
Discussion Paper-3

Possibility of Radicalization in Police

(Post Afghan Taliban victory in Afghanistan)

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Prelude

Rise of Taliban in Afghanistan in post-US withdrawal is obviously going to have serious repercussions in Pakistan in particular Police department. The two earlier world powers intervention created serious law and order situations. Thousands died and many thousands got maimed in process. Drugs, weapons, and militancy became norm. The thoughts discussed in succeeding paras are outcome of deliberations held on 'Possibility of Radicalization' in police on Pakistan Police Forum. This is a study based on debate on the prospect of radicalization in ranks and files of law enforcement agencies with suggestive measures to overcome the eventuality in case of such development.

Existing Environment

Pakistan does not have unique culture or identity that goes back to thousands of years like Mesopotamia, Sassanids, Greeks and many others exist here. By birth we are associated with families and tribes and in broader sense belong to an ethnic group speaking language. This is not a nation nor nations are built on such genealogical perceptions. Nations are built on political visions and socio-economic ideologies as preached by our nation builders Sir Syed, Jinnah, Iqbal, and which has not been actualized.

The visions and strength of ideologies depend on their being dynamic and their being friendly to change and progression, not on their being static and rigid. Pakistan failed to explore dynamism which is mass's fault and not a flaw in our culture and rich history. Only indigenously cultivated solutions and not the imported ones can in reality work.

State Of Affairs

Rise of Taliban in Afghanistan in post-US withdrawal is obviously going to have serious repercussions in our country as well. Amjad Islam Amjad poetry is Hasbe Hall of the group and other morbid environment around the blast. But last lines are full of hope. "Let us not live in the world of abstraction and self-righteousness. Who shall provide " Johar e kamil" who can lead this huge herd of people to that goal? A country with only about 25% education (amongst them largely likhey jahil bhi hain) cannot equal the desired strategic vision.

Any good idea if not translated into action is as good as a to be staked in a library along with the other literature of wisdom. There are huge issues of poverty, marginalization, internecine conflicts with no solutions in sight. Education is in SHAMBLES due to multiple systems going on unchecked. social disintegration on the increase, A rat race for money irrespective of means, political polarization at a neck breaking speed. It is a case of dream gone sour in Pakistan.

There is a thin line between gaining political control of a state by a group by violent means, using terrorism as a tool and countering an imperialist occupation force /power to liberate the country by employing violent Jihad. Jihad in the former is unjustifiable but in the latter legal and permissible. They create room for a sacred duty to protect the state from imperialistic hegemony.

US withdrawal and rising of Taliban is obviously going to have serious repercussions in our country as well and will bring impact on factors of radicalization in police force as well as in armed forces. Let us not forget Rockets were fired on Parliament House, ISI office and CMLA house in 80's. Similarly, 22 persons were killed in Sargodha by a so-called peer and his accomplices was one of ex gunman to PM Nawaz sharif.

Emergence of radicalization

In 1989 when Soviets were leaving there were dozens of bombings in NWFP especially Peshawar and when the exodus was complete everything stopped suddenly as if there was nothing. We enjoyed calm for next ten years. Radicalization begun and was promoted during 80's setting in Pakistan and Afghanistan. No one bridled the trend or tried to in the beginning. End-Result were Taliban conquered Afghanistan hosting all radical groups and Pakistan acquiesced to the victory. The thought carried by masses matured with maturing of the then youngsters. Jihadist thought was prevalent in forces and crept into the populace. Police being reflection of society could not be isolated and hence faced blunt.

Somehow many years ago Islamabad police the top cop, during orderly room directed the delinquent officials to go for Tableegh for certain period according to the severity of the charge and then bring Parchi of "Chilla "and then he would just be warned and upon bringing parchi from certain Imam Masjid SCN were used to be filed. There is no denying the fact that Monster of Extremism has already seeped deep in our Psyche in the form of Cast, Creed, religious & worst of all Sectarianism

NISP impediments

The first National Internal Security policy of the country was notified in 2014-18, with main emphasis on CDP with kinetic and CRP non-kinetic spheres as linchpins; though some work was done in the first area, the later was totally neglected. This is the area where we must fight internal conditions against radicalization including that of coming up with an effective counter-narrative.

The NISP 2014-18 was somewhat implemented but other 2018-23 was hardly put in place. NAP in Dec 2014 was formulated in the last days of PML-N govt, so the PTI govt did not give any importance to for its implementation. General approach is to have predominantly kinetic and whereas the non-kinetic aspect of CT/CVE was ignored.

Ground realities

Organization often errs in identifying sources of radicalization. In age of social media, it is hard to locate lone wolves. Even few such individuals can be dangerous implications. So, more engagement with rank and file becomes more imperative. In contemporary literature of statehood, power and strength of state lies not in coercive arm but in the rule of law, democracy, legitimacy, transparency, and inclusivity where diversity is considered strength and difference of opinion a healthy sign of civilization.

With heavy heart, one has had to say if the regimes are staffed with corrupt governments, a justice system incapable of delivery, an authoritarian rather than representative governments and weak economy, problems are not going to be solved by coercive military means. Pakistan needs to build strong federation, democratic traditions, inclusive society where everyone has a share and where all have representation where culture and faith should have due respect with visionary and progressive leadership. If poverty, population explosion, multiple educational systems continue to spell our national roadmap, one is destined to doom.

Prevailing views

If Taliban succeed take over, lot of people will buy their point of views and start following their footsteps. In our electoral history, religious parties have never won more than 14% of votes cast so in actual sense, they are underrepresented. On the contrary in India religious party BJP rules but they are so called secular state and we are other way round. People in Pakistan do not favor religious parties and majority population have modern and moderate thinking. Let us not toe any country rather find our specific unique solutions to our own unique problems.

Perspective on radicalize

It should be considered highly sensitive and delicate matter to label someone as radicalized and be undertaken with utmost discretion and caution. Stereotypes such as someone beard or being very religious should not be readily used to label radical. Police leadership should have clear sense of what radicalization connotes. There should be a checklist of indicators which can help place identified suspected radicalized officers in different categories.

There should be internal surveillance system to assess suspected officers against those indicators. The process of de radicalization and rehabilitation should be well thought of not alienating mainstream or generating undue sympathy or solidarity. The whole process needs to be handled with extreme care and caution. Otherwise, it may backfire.

Labelling is a dangerous trend in any organization especially for security related services. Especially when it is a matter of mindset. Deradicalization programs are subjected to reality check and are more

a talk of desires than pragmatic outcome. Its sensitivity must be emphasized repeatedly. The religious elements can misrepresent the effort in social media, leading to a terrible backlash.

In the existing environment in the country some of the members of the force are likely to be radicalized. In addition, close association of the police leadership with the men under their command is key to deal with this challenge. Regular darbar, mess meetings, timely orderly room and frequent inspection of the lines and police stations are some of the tried and tested methods to create a relationship of trust and confidence in the command. Deal constabulary men with understanding and compassion.

These radicalized elements in police, on one hand, are threat and potent embarrassment due to their prejudicial conduct, but more serious concern is if they become “moles”.

Aftermath

The US has shut shop in Afghanistan and left the field open for a Taliban resurgence. The Taliban claim control of over eighty percent of Afghanistan. Albeit an exaggerated claim as in many of the provinces the Taliban only control strategic points and border crossings.

The formation of a stable government by the Taliban in Afghanistan seems unlikely mainly because the structure of the Taliban is devoid of effective central control, and they do not have the resources to run the country’s economy which has been dependent on foreign aid for years. Consequently, the expected scenario is no different from the nineties when warlords and militias held control of various areas of Afghanistan acting as proxy for foreign interests.

It is a cause for legitimate concern for its neighbors. As the proxy war rages foreign intelligence agencies will activate sleeper cells and enlist extremist elements as well as mercenary supporters in law enforcement agencies.

Outlook

Economy, education, and culture of tolerance for diversity could be vital. Saudis and Irani’s are religious zealots and represent two extremes of Islam. Pakistan is and has been a land of Sufis and ill-suit Iran and Saudi versions so far as our cultural history goes. China is also a tyrant communist regime.

How radicalization is done

For Radicalization, there is need for a cyber scout who is to identify potential candidates for the radicalization. After identification is to expose them to Jihadist propaganda. Once the recruiter find that person fit, he is moved to exclusive groups. Another the step is isolation, the recruit is isolated,

and the process of radicalization takes its roots. The recruit is exposed to more propaganda and indoctrinated. Once done he is ready for use in the Jihadist Missions for furtherance of agenda.

Scribe views

Afghanistan with Taliban will not augur well for an open society in Pakistan. There are already quite a few who subscribe to their worldview. Especially in tribal districts of KP where many people subscribe to ideology of Afghan Taliban. Such people may get emboldened with Taliban coming to power and yield to the same tactics of enforcing morality.

Difficult time for our areas bordering Afghanistan, the community around these areas is already inclined to Taliban's ideology, de-radicalization is not at possible, madrassas of the area are breeding places, culture of areas augmented it, only solution in short term is to improve security through joint efforts of all LEAs, emphasis on intelligence network, efficiently planned and executed

Deradicalization steps

If given the essential PRIORITY by the Govts and Institutions like the Provincial IGPs, the SBs, the CTDs, the DPOs and not the least by the SHOs chances to thwart are possible. Besides the Intelligence Bureau (IB) can contribute significantly to identify the radicalized personnel in Police and its branches. The task is Herculean now, for its neglect over decades from its inception onwards but it is not inevitable and yet doable.

NACTA and others can supplement this effort, if only such plans & efforts, are not allowed to meet, the fate of NAP. The Sponsors of Radicalization need to be check mated effectively. If the Agents of Radicalization are not adequately prevented, the flood of Radicalization will be unstoppable. This Evil should be nipped at its various originating Sources.

Background check of yester years before calling them on the job or assigning them constabulary numbers both from the view of eligibility and suitability. Compulsory screening is essential to avoid episodes like Mumtaz Qadri. Post recruitment system of individuals behavior in constabulary upon which the stress is minimal or nonexistent now.

Their conduct and behavior in the field and duty must be monitored proactively as a stated policy. A system of warnings be evolved on the subject and each deviation be recorded for him to explain. In case of recurrence appropriate decision about his retention in service be taken. Vigilance along with training and counselling from time to time, is the key to counter this situation.

Other Possible checks:

IQ tests to ascertain their mental level. Religion based tests to know their inclination level. Their views and observations on a situation e.g., bomb blast, death of governor. Personal Traits (these are usually common for example in leaders or murderers, there are some common traits, which need be noted. Family history (any previous criminal history in family, any madrasah link or education). Their needs and desires need to be known, can be known through colleagues.

Information can be ascertained from colleagues working together and observations of their superior by seeing their work drive, nature of person. Monitoring their social media accounts. Background screening by intelligence agencies. Check for association with extremist institutions/persons. Check for isolated behaviors which does not include normal set of friends and associates. Check if financial position can or is being exploited. Monitor social media. Enlist opinions on sensitive topics during orderly room and group discussions.

Curbing radicalization in police

Psychological assessment during recruitment. Appropriate training of not less than a year to blend properly the young recruit in ways of the force. Ensure age of recruitment to less than 21. Barracks be closely watched for any abnormal or hyper constable. Mosque friends should keep eye on colleagues.

Keep some check on social media accounts of policemen showing delinquency or hard-liner views. Profiling of employees in the light of psychological testing and their posting / career planning in the light of career profiling made thereof. Strict monitoring/ vigilance of all employees at all tiers.

It needs to be mandatory for all officers to give a note regarding activities/ interests/ inclinations of subordinates in pen-picture of their report, so that those could be regularly examined / analyzed on annual basis and at the time of promotion. Family background / relevant particulars of family members / relatives of each officer need to be obtained for maintaining family profile of each officer at HQ (as is in practice in Armed Forces).

Counseling sessions/ capacity building through sessions with learned scholars would play a significant role in neutralizing / mitigating any extremist / eccentric tendencies in the employees. May be a database detected to be having tendency to be radicalized, can also be useful, so that they do not get posted to sensitive positions. Mumtaz Qadri was detected to be having such tendencies and even then, managed to get himself posted with Governor Punjab. Such lapses must be plugged by the police.

Developing new internal security policy with national consensus is the demand of the day to avoid any further radicalization, police being part of society. Even HDs across Pakistan used 2014-18 document

as what are their standards set, with leaving main counter narrative part aside, with low justifications for being unable to meet the challenges set there.

It is almost impossible for a policeman to live a secluded life like a soldier of Army and thus, if he lives, he is vulnerable to influences from elements in the society. To check such tendency, psychological assessments of the constabulary on biannual basis be carried out and those failing the reviews should be removed from the force.

A functional vigilance mechanism should be made to timely identify any individual who is in process of radicalization. This is extremely difficult as police has large command domains where it is almost impossible for managers to know each of them under commands personally. It is thus recommended that the police force be organized like a pyramid where span of control of the lowest manager must not exceed 5-7 individuals. This will reduce other administrative problems as well.

Leading ways

Having new national security policy based on national consensus. Such document shall be issued every 5 years to form bases for all organizations dealing with international national security challenges. Emphasizing the non-kinetic sphere in winning the counter-narrative against extremism and radicalization. Getting Pakistan out of FATF grey list, since there the litmus test will be much more than mere playing to the gallery. Surveillance and intelligence collection by the intelligence agencies of all officials and officers deployed on security duty.

All colleges universities specifically Islamic university and other likewise universities and Madrassas should be monitored regularly. Senior management might like to vet the police officers with VVIPs. The idea of periodical vetting after every 6 months is also very useful. Last but not the least, we need to fight radicalization in the society by streamlining our education system, increasing vigilance on Madaris and controlling the firebrand mullah element that promote extremism. This requires a strong will and a coordinated and dedicated effort. As long as radicalization prevails in the society, police will remain vulnerable both from inside and outside

Specimens of Deradicalization:

The only example of a successful de-radicalization program in recent times is that of China. And how they are doing it in their Western Muslim dominated regions is now quite well known. It could be done only in a Chinese society by a Communist party Govt. Saudi Arabia and Iran enforce very strict laws on religious practices. They keep a very strict control on the public life and can do it because both countries are ruled by dictatorial regimes and have a policy of zero tolerance. Pakistan unfortunately has a weak government which lacks the capacity to formulate well thought out policies and to implement the same effectively.

Radicalized segment

A certain percentage of population is always radicalized, and its strength of a society. What matters is that in what kind of cognitive matrix they are radicalized. A radical person cannot be deradicalized absolutely without the risk of loss of his/personality. However, good thing in this cognitive hardness is that it can be easily substituted with some other kind of hard but healthy cognitive matrix. For example, a returned religious extremist can be a good scientist, an artist, or a social worker. Hence, these points should stay alive in minds of policy interventions' designers.

Radicalization in police is possible. Not only due to the socioeconomic impact on contiguous zone but also the religious alignments. A creeping mind changing vibes are likely to be generated on daily basis news coming from Afghanistan regarding Taliban's victory.

Steps for dealing with this looming threat:

Secret survey and identification of radical elements and close monitoring of their sympathizer. Minimizing all sort of de motivation among employees by introducing performance-based career progression and incentives to enhance loyalty with the department. Promoting culture of nationalism by giving opportunity of further higher studies to the officials specially in KPK and Baluchistan. Assessment of gazette officers is also required hence all civil servants especially police officers may be subjected to psychological assessment at time of their MCMC, SMC and NMC. On the top of it Special branch should be held responsible for profiling of police officers, and it should report any doubtful cases immediately.

Case study findings

This might sound like a digression but falls in the same category as psychology. NSPP published a research last year, which they conducted themselves on OCCUPATIONAL STRESS. The findings indicated that mid-career professionals' grade 18 and 19, mostly PSP and PAS are the worst affected.

Based on that research NPA designed lectures and interactions to address this issue and experts delivered these sessions. Mid-career PSPs of 2 specialized MCMCs that were run here in 2020-21, attended these sessions. There were many mental health issues raised by these officers, which most of PSP officers are confronting.

The recent cases of suicides were also brought under discussion. Mental health must be given an ample space in our training facilities. 15_20% having psychological issues in the senior ranks of bureaucracy should be a cause for serious concern!

Recommendations

While going through recruitment process in the past, one never investigates such issues and only kept assessing their General Knowledge. Now though a set of questions are now prepared with the help of Psychiatrists and shared with Recruitment Boards.

To be honest one would have to start with senior leadership along with the Constabulary. Acknowledge with Open Heart that department needs some introspection and counseling. Establishing Units in every District, having presence in every Police Lines, Offices and other related establishments, on pattern of armed forces.

Manpower for this sensitive assignment should be selected with utmost care by a team comprising senior officers. They should be entitled to some extra perks and privileges to make it lucrative and should be for a fixed tenure. Now perhaps we have Cameras installed in all Police Establishments, Visitors can be scanned easily.

Khatibs and other mosque staff should be kept under watch physically as well as Electronically. These special units should also keep an eye on their activities around residences/ off duty. All members of our force are now IT Savvy and maintain email accounts and frequently use SMS, this Unit should keep a casual eye through IB/ SB.

Nothing denying the fact that it's difficult and involves laborious work but not impossible and we have to go through this to forestall any untoward & Tragic happening. Man, management is a very weak area of police. It was taught as an essential element for a commanding officer. Parades, Darbars, orderly rooms, personal interview of subordinates before writing an ACR were in practice years before but now ACRs pile up for years and candidates in promotion zones are officially notified to get their ACRs completed lest they shall not be considered.

How many times a constable or an upper subordinate encounters an officer in charge has a very low percentage. Gunmen are seen in streets in uniform in hotels for having got time out for lunch. Routine, routine, routine has eaten away discipline, close monitoring (even of personal staff) analysis of their conversation, Demeanor. Our casual attitude of administration has led us to present day embarrassments.

Remarks

It is hard to deradicalize a radicalized one. World over, deradicalization is an important part of the CT/CVE rank and file, may be more amenable to it. There are always chances of the success of a de radicalization of program aimed at preventing the more vulnerable segments from being radicalized.

Presently there is no will nor capability to do that. But one must stop them from spreading radicalization.