



Terrorism in Pakistan during Covid-19

(March-December 2020)

By Muhammad Amir Rana



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1. Introduction

Pakistan lifted the Covid-19 related lockdown on August 10, 2020 after having employed strict to smart lockdown strategies for about five months. From August onward, the reported daily cases of infections remained relatively low until end of November when situation once again started to deteriorate. During these nine months (from March to December) the security landscape of Pakistan did not witness any major shift. However, the frequency and intensity of terrorist attacks slightly increased from May to July, particularly in North Waziristan district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the restive southwestern province of Balochistan. Again, in October, the terrorists stepped up attacks and that trend variably continued until end of December. Throughout these months, violent Sindhi nationalist groups launched several attacks against the security forces in Sindh. Similarly, Baloch insurgent perpetrated some high-impact attacks against security forces in Balochistan; in June, Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) militants attacked the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) building in Karachi, where law enforcement personnel were alert enough to kill all four attackers; three security guards and one police officer also lost their lives before the attack was successfully foiled. Meanwhile, the Pakistani Taliban groups continued to regroup in erstwhile FATA besides perpetrating some attacks in Rawalpindi, Karachi and Balochistan.

However, linking this relative increase in terrorist attacks with the pandemic is difficult. But it certainly indicates that the terrorist groups continue to demonstrate the capacity to plan and conduct attacks from the tribal belt to Karachi, despite the government's claims of counter-terrorism successes. At the same time, terrorists could be eyeing the

opportunities created by the pandemic, but they are, apparently, yet waiting to take any major action in that regard. To fully reactivate their operational networks, they would have to reconnect to their support bases in the country, besides increasing recruitment and fund-raising efforts.

Though the nature of the Baloch insurgency is different from religiously motivated terrorism, the Baloch insurgent groups can also capitalize on the pandemic related opportunities. That makes it imperative for the government and the security forces to not let their guards down in the counter-terrorism campaign. In recent years, the Baloch groups have not only intensified their attacks but also expanded the outreach of their terrorist violence beyond Balochistan. The foiled BLA attack on PSX Karachi on June 29th, as cited earlier, has created the intended impact in terms of raising the group's profile and highlighting its cause. In a related attack in November 2018, the BLA terrorists, including one wearing a suicide vest, had attacked the Chinese consulate in Karachi, but the security forces managed to kill all three attackers (Khan, 2018).

The developments in Afghanistan could also affect the security landscape of Pakistan. Since the US and the Afghan Taliban signed a peace deal on February 29, the Afghan Taliban have gained political legitimacy without giving up their reliance on the use of force. As the intra-Afghan talks begin, their relationship with foreign militant groups, including Al-Qaeda and the Pakistani Taliban, will bear security consequences for Pakistan.

Experts agree that Covid-19 has increased vulnerabilities on the level of state and society and violent extremists could exploit those, mainly with the purpose to add to instability and insecurity by carrying out terrorist attacks. Secondly, in a way, that would also serve the militants' purpose by adding to people's anti-government grievances. Pakistan is managing a significant number of Afghan refugees as well as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), whose vulnerability to Covid-19 disease is relatively higher due to lack of available facilities in camps. Militants in the past have been exploiting the grievances of the marginalized groups including those living in camps. Therefore, the threat could have multiple aspects, ranging from the possibility of the spread of the disease to recruitment for the militants.

Against this backdrop, this report focuses the key challenges related to terrorism in Pakistan and its interface with the Covid-19 pandemic situation. The first part consists of a review of the terrorist groups' activities since March 2020 aimed at studying changes in their operational targets, strategies, and tactics, as well as how they are using the coronavirus pandemic for propaganda purposes. The second part focuses on the Afghan Taliban's nexus with foreign terrorist groups and its implications for Pakistan. The last part investigates state responses to all emerging threats and offers an analysis of the responses in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. Pakistan's Security Landscape (March 1 to December 31, 2020)¹

A total of 115 terrorist attacks have happened in Pakistan in 2020 since the outbreak of coronavirus in Pakistan, or from March 1 to December 31, 2020, to be precise. These attacks caused 167 deaths and left another 452 injured. Apart from the terrorist attacks, 37 anti-militant operational strikes and four incidents of clashes between the security forces and the militants claimed in all 118 lives. (See Table 1)

Table 1: Overall Violent Incidents and Casualties in Pakistan (Mar 1 to Dec 31, 2020)

Nature of incidents	No. of incidents	Killed	Injured
Terrorist attacks	115	167	452
Clashes between security forces and militants	9	26	6
Operational attacks by security forces	37	118	19
Plot/foiled terror attempt	11	1	0
Targeted attacks [not specific if terrorist]	11	14	1
Total	183	326	478

2.1 Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)

Over 53 percent of the total terrorist attacks reported from across Pakistan from March 1 to December 31 concentrated in KP. The highest number of terrorist attacks for any one KP district was reported from North Waziristan, where militants perpetrated 28 terrorist attacks out of the total 61 attacks reported from the province.

Table 2: Violent incidents in KP (Mar 1 to Dec 31, 2020)

Nature of incidents	No. of incidents	Killed	Injured
Terrorist attacks	61	86	187
Clashes between security forces and militants	6	20	6
Operational attacks by security forces	22	75	18
Plot/foiled terror attempts	9	0	0
Targeted attack (not specified as terrorist)	10	14	0
Total	108	195	211

¹ Most statistics used in this report are based on PIPS database on conflict and security incidents: www.pakpips.com/app/database

As many as 42 terrorist attacks in KP, or 69 percent of the total attacks recorded in the province, targeted personnel of security forces and law enforcement agencies, which caused 56 deaths and inflicted injuries on 77 others. Five attacks hit civilians killing five and injuring six persons. Four attacks hit Shia community, and one attack targeted immunization workers.

Table 3: Targets of the terrorists in KP (Mar 1 to Dec 31, 2020)

Targets	No. of attacks	Killed	Injured
Security forces/law enforcement	42	56	77
Tribal elders	4	7	0
Civilians	5	5	6
Shia religious scholars/community	4	5	14
Worship places/shrines/madrassas	1	8	90
Political leaders/workers	2	0	0
Health/polio workers, security escorts	1	1	0
Development projects/companies	1	4	0
NATO/US supply vehicles	1	0	0
Total	61	86	187

Militants are apparently expanding their areas of presence and operations in merged districts of KP. While North Waziristan has been witnessing terrorist violence for many months now, four violent incidents were reported from Bajaur tribal district in July alone including two terrorist attacks, one cross-border attack from Afghanistan and one foiled terror plot in which at least 12 IEDs planted on a hill pass were defused by security forces (PIPS, 2020). The growing cross-border activities of the Pakistani Taliban militants in merged districts also validated a recent UN report that claimed that “[t]he total number of Pakistani foreign terrorist fighters in Afghanistan, posing a threat to both countries, is estimated at between 6,000 and 6,500, most of them with the TTP” (Iqbal, 2020).

The situation in Afghanistan – especially after the US signed a peace deal with the Afghan Taliban – could also impact the militant landscape and militancy of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, mainly of the bordering districts. The government and security agencies should be ready to confront and counter these and similar threats.

2.2 Balochistan

In Balochistan, Baloch nationalist insurgents perpetrated 29 terrorist attacks since March, which caused 52 deaths. Baloch insurgent groups including BLA, BLF, United

Baloch Army (UBA), BRAS, and Lashkar-e-Baluchistan (LeB) perpetrated all these attacks. The religiously motivated militant groups, including the Pakistani Taliban groups and factions of Sunni and Shia violent sectarian groups, are still active in the province, and were responsible for five attacks from March 1 to December 31, 2020. Thus, in all 34 terrorist attacks happened in Balochistan during these nine months, which claimed 60 lives and wounded 148 others.

Reported attacks from Baloch insurgents since March included some major or high-impact attacks. For instance, in May, BLA and United Baloch Army militants carried out, separately, two major attacks against security forces, in Kech and Bolan, respectively. These attacks claimed the lives of six army soldiers, six Frontier Constabulary (FC) personnel and one civilian. Similarly, BLA militants killed three army soldiers and injured another eight in an ambush in Panjgur in July. In October, security forces were escorting a convoy of OGDCL from Gwadar to Karachi when BRAS militants attacked it on Coastal Highway near Ormara. As a result of ensuing encounter, 7 FC soldiers and 7 private security guards were martyred (*The Nation*, 2020a). In another high-impact attack, at least seven security personnel were martyred, and six others injured in an attack by BLA terrorists on a Frontier Corps check post in Harnai district (BBC Urdu, 2020a). These increasing high-impact attacks against security forces indicate that the Baloch separatists pose a potent threat. To their operational advantage, they have also established networks in areas closer to the Pak-Iran border.

Table 3: Violent incidents in Balochistan (Mar 1 to Dec 31, 2020)

Nature of incidents	No. of incidents	Killed	Injured
Terrorist attacks (by nationalist insurgents)	29	52	112
Terrorist attacks (by religiously inspired) militants	5	8	36
Operational attacks by security forces	11	30	1
Clashes between security forces and militants	1	3	0
Total	46	93	149

Apparently, the provincial government of Balochistan appears vigilant of the emerging situation in the aftermath of coronavirus pandemic. According to Minister for Home and Tribal Affairs Mir Ziaullah Langove, with proper efforts by law enforcement agencies, the law-and-order situation in Balochistan is being maintained adequately amid the coronavirus outbreak (*Dawn*, 2020). Still, one cannot rule out the possibility of the militants' exploitation of the situation mainly in areas closer to Iranian border, where security forces are mainly focused on addressing the situation arising out of the spread of coronavirus.

Eleven terrorist attacks in Balochistan, during the period under review, targeted personnel of security forces, which caused 29 deaths and injuries to 49 others. Six attacks hit civilians including one attack on tribal elders. (See Table 4)

Table 4: Targets of the Terrorists in Balochistan (Mar 1 to Dec 31, 2020)

Targets	No of attacks	Killed	Injured
Security forces/law enforcement agencies	20	52	88
Tribal elders	1	0	2
Civilians	10	8	55
Worship places/shrines/madrassas	1	0	3
Railways tracks/trains	2	0	0
Total	34	60	148

3. The Active Terrorist Groups

During last 9 months of 2020, five religiously inspired militant and seven separatist nationalist groups were active in Pakistan, and they all together perpetrated 115 terrorist attacks across the country.

Table 5: Terrorist Attacks Claimed/Perpetrated by Terrorist Groups (Mar 1 to Dec 31, 2020)

Organization	Balochistan	KP	Punjab	Sindh	Total
Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)	2	35	3	1	41
Jamaatul Ahrar	-	1	-	-	1
Local Taliban	-	7	-	-	7
United Baloch Front (UBA)	2	-	-	-	2
Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA)	15	-	-	1	16
Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF)	4	-	-	-	4
Balochistan Republican Army (BRA)	2	-	-	-	2
Lashkar-e-Balochistan	1	-	-	-	1
BRAS	1	-	-	-	1
Sindhu Desh Liberation Front (SDLF)	-	-	-	1	1

Organization	Balochistan	KP	Punjab	Sindh	Total
Sindhu Desh Revolutionary Army	-	-	-	7	7
Rival sectarian groups mainly LeJ	-	4	-	2	6
Hizbul Ahrar	-	1	1	-	2
ISIS affiliates	-	1	-	-	1
Unspecified militants and Baloch insurgents	7	12	-	4	23
Total	34	61	4	16	115

3.1. Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)

The TTP was the major actor of instability during last nine months. It was found involved in 41 terrorist attacks, out of which 35 were reported from KP province, 3 from Punjab, 2 from Balochistan and one from Karachi. The small militant groups in KP and its tribal districts, described as the local Taliban, carried out seven terrorist attacks since March 1st, 2020.

3.2. Hizbul Ahrar

Hizbul Ahrar carried out two terrorist attacks in Rawalpindi district of Punjab and KP. It was also believed to be involved in target killing of at least 3 policemen in Rawalpindi, which were reported by media as acts of crime. Its parent organization, i.e., Jamaatul Ahrar, also perpetrated one attack in KP. Both groups rejoined their parent group, i.e., TTP, in August 2020.

3.3. Islamic State (IS)

The killing of Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi in October 2019 was a big blow for the Islamic State (IS) and its chapters across the world including its Khorasan chapter for Afghanistan and Pakistan. The group announced a separate chapter for Pakistan in 2019 (Gul, 2019). During the period under review the group perpetrated a major attack against a madrassa in Peshawar; earlier in the year, it had carried out a similar attack in Quetta. The law enforcement agencies dismantled a few cells of the group during 2020 (Dawn, 2020a). For one, the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) of Punjab province also claimed a success against the banned IS after killing four of its suspected terrorists in an intelligence led operation in Bahawalpur district (Express Tribune, 2020).

3.4. AQIS

Though Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) was not found involved in any terrorist attack in Pakistan over the last few years, but law enforcement departments still considered it a potent threat. An appraisal by police's counterterrorism department (CTD) noted in 2019 that the banned AQIS was regrouping in Karachi, apparently to carry out some major attacks (Ali, 2019). Karachi has remained hub of jihadist, sectarian and criminal violence and there is a possibility that their remnants are still there. The Covid-19 pandemic has overstretched the law enforcers, yet they need to remain vigilant enough to not allow the militants any opportunity to initiate a new wave of violence in the provincial metropolis.

3.5. Baloch insurgent groups

Around seven Baloch insurgent groups are active in Balochistan but the BLA and BLF are the major groups, which represent the new generation of the insurgents, mainly coming from urban backgrounds. BLA perpetrated 16 terrorist attacks since March 2020, including 15 in Balochistan and one in Karachi that targeted the Karachi Stock Exchange. BLF and BRA perpetrated a total of six attacks in Balochistan. Meanwhile two attacks were claimed by the UBA including a major one. The UBA claimed an attack after a long time in which, according to a statement by ISPR, six FC soldiers including a Junior Commissioned Officer (JCO) and a civilian driver embraced martyrdom in Pir Ghaib, Mach (Bolan district) on May 19th (*The News*, 2019).

3.6. Sindhi insurgent groups

The terrorist activities of Sindh-based separatist groups have increased since the coronavirus pandemic started in Pakistan. They have managed at least eight attacks since March 1st, 2020. The Interior Ministry banned the JSQM-A, Sindhudesh Liberation Army (SDLA), and Sindhudesh Revolutionary Army (SDRA) under the Ant-Terrorism Act 1997, arguing that "there are reasonable grounds to believe that the organisations are engaged in terrorism" in Sindh province (Syed, 2020).

The SDLA is an underground militant outfit linked with Shafi Burfat-led Jeay Sindh Muttahida Mahaz (JSMM), the only nationalist group to have announced a planned armed struggle. In 2013, the Interior Ministry banned the JSMM for its involvement in province-wide violence and placed Burfat, who lives in Europe in self-exile, on its list of wanted people. A few years back, Syed Asghar Shah, an SDLA leader hailing from Jamshoro district, abandoned the SDLA after developing differences with Burfat over funds and leadership, and formed his own outfit, the SDRA. In the beginning, both militant outfits were carrying out attacks on law enforcement personnel, railway tracks, gas pipelines, and electricity pylons as well as undertaking targeted killing based on ethnicity. "But since the start of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)-linked development projects, the group has started attacking the Chinese nationals using roadside improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in the province." Luckily, no Chinese

national has died in the attacks in the province so far (Rehman, 2020).

4. Shift in Targets and Tactics?

A little variation has been witnessed in the tactics of the terrorists during the coronavirus pandemic, but it is difficult to causally link this variation with the changing situation. In 56 terrorist attacks, the terrorists employed IED blasts including a significant number of vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VB-IEDs) mostly in form of motorcycle and cycle blasts. Few years back that was a pertinent attack tactic employed by the Baloch insurgents. But now it seems some other groups, including the Taliban, are tending to rely on the tactic, which is apparently easier to perpetrate and involves less reliance on suicide bombers whilst having a similar impact.

Target killing in North and South Waziristan is also on the rise. While there is no evidence to say these killings are terrorist attacks, yet locals suspect that some militant groups could be involved in these incidents with an aim to make a comeback. In a high profile such killing, on May 1st, Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) leader Arif Wazir received bullet injuries when unidentified persons opened fire on him near his house in South Waziristan. A day after he succumbed to his injuries at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) in Islamabad (*The News*, 2020).

5. Afghanistan and Terrorism in Pakistan

The Afghan Taliban surprised the world when they said that Al-Qaeda did not exist in Afghanistan (Joscelyn, 2020). The Taliban have a history of employing the 'denial' as a war tactic but denying the presence of Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan reflects on the Taliban's political compulsions, which may bring them at a crossroad. Reacting to the Taliban statement, the US Central Command's top general, Marine Gen. Kenneth F. McKenzie, had warned that he would not recommend a full withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan unless the Taliban demonstrate that they no longer support Al-Qaeda forces there (Tolo News, 2020).

The Taliban have been using the 'denial strategy' effectively against friends and foes since they first came into power during the late 1990s. For instance, the terrorists of violent sectarian group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) were running their training camps in Afghanistan. However, quite surprisingly, whenever Pakistan demanded the extradition of these terrorists, the Taliban denied their presence on the Afghan soil. Even now the Afghan Taliban do not publicly acknowledge their close bond with the Pakistani militant groups including the TTP. A recent report from the UN's Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team has indicated that Pakistani militant groups, mainly the TTP, are operating inside Afghanistan with the permission and support of the Afghan Taliban. In many instances, they remain reluctant to act against the TTP and its affiliates despite Pakistan's apprehensions. The same report claimed that the Afghan

Taliban regularly consulted with Al-Qaeda during negotiations with the United States, and Al-Qaeda gave a nod to the deal.

The Taliban have also given the impression that severing ties with Al-Qaeda is in process, but there is no proof of it. Five hundred to 600 members of Al-Qaeda are known to still be in Afghanistan, and have become a strategic burden for the Taliban, who believe they have secured the best possible deal with the US. Many believe that the Taliban's continuing ties with Al-Qaeda could sabotage the peace process.

Three points need to be considered. First, if the Taliban have consulted with Al-Qaeda during their talks with the US, it is not possible that the US would not have been aware of it. If Al-Qaeda guarantees that it has no intention to launch terrorist assaults on NATO members, the US can tolerate the group though it would be difficult to guarantee this.

Secondly, the Taliban were ousted from power in 2001 because of Al-Qaeda, and it may be considered against their political and ideological code to disconnect with the group for whom they had sacrificed their government and fought a long war. Thirdly, breaking with Al-Qaeda may also cause an internal crisis within the rank and file of the Taliban. The two groups have also built strong family bonds through inter-marriages.

In that context, denial seems a good option for the Taliban, but their similar attitude towards the TTP and other Pakistani militant groups may have other factors behind it as well. Apart from the prevailing theory that the TTP is a strategic tool in the hands of the Afghan Taliban against Pakistan, the Afghan Taliban have engaged Pakistani Taliban in their war. The fact that the TTP has carried out terrorist activities in Pakistan may cast doubt on such observations. However, when it comes to power-sharing in Afghanistan, the Pakistani Taliban might be contenders too as they served during the Taliban regime in the 1990s. If that happens, Afghanistan and the Afghan Taliban will become prime attractions for madrasah graduates in Pakistan, particularly in the country's border regions, revealing a nightmare scenario for Pakistan (Rana, 2020).

6. The Policy Challenges and Responses

6.1 Amnesty for TTP as an option?

The government is also facing the dilemma about what to do with the Pakistani Taliban militants who are sheltered across the border and may want to relocate to their native towns in tribal districts. A BBC report quoted the defense analyst Brigadier (Retd.) Mehmood Shah to claim that about 9,000 Taliban militants wanted to come back to their native towns in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa after seeking a forgiveness and promising to quit violence. Local accounts from North and South Waziristan have been claiming that they have seen some of those in their areas who had remained in the past attached to militant groups (BBC Urdu, 2020). However, not all the Taliban in these areas, were attached to the TTP; nor the Taliban are currently so strong to challenge the writ of the state as they used to do before the operation Zarb-e-Azab was launched in 2014. Still, the government and local administration will have to develop a policy on how to deal

with the militants, including those operating discretely in tribal districts and those living in Afghanistan and willing to come back.

6.2 FATF and curbing terror financing

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) in June 2018 put Pakistan on its 'grey list' or in list of countries described by FATF as the ones with inadequate control over curbing money laundering and terrorism financing. Pakistan is currently working with the global money laundering and terrorist-financing watchdog to comply with 27-points Action Plan.

The coronavirus pandemic has provided some relief to Pakistan in fulfilling the provisions of the Action Plan it has agreed with the FATF; Pakistan will now submit its due-in-June compliance report in September. Pakistan's case was also not taken up at FATF's last meeting held in Paris on June 24, 2020. However, Pakistan will have to show "significant and sustainable progress" to get off the grey list.

In one of his briefings to the Prime Minister, former Federal Interior Minister Ijaz Shah claimed that Pakistan had met most of the conditions set by the FATF (*Express Tribune*, 2020a). The minister also stated that his ministry had frozen 976 movable and immovable properties of proscribed outfits, and taken over several schools, colleges, hospitals, dispensaries, ambulances etc., of the proscribed organizations into government's control.

The Pakistan government has taken some significant measures to meet the requirements of the FATF. First, Interior Ministry has set up a single-template database to curb money laundering and terror financing, which will also facilitate the provincial efforts for countering terrorism and terror financing. Secondly, an Interior Ministry cell, which was established to implement the FATF recommendations, has been activated again. The cell functions were temporarily suspended because of the coronavirus. Thirdly, the lower and upper houses of Parliament have approved the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Amendment Bill, 2020 and the Anti-Terrorism Act Amendment Bill, 2020, in an effort to fulfill the FATF requirements (*Express Tribune*, 2020b).

On the other side, the anti-terrorism courts have sped up the process of hearing the terror financing cases. For one, anti-terrorism courts have recently sentenced top Jamaatud Daawa (JuD) leadership including its head Hafiz Saeed and his brother-in-law Abdul Rehman Makki, among others, in cases of terrorist financing (*The Nation*, 2020). It is essential that these actions against banned groups are sustained and developed into a strong resolve of the state because they do not merely relate to FATF provisions but are indeed integral to Pakistan's national security interests.

In a related development on curbing terror financing, the Federal Investigative Agency (FIA) took control of five properties of Afghan Taliban chief Mullah Akhtar Mansour, who

was killed in a drone strike along the Pakistan-Iran border on May 21, 2016, had purchased these properties, including plots and houses for auction in Karachi (Sahoutra, 2020).

There are multiple areas and factors, which make Pakistan vulnerable to terrorist financing. At the same time, there are challenges related to governance and law enforcement, which affect the state's responses to curb terrorism financing. These challenges and vulnerabilities, both transactional and structural, raise the risk profile of Pakistan. They have also "led [among other factors] the FATF to put Pakistan on 'grey list'; [and] the country also holds the critical risk of being blacklisted" (NIOC, 2020). Experts assert that the "approach and plan of eradicating terrorist financing needs to be developed beyond FATF," and should entail sustained policy endeavors (NIOC, 2020).

7. Security Challenges during the Pandemic

Pakistan's internal security landscape is complicated due to both internal and external threats. The internal security dimension not only includes threats from hardcore radical and sectarian terrorist groups but also from groups that promote religious extremism and intolerance. The latter pose a different sort of critical challenge, because such groups can mobilize their support bases to cause more damage to the economy, social cohesion of society and global image of the country.

The pandemic has created space for sectarian and radical groups, who tend to spread hate including in cyberspace. In the beginning of the pandemic, while Sunni extremists and activists blamed the Shia pilgrims returning from Iran for the spread of the Covid-19 infection in Pakistan, the Shia activists accused the Tablighi Jamaat tours and gatherings for the spread of the virus. Posts and messages rife with sectarian hate speech also went viral on social media platforms.

The Wall Street Journal (WSJ) recently reported about the removal of significant number of names of suspected violent actors from the terrorism watch list maintained by the National Counter-Terrorism Authority (NACTA) of Pakistan. Pakistan Annual Security Report 2019, prepared by Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), had also highlighted the need for developing a National Databank (NDB) synchronized with the police departments of the country, National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), NACTA, FIA and State Bank of Pakistan. The report recommended that the Databank should have following features:

- A synchronized National Red Book, containing updated information about the wanted, suspected and arrested terrorists and their groups.
- The national databank could be divided into two categories, one for public consumption, which would include details about terrorists and their activities and second dedicated for the police and law enforcement agencies containing

details of bank accounts, financial transactions data, property and other assets of the suspected and active terrorists whose names had been placed under the Fourth Schedule.

- A common website can be developed under the supervision of NACTA and all police and relevant authorities could be bound to provide updates/information on weekly or monthly bases.
- There is a need that all provinces have their forensic labs linked with National Forensic Laboratory (NFL) in Islamabad.
- Capacity building training programs for the Counter Terrorism Departments needed to be developed and they must know the best practices around the world to avoid any mishandling of the sensitive issues.

As noted earlier in the report, Covid-19 has increased vulnerabilities of people in terms of provision of health, shelter, food and other amenities of life. Similarly, a sense of insecurity could increase due to economic deprivation and the state's failure to provide adequate social safety nets; preoccupation of the security, particularly due to police force's pandemic-related duties; and restriction of mobility to maintain demand and supply of things, etc. Violent extremists could try to exploit these vulnerabilities, mainly with the purpose to add to instability and insecurity by carrying out terrorist attacks. In a way, that would also serve the militants' purpose by adding to people's anti-government grievances.

The government will have to adopt a clear policy against non-violent extremist groups. The National Action Plan (NAP) had put some pressure on religious extremists including those propagating hate speeches, but in recent years, its implementation has been faltering. The government should revamp its focus on NAP besides enhancing counter-terrorism vigilance and action.

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Profile

About NIOC Pakistan

National Initiative against Organized Crime (NIOC), in collaboration with the Global Initiative Resilience Fund is the first-ever initiative in Pakistan launched by a group of committed professionals and experts with law enforcement, media and other public service backgrounds. NIOC aims to build community resilience and influence public policy to combat organized crime. Initially launched as a pilot project with effect from November 1, 2019, it aims to jump start not only the discussion around transnational organized crime in Pakistan, but also to facilitate the government work.

With a complex governance structure having multiple layers of stakeholders, the criminal justice system and law enforcement apparatus require better coordination and capacity building. NIOC will try to identify the gaps and suggest improvements in the system.

National Initiative against Organized Crime (NIOC)-Pakistan is housed within the Pak Institute for Peace Studies in Islamabad, Pakistan's capital, which sits at the heart of the country's international linkages.

What is Pak Institute for Peace Studies? It is a registered, legal entity that functions as a non-political statutory institution to promote the rule of law focusing issues linked to peace and counter extremism, including advocacy against organized crime. It is operationally independent and managed by dedicated professionals offering their services for the cause of good governance.

Link between NIOC and PIPS: Pak Institute of Peace Studies will serve as the secretariat of NIOC-Pakistan. This will yield two-pronged advantages: increase NIOC's legitimacy given the institutionalised, statutory basis of the reputable think tank and rely on its experienced human resource to execute the proposed programme. Although based at the Institute, NIOC will remain an independent initiative, which is non-aligned, politically neutral and non-denominational.

NIOC's ambit, membership: Although based in Islamabad, NIOC is a nation-wide initiative aimed at facilitating creation of a national strategy on combating transnational organised crime in Pakistan. NIOC itself will primarily comprise of retired senior government servants, particularly with a law enforcement background, which will bring in their own diverse networks across different tiers of government and police services.

NIOC's Governance Structure: NIOC will be a three-tier organisation, including:

Advisory Board (AB): The AB consists of President, Members, Director, Secretary, Deputy Director and Member Administration and Finance. It is responsible for providing overall guidance and direction for NIOC.

The Director and Secretariat: The Director will be the executive head of NIOC. He will also be an ex-officio member of the AB. He shall be authorised to carry out all acts that further the aims of NIOC, presenting and approving work plans of NIOC, raising funds, etc. This also includes power to be the signing authority for the organisation and its

resources. He shall be assisted by the Secretariat, which in addition to the Director, will comprise of a Deputy Director, Secretary, Treasurer and other members of staff, which shall be either drawn from the human resource at PIPS or hired separately. The Secretariat will also be supported by a Manager Administration and Finance.

Summary of Proposed Initiative

Pakistan remains a country of concern within the context of transnational organised crime. It is not only on the frontline of the Afghan war, but also has differences, often detrimental to regional peace, with India over cross-border terrorism. Incidence of drug production, human trafficking and migrant smuggling come together to form an alarming brew of adverse factors, which necessitates focus on combating transnational organised crime. Due to recent concerns raised by FATF, linkages of transnational organised crime within the context of the terrorist financing have come into the fore. These cross-border networks are a cause of alarm given the propensity of organised crime to lend its infrastructure to terrorist activities. Therefore, with a new government and an increased international focus, this is an opportune to organise a network, which facilitates and guides efforts to combat transnational crime and strengthens international collaboration.

NIOC Pakistan, in collaboration with the Global Initiative, aims to pilot an initiative in this regard under the Resilience Fund. Primarily consisting of retired and former law enforcement officials and experts, NIOC aims to build community resilience and influence public policy to combat organised crime. The pilot will be for duration of 6 months, with an aim to jumpstart not only the discussion around transnational organised crime in Pakistan, but also to facilitate the government's work. With a complex governance structure with multiple layers of the stakeholders, an archaic criminal justice system and law enforcement institutions operating in silos, technical assistance on how to commence with policy formation on the issue will be a key deliverable under the proposed pilot.

Advisory Board

Tariq Parvez

President Advisory Board, NIOC:

Former Director General Federal Investigation Agency

Starting his career in 1973 as Assistant Superintendent of Police, Mr. Tariq Parvez served the police service of Pakistan for more than 35 years with distinction and honor. His contributions in the field of counter terrorism as a police officer are unparalleled. He has been awarded the prestigious national award of Sitara- e- Imtiaz (Star of Excellence) by the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for his immensely valuable contributions to peace and security of the country. He has served as head of the Federal Investigation Agency and also as National Coordinator, National Counter Terrorism Authority. His contributions as head of the Counter Terrorism Department of Punjab laid the foundations for an organized and highly professional counter terrorism efforts in the province of Punjab, which is host to about 100 million people. He has also served as Home Minister of the province of Punjab. He advises multiple international organizations in the field of counter terrorism, investigations, organized crimes and police reforms.

Zahid Hussain

Member NIOC AB:

Security Analyst

Zahid Hussain is a Pakistani journalist, writer and television analyst. Zahid Hussain is a correspondent covering Pakistan and Afghanistan for The Times of London and The Wall Street Journal. His work has included assignments for Newsweek, Associated Press, The Economist and several other international publications. He also writes regularly for Pakistani daily newspaper Dawn and Newsline.

Samina Ahmed

Member NIOC AB:

Samina Ahmed is Senior Adviser Asia and Project Director, South Asia, for the International Crisis Group. Her work focuses on security and stability issues in South Asia, including security sector and criminal justice reform; insurgencies, militancy and jihadism; democratization, authoritarianism and governance; refugees and humanitarian crises; and the risks of regional conflict.

Ahmed has a Ph.D. in Political Science and an MA in International Relations from the Australian National University. Prior to joining Crisis Group, she was a research fellow at the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University and senior research analyst at the Institute of Regional Studies, Islamabad. She was a Peace Fellow at New York

University, Abu Dhabi, and a visiting researcher at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington DC, the Stockholm Peace Research Institute, and Oxford University.

Zubair Habib

Chief, CPLC Sindh Karachi, Member NIOC AB:

Community outreach.

Mr. Zubair Habib heads the Citizens-Police Liaison Committee (CPLC) Sindh as its Chief since July 2015. Mr. Habib is one of the founding members of CPLC Sindh. His association with CPLC goes back to 1989. CPLC also helps fight crime such as Kidnapping for Ransom, serious and gender based violent crimes, etc. It also maintains and analyses crime data to share with police for collaboration to fight organized crimes. CPLC also incorporates data of First Information Reports (FIRs) and data of prisoners lodged in jails of Sindh with biometrics. In 2006, the Government of Pakistan conferred the award of “Tamgha-e-Imtiaz” to Mr. Zubair Habib, in recognition of his services in fighting crime involving communities and through supporting the law enforcement departments. Mr. Zubair Habib has also served on the Board of Directors of multiple public and private sector organizations.

Jawaid Akhtar QPM

Member NIOC AB:

Jawaid is a Pakistan origin former Police Officer who retired as the Deputy Chief Constable of West Yorkshire Police, the fourth largest in the United Kingdom. As an Assistant Chief Constable he held the Operations Support portfolio before taking over the Specialist Crime (Major & Organised Crime) portfolio which included the Counter Terrorism Unit for the North East of England. He was also a member of a number of national working groups under the Association of Chief Police Officers.

As Deputy Chief Constable he was responsible for the overall performance of the force as well as strategic planning, corporate development and professional standards.

He was awarded the Queens Police Medal (QPM) for distinguished police service in the Queen’s Birthday Honours List in 2011.

He holds a B.Sc. (Hons) in Aeronautical Engineering and has a Diploma in Criminology from Cambridge University.

Jawaid has strong family and professional connections with Pakistan and has visited Pakistan on a number of occasions on professional assignments including a number of murder investigations.

He has recently been appointed as an Independent Member of the Parole Board (Ministry of Justice).

He is a keen flyer and holds a Private Pilot’s Licence.

Fasi Zaka**Member NIOC AB:**

Communications expert.

Fasi Zaka currently works on reform projects in education and rule of law in the provinces of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) in Pakistan. His most recent publication is a book chapter for the recently published Folio Books Rethinking Pakistan: A 21st Century Perspective, and has worked professionally in the area of research into radicalization. Until recently he co-hosted a political talk show on Dawn News TV, and continues to host one of Pakistan's longest running radio shows, The Fasi Zaka & Friends Show on FM91. He was a Rhodes Scholar from Pakistan to Oxford University, and a Young Global Leader of the World Economic Forum.

NIOC DIRECTORATE

Tariq Khosa
Director

Tariq Khosa has been actively involved in law enforcement since start of his service in 1973. During about four decades of serving in various supervisory and command positions in Police Service of Pakistan, he has actively been engaged in structural and operational reforms in the policing and justice sectors.

Before retirement, his last assignment as Federal Secretary of Narcotics Control Division in 2010-11 placed him at the pinnacle of government service in Pakistan.

He served as Director General Federal Investigation Agency in 2009. As head of National Central Bureau, INTERPOL he won elections to serve as Delegate for Asia in the Executive Committee of INTERPOL from 2009 to 2012 and contributed to international police cooperation. He was actively associated in establishment of Interpol Global Complex of Innovation in Singapore.

He had the distinction of serving as the Police Chief of Balochistan Province in 2007 and brought the entire province in police jurisdiction replacing a tribal policing system administered by the Levies since long.

He graduated from the National Defence College Islamabad completing his Masters in Defence and Strategic Studies in 2004–05.

He was a Hubert Humphrey Fellow under Fulbright Exchange Program at the Graduate School of Public Affairs in University of Washington Seattle in the United States of America in 1987-88.

He was part of the Working Group that drafted the Counterterrorism National Action Plan launched by the Government of Pakistan on Jan 1, 2015 and currently serves as Member of the Committee of Experts for National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA).

He is a Member of the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, a Geneva-based network of professionals.

He is also the author of two books: “The Faltering State: Pakistan’s Internal Security Landscape” (Oxford University Press, 2017); and “Inconvenient Truths: Pakistan’s Governance Challenges” (Lightstone Publishers, 2019). His first book won the national Best Book of Year Award in Non-Fiction Category in 2019
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Muhammad Amir Rana

Secretary

Muhammad Amir Rana is a security and political analyst and the director of Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS). He has worked extensively on issues related to counter-terrorism, counter-extremism, and internal and regional security and politics. He was a founder member of PIPS when it was launched in January 2006 and had previously worked as a journalist with various Urdu and English daily newspapers from 1996 until 2004. He has given lectures at several universities and security institutes in Pakistan and abroad. Amir has published widely in national and international journals, professional publications and magazines. He writes regularly for Dawn, Pakistan's leading English newspaper. He is also the editor of Pakistan Annual Security Report, and PIPS research journal 'Conflict and Peace Studies'.
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Muhammad Ali Nekokara

Deputy Director

Muhammad Ali Nekokara has over 25 years of experience as a manager and a leader in the Civil and the Police Service of Pakistan and has served in various police operations and staff assignments in Punjab and Islamabad. He is currently working as Team Lead with Adam Smith International on a Rule of Law Program and supporting the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the implementation of the Rule of Law Roadmap. He has also worked with the Government of Sindh and played a major role in the development of the Rule of Law Roadmap which has been approved by the cabinet for implementation. He has worked for multiple international organizations including UNODC, UNDP, USIP, GIZ, Global Initiative and DAI. He has authored publications for PILDAT on Police Order 2002, Police Budgets in Pakistan- A comparative Analysis, Policy Recommendations for Police Reforms, Media and Police, and for PILDAT/UNDP on SDG 16 relating Accountability and Corruption. He also contributes as an Op-ed writer to Dawn, The Express Tribune and The Nation. He holds master degree in Public Administration from Harvard University and in Criminal Justice Policy from the London School of Economics and Political Science.
He can be accessed at: mali1803@gmail.com

Hassan Sardar

Admin & Finance Manager

Hassan Sardar obtained his degree of MBA (Finance) from the Comsats Institute of Information Technology, Islamabad. Before that, he did his BBA (Hons.) in Finance from

the University of Sargodha. He attended various workshops, seminars and conferences including USAID “Grantee orientation workshop” and “Operations Focused Training,” in Islamabad, and “Seminar on Dynamics of Youth and Terrorism: Understanding and Countering the Issue” in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Mr Sardar is a development professional with more than 10 years of professional experience in the Gulf and Pakistan in various fields including financial management, human resource management and administration. He worked with many national and international organizations and successfully implemented many development projects in Pakistan. Besides it, Mr Sardar is an excellent team builder with strong communication skills. hassanpipss@gmail.com

Ammar Hussain Jaffri

Consultant

Mr Ammar Jaffri has over 40 years of experience in Governance, Digital Forensics, Information Technology, Security, Education and Philanthropy. He has served and led different departments in the Federal Government of Pakistan and has been recognized with some of the highest industry honors in Pakistan as well as internationally. He serves as the Pakistan point of contract for a number of international initiatives on Cyber Security like the Microsoft Law Enforcement Forum G-8 24/7 High Tech Crime Network the OIC-CERT, SAARC CERT, APCERT, Council of the European Union and with INTERPOL. He retired as the Additional Director General of the Federal Investigation Agency of Pakistan in 2010 and is currently engaged in various public and private projects in a private capacity. He is a well-known speaker on a wide range of subjects including Information Security, Electric Governance, Business Continuity Planning, Electronic Banking and emerging trends in communication. Mr Jaffri’s goal is to improve lives in the rural areas of Pakistan by leveraging information and communication technologies.

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Kashif Noor

Consultant

Kashif Noon has over 23 years of national and international experience of working with civil service, UNOPS and Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Institute; an intergovernmental body of 11 member countries. His professional work streams have been rule of law, governance and international cooperation. He has worked extensively on reforms of rule of law supply chain; police, prosecution, bar, judiciary and prisons. He

remained engaged with Civil Society of Pakistan whilst working in various capacities. He has created a network of CSOs on generating demand for rule of law. He has remained National Project Manager, Head of Programs and Head of Strategic Planning Division at UNOPS, DAI and CAREC Institute respectively. He has a Master's degree in Public Policy from Queen Mary College, University of London, Master's in International Relations from Quaid-e-Azam University Islamabad and a Post Graduate Diploma in International Human Rights Law. He periodically, writes articles and travel pieces for, The News on Sunday and Tribune.

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Saroop Ijaz

Legal Expert

Saroop Ijaz is a lawyer and a Senior Counsel for Asia, Human Rights Watch (HRW). He is also a member of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP). He has been appointed as amicus curiae in many significant constitutional cases such as the YouTube ban, Christian divorce act and the challenge to the local government act 2013 amongst others. He has formerly been the Chairperson of the Lahore High Court Bar Committee on International Human Rights. He has been a consultant and an advisor for the European Union, British Council, International Commission for Jurists, and various other organizations.

