

“Non-state Actors to Counter Violent Extremism: a Case Study of Pakistan”
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Abstract

Violent extremism has manifest in myriad ways over the past decade in Pakistan. In response, the Pakistan state and military have sought to counter this extremism through different strategies. However, these have been fraught with problems, as the recent Qazi Faez Isa Commission Report on the Quetta attacks in August 2016 reveals. On the other hand, non-state actors – individuals along with local NGOs -- are engaging in various kinds of social negotiations and actions to lessen the violence and recapture indigenous cultural identity. These include efforts to introduce a peace studies curriculum in the Bacha Khan Foundation primary schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, painting over hate speech on walls in Karachi, intervening when minorities are under attack, Pashto poetry that is “anti-Mullahism,” substantive investigative reporting in Baluchistan, and community organizing among youth in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

This paper, based on original field research conducted in Pakistan in mid-2016 and January-March 2017, will analyze and assess the effectiveness of state and non-state entities in their respective efforts to counter violent extremism, using Pakistan as a case study. It will also address how they compete in their efforts to address these challenges and where cooperation between them might strengthen their effectiveness.