

Impact of Afghan War on the Radicalization

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ABSTRACT

Religious radicalization has emerged as a tangible threat in the Post-Soviet Union global milieu. The term used as radicalization has mainly been attributed to Islamic fundamentalism, linked with brewing militancy in the Muslim countries. Afghanistan and Pakistan have been serious victims of violence initiated by religious zealots, especially after the eventful day of 11 September when Al-Qaeda affiliated militants carried out terrorist attacks on the American mainland. The US responded with the invasion of Afghanistan, removing the Taliban Regime from Kabul and initiating a global hunt against its once allies during Afghan Jihad. During the American led war against Muslim militants, Afghanistan was yet again thrown in endemic violence, while neighboring Pakistan those once hosted Jihadists from all over the world for resistance against the Red Army also faced serious security challenges. The radicalization process in Pakistan has been a direct outcome of violence in Afghanistan where Jihadi forces, once trained, equipped and sustained by the US now started fighting with its mentor. Islamabad faced a serious challenge from militancy but initiated a well deliberated as well as executed strategy to not only defeat the terrorism but de-radicalize the society also. Pakistan had relatively better gains in its de-radicalization drive and the strategy employed during the process can be adopted by other effected nations as well.

Key Words: Buffer State, Global Power Politics, Soviet Invasion, Jihad, Afghan Resistance, President Jimmy Carter, Zbigniew Brzezinski, CIA, Mujahedeen, Persian Gulf, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Radicalization, Al-Qaida and Taliban, Islamic Extremism, 9/11 Terrorist Attacks, De-radicalization, Punitive Measures, Preventive Measures, National Action Plan.

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Background

The post-cold war international arena is confronting numerous challenges ranging from the effects of globalization that inextricably intertwines the peace and stability of the whole world, to the radicalization of the masses which potentially leads to extremism. The phenomenon of radicalization gained currency in the aftermath of American led war against terror and, now the menace has proliferated to an extent that most of the world considers it a tangible threat. The predominantly al-Qaida and Taliban linked terrorism emanating from Afghanistan is no more the lone concern; a congregation of extremist outfits has mushroomed over the years, which has been threatening to swarm the entire globe. Notwithstanding the global rejection of terrorism, the narrative continues to expand as the dogma is attracting the masses in many areas, while large swathes of territories remain breeding places for the extremist ideologies.

There are numerous academic debates as well as a day in and day out seminars in most parts of the world to comprehend what the challenge is, and how to address this issue; however, development of a consensus insight regarding the actual threat and formulation of a shared vision on way forward remains elusive. The prospects of public radicalization at mass scales in many parts of the South Asian region and the ultimate transition of this trend into violent political movements are as viable as ever. The talk of Islamic terrorism is no more restricted to the Afghanistan-Pakistan region alone; the emergence of outfits like the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and their reach into the areas previously considered safe, has added a new dimension of radicalization challenge to the contemporary world. Besides debating the implications of terrorism, there is a need to find out its motives and also the external factors due to global power struggle that have contributed to brewing the radicalization phenomenon. With available literary work mainly promoting a one-sided narrative, it becomes even more challenging to accumulate neutral as well as unbiased references on a sensitive subject like radicalization.

The Menace of Radicalization

Radicalization may be regarded as the tendency of possessing obstinate views on any issue and intolerant response towards diverging opinions; the word "radical" has always been an exceedingly vast term, reflecting all shades of fanatic human behaviors. Notwithstanding that the threat being deliberated here is primarily linked with the religious extremism that promotes militancy; the prevailing radicalization hypothesis steers us away from the real causes of terrorism. Moreover,

Islam happened to exist extensively on the wrong side of the global divide needs no great effort to prove; with few exceptions, the Islamic world is almost entirely within the boundaries of the South (Elnur, 2003, p. 63). Religious intolerance in the region where Pakistan is located has never been an eternal motivation of the masses; nevertheless, the rise of Islamic militancy can be attributed to several internal as well as external intricacies. Like Communism before it, "Islamic fundamentalism" evokes images of a deadly virus spread by revolutionary regimes, such as Iran and Sudan, whose alleged aim is to develop a Pan-Islamic bloc rich in resources and potentially armed with an "Islamic bomb" to wage jihad against the West (Niva, 1998, p. 26).

The narrative of Islamic extremism and projection of its links with militancy does not appear to be a retaliatory strategy against a rationally perceived threat; it seems rather a judiciously crafted endeavor to device a rallying point for the Western /US populace against a common challenge. However, when a political ideology becomes monistic, irrational and uncompromising, and when political conflicts are subjected to violent solutions, then political ideology will have assumed the character of religious fanaticism (Naidu, 2001, p. 6). Moreover, the phenomenon of Islamic extremism is often projected beyond rationality to instill a sense of insecurity among Western masses through a well-deliberated media campaign. Films and television programs routinely vilify Islam as a debased religion and Muslims as little more than hostage-taking terrorists seeking to avenge themselves on innocent Americans; official US policy statements regularly embraced alarmist representations of the "Islamic threat" (Niva, 1998, p. 26).

While narrowing the focus on Pakistan, it would be prudent to assert that there have been various accelerators expediting public radicalization in the country. Notwithstanding the impact of numerous domestic socio-economic attributes of extremist tendencies in the country, the external factor has far more influence and role in the radicalization of the society. In this regard, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and events related to it, have significantly shaped the social construct of Pakistan as the country opted to side with US/ Western camp against Russian forces. Throughout the 1980s the Afghan mujahedeen were, in effect, America's surrogate soldiers in the brutal guerrilla war that became the Soviet Union's Vietnam, a defeat that helped trigger the subsequent collapse of the Communist Empire (Crile, 2003). How far Islamabad has been able to contain this phenomenon and whether the inferences drawn from Pakistan's savvies can be relevant to the others, is essentially what would be discussed in the ensuing paragraphs. It would be imperative

to first determine the motives of public radicalization by evaluating the root-cause of the menace due to external factor, before suggesting the viable cure of this ruinous proclivity.

Radicalization in Pakistan

The Influence of Afghan Dynamics

Pakistan has been confronted with the rising public radicalization as is the case with many of the other regional countries. Ostensibly, the phenomenon may appear as the byproduct of the prevailing domestic environments of the country; however, there are valid arguments to insinuate the overriding influence of external factors that have been shaping the internal dynamics of Pakistan. It would be valid to argue that owing to the existential threats to the state from outside, the political horizon of the country has been overly marred with security challenges while it also did not allow Islamabad to duly concentrate on the socio-economic matrix. Though Pakistan was forced to divert a significant portion of national resources to confront security challenges from its inception; socio-economic milieu never fell below the tolerable threshold.

The South Asian region where Pakistan is located, has immense strategic eminence and it has always remained the focus of international geopolitical as well as geo-economic contests. Historically, the classical notion of Afghanistan as a buffer state consisted principally in the maintenance of a shaking balance, which usually engaged the entire statecraft of the Afghan government, between the two great powers in the region: Britain and Russia (Hauer, 1982). The status quo acquired by imperialist powers through ensuring the neutrality of Afghanistan was hence termed as the 'Great Game'. Afghan territory has since been vital for the national interests of contending powers in the strategically vital South Asian region and thus subject to external meddling in various contexts. The end of the colonial era resulted in the emergence of independent states on the one-time British Indian territory, however, strategic prominence of Afghan lands stayed intact.

After coming into existence as an independent state, Pakistan has mainly been concerned with the developments along its eastern border, however, the events elsewhere in the South Asian region did influence Islamabad's security calculus. Pakistan had to confront a hostile Afghanistan which laid claims on the Pashtun territories of the newly born state; the tussle between Islamabad and Kabul continued with both opting to strengthen dissident groups against each other. Zulfikar Ali

Bhutto formulated a strategy in the 1970s to use Islamist opponents to Kabul to divert Afghan pressure while General Zia-ul-Haq (in power between 1978 and 1988) had accentuated this policy during the jihad against the Soviets in Afghanistan, beginning in 1979 (Chaudet, 2010). The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan brought a serious challenge to Pakistan's doorstep, forcing the country not only to manage refugee exodus but get in the thick of international power politics.

Afghan Resistance against the Soviet Invasion

As the state had remained fervently embedded with its Islamic identity, Pakistan enticed Muslim zealous from all over the world during Afghan resistance. The US opted to rally all such forces that were ideologically averse to communism to wipe out the Soviet influence in Afghanistan; Pakistan, in its turn, became a hub to recruit different Mujahedeen groups as holy warriors and Saudi Arabia financed this religious extremist or radical Islamist groupings (Harshe, 2008, p. 69). The Afghan war invited geopolitical contest between cold war superpowers on the doorsteps of Pakistan, embroiling the country in a situation where siding with the free world almost became inevitable for the ruling hierarchy at Islamabad. While the resistance against the Soviet invasion of neighboring Afghanistan was viewed in the National Interest by Pakistani leadership, the Afghan war nevertheless has primarily been a continuation of superpower rivalry in the region.

Consequently, Mr. Zbigniew Brzezinski, the National Security Advisor to President Jimmy Carter states:

“According to the official version of history, CIA aid to the Mujahedeen began during 1980, that is to say after the Soviet army invaded Afghanistan on Dec 24, 1979. But the reality, secretly guarded until now, is completely otherwise. Indeed, it was July 3, 1979, that President Carter signed the first directive for secret aid to the opponents of the pro-Soviet regime in Kabul. And that very day, I wrote a note to the president in which I explained to him that in my opinion, this aid was going to induce a Soviet military intervention. That secret operation was an excellent idea. It had the effect of drawing the Russians into the Afghan trap and you want me to regret it? The day that the Soviets officially crossed the border, I wrote to President Carter. We now have the opportunity of giving to the USSR its Vietnam War” (as cited by Amineh & Houweling, 2005, p. 52).

Prados (2002) further elaborates American involvement in Afghan dynamics well before the Soviet invasion of the country: -

“While some sources claim the American effort began very early, more concrete evidence of US feelers to the Muslim guerrillas emerges only from early 1979, about the time of the kidnapping and murder of the American ambassador in Kabul, Adolph Dubs. President Jimmy Carter's National Security Council (NSC) considered options for a CIA operation in March and April, and the president approved a proposal forwarded by Zbigniew Brzezinski that July. A decision to expand the project followed a meeting of the NSC Special Coordinating Committee on December 17, 1979. Thus, the inception of the CIA project in Afghanistan preceded the Soviet intervention, with three motorized and airborne divisions and other units, that came on December 25, 1979” (Prados, 2002, p. 467).

The resistance against Soviet forces in Afghanistan essentially transformed into a war between Godless Communist forces and ideologically motivated Islamists assembled from all over the world. In this entire Afghan Jihad, US-led West played a dominant role in mustering the support for Mujahedeen in terms of finances, organization, training, and passage to war theatre from various parts of the Islamic world, especially Arab countries. Ironically, if the US construed the Soviet Union as a state fanatically associated with communism, it chose to fight one kind of fanaticism with another as represented by the Islamic radicals; the US moral and material support for thousands of Mujahedeen who gathered under the flag of jihad to oust the communist presence in Afghanistan began to render legitimacy to religious extremism (Harshe, 2008, p. 69). The highly radicalized Jihadists in Afghanistan were equaled with American forefathers, while resistance against the Soviets was romanticized by the Western media as the just war.

At the time of the Afghan war, the predominant interest of the US and other pro-Mujahedeen countries was the defeat of the Soviet Union with no apparent concern about the potential repercussions of a religiously motivated and externally supported asymmetric war in a politically volatile region. According to American analysts, there were many reasons for giving weapons to the Afghans, even if none of them had anything to do with liberating the country: it was a useful warning to the Soviets not to make any further moves toward the Persian Gulf or into Pakistan; it was a signal that the United States was ready to escalate a covert killing war aimed at Russian soldiers; and because it involved aid to Muslim fundamentalists, it was an extraordinary opportunity to make friends with the Islamic nations that had treated the United States as a virtual enemy because of its support of Israel and the Shah of Iran (Crile, 2003, p. 23).

George Crile while discussing the CIA's involvement in the Afghan war states: -

“At the time, it was viewed as a noble cause, and when the last Soviet soldier walked out of Afghanistan on February 15, 1989, the leaders of the CIA celebrated what they hailed as the Agency’s greatest victory. The cable from the CIA station in Islamabad that day read simply “We won.” But the billions spent arming and training the primitive tribesmen of Afghanistan turned out to have an unintended consequence. In a secret war, the funders take no credit-and any doubt that's why the mujahedeen and their Muslim admirers around the world never viewed US support as a decisive factor in their victory. As they saw it, that honor went to Allah, the only superpower they acknowledge. But for the few who know the extent of the CIA’s involvement, it’s impossible to ignore the central role that America played in this great modern jihad, one that continues to this day” (Crile, 2003, p. 15).

Influence of Jihadist Culture

While Pakistan emerged as a front-line state in the war against Soviets in Afghanistan, in the same period, the Islamic world had also been in a transition mode. The events in Afghanistan coincided with the Iranian Islamic revolution, adding the sectarian dimension into the Pakistani society which was getting increasingly radicalized in the areas mainly adjacent to Afghanistan amid Mujahedeen influx. Tribal Areas located along the Pak-Afghan border turned into small garrison towns, inhabiting religious zealous from all over the Islamic world; most of these foreign jihadists were Arab nationals and the followers of hardliner Sunni Salafist school of thought. On the other hand, the successful Iranian revolution and desire of Iranian leadership to export revolutionary ideology, motivated Shia population, adding sectarian flavor in the radicalization process of the Pakistani society.

The Sectarian divide exacerbated in the Islamic world, resulting in a power tussle between Sunni Arab states and Shia clergy-led Iran. Consequently, Pakistan was an important prize in the struggle for the control of the Persian Gulf, as well as for erecting the 'Sunni wall' around Iran; Saudi Arabia and Iraq, therefore, developed a vested interest in preserving the Sunni character of Pakistan's Islamization (Nasr, 2000, p. 157). The continuous influx of radicalized Sunni Jihadists in Pakistan for Afghan resistance against the Soviet Union and the growing sway of Arab states of Gulf instilled serious concerns among the Pakistani Shia community. Consequently, the involvement of Saudi Arabia and Iran in Pakistan's internal affairs through supporting respective sectarian proxies resulted in the radicalization of the society.

The success in the Afghan war avenged American military humiliation in the Soviet-backed Vietnamese guerillas, albeit its ultimate price has been and continues to be paid by the populations of Afghanistan as well as Pakistan. It was the biggest secret war in history, but somehow it never registered on the American consciousness; when viewed through the prism of 9/11, the scale of that American support for an army of Muslim fundamentalists seems almost incomprehensible (Crile, 2003). Later, during the course of the Afghan civil war, the international community largely remained indifferent to the regional developments; radicalism kept proliferating. The sole global superpower and the eventual beneficiary of the Afghan war, the US abandoned the region and stayed largely oblivious of the events taking place in Afghanistan. However, a good deal of post-11 September discourse focused on the Islamic factor in the global divides; as Blank (2001) noted “Since the end of the cold war, Muslim fundamentalism seems to have replaced Soviet communism as the West's bugbear of choice” (as cited by Elnur, 2003, p. 62).

September 11 Terrorist Attacks & US Response

The global policies, as well as regional dynamics during anti-Soviet Jihad, had a snowballing effect on the radicalization phenomenon, which ultimately culminated in the incident of 9/11. The US authorities had been pointing out that the Islamic terrorists belonging to al-Qaeda organization and working under Osama bin Laden were responsible for waging a war against the US and for causing the tragedies of 11 September (Naidu, 2001, p. 4). The events of 9/11 prompted many scholars to evaluate the impact of the CIA's secret Afghan war; besides Osama bin Laden, there had been many foreign fighters who after successful Afghan Jihad, turned their attention to other parts of the world. Consequently, in many incidents termed today as terrorist acts around the globe, the involvement of the Afghan war veterans has been evident; the predominant target has now been former mentor America's interests.

As the first of the CIA's project leaders for the Afghan program, Charles G. Cogan, later put it, “The hypothesis that the Mujahedeen would come to the United States and commit terrorist actions did not enter into our universe of thinking at the time” (Prados, 2002, pp. 470-471). Whatever the motive of attacks in the US, the war on terrorism essentially appeared as the anti-Muslim campaign due to the dictums often used by Americans as well as terrorists who once executed Washington's anti-Soviet military strategy in Afghanistan. Pakistan yet again found itself amid the latest imbroglio, compelling the rulers to align the country against its former allies in Afghan Jihad to

avert the wrath of the global hegemon the US. Islamabad's decision to side with the American led global war on terror against the Afghan Taliban and Al-Qaeda militants resulted in the further radicalization of the society, leading to a long phase of violence in the country.

While Pakistani policymakers were aiming at downplaying the religious dimension of the US-led war against the Taliban led Islamist radical forces in Afghanistan, the American administration was on exactly the other extreme. In preparing the nation for retaliation against Islamic terrorists, the American leaders have appealed to religious sentiments and beliefs of Judaism and Christianity; they sought church and synagogue pulpits, have labeled the terrorists "evil," have declared a "crusade," and have sought God's blessings for America (Naidu, 2001, p. 4). The strategy of inciting public sentiments against terrorist attacks through religious motivation was a very dangerous ploy by the American administration; the initiative may have helped in getting domestic backing of the war but it did have its repercussions, as the events later proved.

Resultantly, greater media involvement in the war events during the American invasion of Afghanistan as well as Iraq did fuel radical sentiments in the entire Muslim world; Pakistan being no exception. The American invasion of two Muslim states was projected as a campaign initiated against Islamist forces on the wrong premise of terrorism, implanting a sense of resentment among the Muslim youth all over the world. Richard Clarke, the senior counter-terrorism official in both the Clinton and the George W. Bush administrations, contends: "the war as seen on television in Islamic countries has dangerously increased the level of frustration, anger, and hatred directed at the US; seeds of future terrorism have been sown" (Byman, 2003, p. 83). The war on terror thus contributed significantly towards further radicalization of not only Afghan society, where Taliban resistance continues even after nearly two decades of 9/11 but Pakistan as well, which had endured bloodied struggle against extremist forces.

While the attack on American mainland by the Al-Qaeda linked militants can never be vindicated, it has, however, been a crime committed by those once patronized and trained by the US as a resistance force against the Red Army. Washington's decision to abandon the region immediately after the Soviet demise manifested classic knee jerk action where potential implications of such a strategy were presumably not debated. Post-Cold War American policies were viewed as anti-Muslim by Afghan war veterans in the Islamic world; consequently, the implication of al-Qaida for the 9/11 attack and the US invasion of Afghanistan was considered as part of the conspiracy.

In response to crusade call, resorting to similar religious appeals the Muslim Mujahedeen and Osama bin Laden declared jihad against the infidel West and have demonized Americans as the enemies of Allah (Naidu, 2001, p. 4).

The Bush administration never paid any heed towards brewing concerns of victimization among Muslim masses and without stabilizing Afghanistan, the US embarked upon another military venture. Hence, the American decision to invade Iraq unilaterally without the United Nation's approval on the clumsy premise of 'weapons of mass destruction' further infuriated the Muslim world; the high handedness of Bush administration further intensified anti-US sentiments. Scholars at Egypt's Al-Azhar University, declared US attack on Iraq to be a "crusade" and called for jihad in response; these were not the voices in the wilderness, but rather the core of the Sunni Muslim religious establishment (Byman, 2003, p. 83). In essence, American military adventurism to eliminate the Islamic extremist elements did little in eradicating this menace and instead strengthened the receptivity of radicalization.

Today, after nearly two-decade of American initiated war against terrorism, Iraq is virtually divided in Shia, Kurd and Sunni parts with perpetual violence while Afghanistan continues to bleed. The scores of civilian casualties in Afghanistan and Iraq, the destruction of countries like Syria and Libya, and the targeting of innocents during drone strikes have added up hatred in the Islamic world against American policies. Consequently, American led global war on terror in the aftermath of 9/11 has not only failed to contain Islamic militancy but added fuel to the process of radicalization in the region. The US is believed by many to be opposed to the settlement for its ends; feelings of resentment are generated because of the suspicion that America wants to keep the Afghan conflict alive (Kizilbash, 1988, p. 63). The threat of radicalization is no more limited to Afghanistan and Pakistan alone, the menace is now frightening the entire region in even more intimidating forms.

The De-radicalization Process

Pakistan's De-Radicalization Strategy

There is no denying the fact that compared to radicalization, the process of de-radicalization is far more painstaking, demanding a sustained endeavor at both, the state as well as social levels and implying an all-encompassing approach. The de-radicalization process may evolve various

initiatives and measures; nevertheless, the drive essentially comprises two phases i.e. eradication of prevailing radicalization and prevention of its further proliferation. Consequently, de-radicalization warrants punitive measures to render it as an unattainable proposition and preventive means through incentive-based luring away of those amenable to the radical appeal. Pakistan's de-radicalization strategy essentially revolves around these two approaches, which practically manifest the policies devised and implemented in the quest against extremist tendencies. The de-radicalization strategy has intertwining phases as a punitive policy is not sufficient as long as the prevention of its proliferation is not an integral part of the overall plan.

Pakistan is one of the most affected of extremist tendencies, has pursued multi-pronged strategies to confront radicalization and reaped worthwhile success in the process. The achievements of Pakistani Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) against the extremist forces and successful manifestation of deradicalization strategy is appreciable, containing numerous lessons. At the operational level, the security forces have effectively punished rank and file of the extremists through the use of military means, dismantling the infrastructure of the militant groups and constricting their functional capacity by physically occupying spaces once considered their strongholds. At the strategic level, the state has formulated an all-inclusive National Action Plan (NAP) to deal with the menace comprehensively. Both these policies are envisaged to go along side by side, complementing each other in the attainment of the ultimate goal of de-radicalization. Though it would be fair to claim that Pakistan has hitherto achieved reasonable success in its efforts against extremism and terrorist elements are on the run; the gains are still fragile, susceptible to reverses and warrant a sustained approach.

The perpetuity of the struggle against radicalization should not be lost since religiously motivated extremism has always a very strong ideological basis while international environments influencing the whole process also remain far from ideal. The all-encompassing deradicalization strategy employed by Pakistan essentially contains two phases as mentioned above and comprise of 'Punitive and Preventive' phases: -

The Punitive Phase. The operational or tactical level strategy being pursued by Pakistan revolves around the concept of clear, hold, build and transfer; a model being globally appreciated after successful manifestation by Pakistan Army. The clear and hold phases are essentially the regaining of space from terrorists, abolishing their sanctuaries,

destroying the available material resources with these radicals and hampering their capacity to plan and organize anti-state activities. Over the years, Pakistan's security forces have undertaken numerous successful operations, including much acclaimed Zarb-e-Azb, and Rad-ul-Fisadto clear vast swathes of the territories in Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA); punishing the rank and file of the terrorists and continue to hold cleared areas for the implementation of subsequent phases of the strategy as well as constricting terrorists' liberty of action. The containment of the radicalization in the cleared and held areas is inbuilt in the strategy through the build and transfer phases. The military thus implements the development envisaged in the national strategy to improve the socio-economic outlook of the target areas by building schools, dams, health facilities and roads on a massive scale in the entire FATA region. The last part of the military strategy envisages the transfer of the cleared and built-up areas to civilian administration, accomplishing the preliminary phase of de-radicalization in a selected but comparatively limited area. The operational level implementation of the de-radicalization module then sets in motion broader national campaign, involving far larger areas, resources and parts of the strategy through NAP. The Tribal Areas have undergone reforms and now included in the national stream through the merger with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) Province

The Preventive Phase. The 16th December 2014 barbaric attack on Army Public School (APS), Peshawar, by the terrorists proved to be the watershed moment in Pakistan's long fight against radical elements in the society. The tragedy highlighted the gravity of the challenge in hand, and brought the entire nation on board against terrorism, resulting in the formulation of NAP. Besides contemplating a comprehensive national strategy against terrorism, the NAP envisages de-radicalization campaign through various measures, which include: -

- Implementation of the death sentence of those convicted in cases of terrorism.
- Special trial courts under the supervision of the Army. The duration of these courts would be two years.
- Militant outfits and armed gangs will not be allowed to operate in the country.
- NACTA, the anti-terrorism institution will be strengthened.
- Strict action against the literature, newspapers, and magazines promoting hatred, decapitation, extremism, sectarianism, and intolerance.

- All funding sources of terrorists and terrorist outfits will be frozen.
- The defunct outfits will not be allowed to operate under any other name.
- Establishing and deploying a dedicated counter-terrorism force.
- End to religious extremism and protection of minorities will be ensured.
- Registration and regulation of religious seminaries.
- Ban on the glorification of terrorists and terrorist organizations through print and electronic media.
- Administrative and development reforms in FATA with an immediate focus on the repatriation of IDPs.
- The communication network of terrorists will be dismantled completely.
- Concrete measures against the promotion of terrorism through the internet and social media.
- No room will be left for the extremism in any part of the country.
- Ongoing operation in Karachi will be taken to its logical end.
- Baluchistan's government to be fully empowered for political reconciliation with complete ownership by all stakeholders.
- Action against elements spreading sectarianism.
- Formulation of a comprehensive policy to deal with the issue of Afghan refugees, beginning with registration of all refugees.
- Reforms in the criminal courts' system to strengthen the anti-terrorism institutions including provincial CIDs (as cited by Government of Pakistan, p. 46).

Conclusion

The radicalization of Afghanistan and Pakistan and the region around these countries has been significantly influenced by global power politics as well as the hegemonic interests of some of the regional players. Consequently, the radical elements very conveniently secure external patronages for their terrorist activities, rendering national strategies often ineffective over a longer duration. Additionally, the prevailing international anarchic system and the perception among deprived masses of the discriminatory policies being pursued by the powerful global actors, also fuel

radicalization. The militancy and religious extremism have been a consistent challenge in the post-Soviet Union global milieu and kept on proliferating due to international power politics. The radicalization of Islamic societies has mainly been influenced by the inability of major powers in addressing their legitimate concerns besides the socio-economic failures of the domestic regimes. Pakistan's existing de-radicalization strategy is primarily aimed at addressing the domestic facets of the process and therefore, may appear as a momentary initiative. As radicalization and terrorism are a global phenomenon, the prospects of the success of any national strategy against the menace in isolation remain frail and thus may not accrue desired effects. While internally Pakistan has displayed an unflinching commitment to eradicate extremism in all its manifestations; externally the political, military and intelligence hierarchy of the country has backed all initiatives aimed at stabilizing Afghanistan. Pakistan believes that sustainable de-radicalization in the region is linked with the process of successful Afghan reconciliation and compelling the fighting factions to become part of the political process. Consequently, Islamabad has unconditionally supported as well as facilitated the peace process in Afghanistan, which has been duly acknowledged by the Trump Administration.

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