

INTRODUCTION

What is the National Action Plan?

On December 16, 2014, armed militants broke into the Army Public School (APS) in Peshawar Cantonment area of the Khyber Pukhtunkhwa (KP) province. In the brazen attack they murdered 133 schoolchildren, as well as 10 teachers, including the principal. This atrocious attack was a major paradigm shift in Pakistan, and will forever remain the incident that damaged and radically altered our collective national psyche.

On December 25, 2014, the National Action Plan (NAP) was enacted. This was established by the state to crack down on terrorism and to supplement anti-terrorist offensives. It is a major coordinated state retaliation following the deadly Peshawar school attack, but has since taken a life of its own as Pakistan's dominant strategy to combat terrorism and extremism. NAP received unprecedented levels of support and cooperation across the country's political spectrum, the military leadership, and civil society.

There are 20 points in the NAP (please see Annex II), and they pertain to a wide variety of interventions and mechanisms across the country. The government has loosely divided the twenty points into three broad categories:

1. Hardcore Terrorism (#3, #18, #7, #16, #17, #15)
2. Terrorism Enablers (#5, #9, #11, #6, #13, #14, #10, #19)
3. State Enablers (#4, #8, #12, #1, #2, #20)

What is NAP Tracker?

The NAP Tracker is the only publication of its kind that tracks the Pakistani state's progress on all 20 points of the National Action Plan. The points are loosely divided into nine categories, with each category encompassing one or more points from the NAP. These nice categories include:

1. The lifting of the moratorium on the death penalty (#1)
2. The formation of military courts (#2)
3. Proscribed organizations in Pakistan (#3), their operations (#7), communication networks (#13, #14), and funding sources (#6)
4. Counterterrorism, including the strengthening of the National Counterterrorism Authority

THE THEMES

1. Moratorium Lifted
2. Military Courts
3. Proscribed Organizations
4. Counterterrorism
5. Sectarianism/Minorities
6. Local Conflicts
7. Seminaries
8. Refugees/IDPs
9. Criminal Justice System

These nine themes have been derived from the 20 points of the NAP.

- (NACTA) (#4), establishing a dedicated counterterrorism force (#8), as well as generic goals (#15) for eliminating terrorism
5. Sectarianism, proliferation of hatred and intolerance (#5, #9, #18)
 6. Local conflicts in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) (#12), Karachi (#16), Balochistan (#17), and also Punjab (#)
 7. Seminary reforms (#10)
 8. Afghan refugees and rehabilitating the Pakistani population displaced due to internal conflicts or military operations (#12, #19)
 9. Criminal justice sector reforms

Each of the subsequent chapters deals with these issues one by one. The data quoted in these chapters is very carefully sourced. Both primary and secondary methods were used. Two of the primary sources were multiple interviews with the National Security Advisor (NSA), Lt. Gen. (retd) Naseer Khan Janjua, between December 2016 and March, 2017, and an interview with Ihsan Ghani, the current head of the NACTA. This report cites the data provided by them across many of these parameters as the primary data, but also delves into other publically available sources.

Overall, Pakistan has done remarkably well in the last few years in its fight against terrorism on the kinetic front. According to data collected by this organization, violence-related fatalities have dropped drastically, 45% between 2015 and 2016, and 66% between 2014 and 2016, across Pakistan. This is a tremendous achievement, and should not be discounted.

However, Pakistan's mechanisms and interventions for dealing with the root cause of terrorism, extremism in the society, remains largely ineffective. With victories on the physical front, there seems to be a shift in thought and focus towards some of the elements that drive radical thoughts and ideologies. Thus there is hope that the softer side of things will be addressed as well.

In private conversations, NSA Janjua has repeatedly stated that Pakistan must counter both terrorism with hard power, and the mother evil of extremism with soft power. This is an important and crucial development, as it shows both awareness and the need to go beyond military interventions and terror sweeping operations.

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EXCERPT FROM INTERVIEW WITH NSA, Lt. Gen. (retd.) NASEER KHAN JANJUA¹

by Zeeshan Salahuddin

Lt. Gen. (retd.) Nasser Khan Janjua was appointed as Pakistan's National Security Adviser (NSA) on October 26, 2015. His mandate is to oversee the national security of the country and build sustainable policies and mechanisms that render a positive, progressive, peaceful, and secure Pakistan. The following are critical excerpts from several interviews with General Janjua between December 2016 and March 2017, specifically with regard to the National Action Plan (NAP).

Zeeshan Salahuddin (ZS): What is your view on the current evaluation/execution of NAP?

Lt. Gen. (retd.) Naseer Khan Janjua (NSA): First, let me briefly explain what NAP is. It is the identification of all those areas which we need to improve to get rid to the menace of extremism, violence, terrorism, and militancy. It was evolved through a national consensus to make Pakistan a secure country for furthering our progress. In many ways, NAP is our national stance and unity to say no to terrorism. It reflects on our attitude that we as a society reject extremism and the resultant terrorism.

ZS: Speaking of clarity, can you point to what you feel is the central issue, the root cause of terrorism?

NSA: It is simple. In this case extremism is the mother evil. Extreme thought is the most damaging thing for the people of Pakistan. It manifests itself in the form of violence and terrorism. Terrorism is merely an outcome of extreme thought, and by fighting terrorism alone, we will never defeat this menace. We need to mitigate and moderate our extreme thought in the intellectual and ideological domains, with a well-thought-out strategy at the national level while making the people its effective stakeholders. Fighting terrorism is still very important, because it affects us immediately and creates this false sense that Pakistan is constantly under threat. But to mitigate extremism is the bigger goal. I believe it is all about the people. Mainstreaming the fringe, educating the population, and building public ownership of this fight are very important.

ZS: The NAP consists of 20 points, a lot of which overlap or have similar objectives. Are you going to review the progress and work on an implementation strategy point-by-point?

NSA: As you said, the NAP has a lot of overlapping areas. The way I envision it, I see three broad, thematic areas that we can then address separately.

¹ Salahuddin, Z. (2017, Apr 07). Pakistan's National Security Adviser on Counterterrorism. Retrieved April 12, 2017, from <<http://thediplomat.com/2017/04/pakistans-national-security-adviser-on-counterterrorism/>>.

First, there is the theme of fighting hardcore terrorism. This consists of points such as dealing with armed militias (NAP point #3), sectarian terrorism (#18), proscribed organizations (#7), the Karachi operation (#16), and the situation in Balochistan (#17) as well as some areas of Punjab (#15).

The second broad theme is terrorism enablers. These are elements which cannot be classified as hardcore terrorism, that may need to be dealt with a combination of kinetic and non-kinetic means, but they facilitate terrorism and must be dismantled. These include hate speech (#5), religious persecution (#9), media glorification of terrorism (#11), choking finances (#6), communications (#13), internet and social media proliferation (#14), madrasas (seminaries) (#10), and preventing terrorist from using the cover of Afghan refugees (#19).

Finally, the third category is that of state enablers. These are steps that, if implemented, could greatly aid the state in combating the menace of terrorism. These include the strengthening of National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) (#4), the formation of the dedicated counterterrorism force (#8), reforms in FATA (#12), the lifting of the moratorium on the death penalty for terrorists (#1), military courts (#2), and the reforms in the criminal justice sector (#20).