



POLICY BRIEF

# Paigham-E-Pakistan

**A National Narrative  
To Counter Terrorism  
And Extremism**

**YDFPK**

Youth Development Foundation (YDF)

Lahore | Islamabad | Multan | Karachi | Canada

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# BACKGROUND

After 9/11, terrorists attack on various establishments including schools, shopping centers, hospitals, and public offices took the lives of innocent people in Pakistan. Since 2001, country also suffered US \$126.79 Billion economic losses in the war against terror <sup>(1)</sup>.

In between this time period, insurgencies in some parts of the country erupted and a banned militant group rebelled against the state in District Swat <sup>(2)</sup>.

This insurgency also received support from other militant and extremist organizations operating in the other regions of the country <sup>(3)</sup>.

In 2009, political government launched Operation Rah-e-Rast to root out these militant forces from District Swat. After a lapse of five years, a joint military offensive launched against local and foreign militant forces in South Waziristan on December 16, 2014, terrorists attacked Army Public School that took the lives of 152 people including 132 children <sup>(4)</sup>.

After this gruesome attack, political and military leadership developed a 20-point National Action Plan focused on uprooting terrorism and countering extremism in the country <sup>(5)</sup>.

1980s observed a surge in the sectarianism that claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people by extremist and militant groups <sup>(6)</sup>.

Such extremist elements in the country gained strength as these were also supported by external forces intensifying the sectarian divide. Declaring other sects' infidels also add fuel to the ongoing sectarian tensions in the country. Consequently, everysect considering itself as righteous severely disturbed the social fabric of the society. Country has also experienced situations where fundamentalists gain power, took law into their hands, declare people infidels, and killed people in the name of faith<sup>(7)</sup>.

# PAIGHAM-E-PAKISTAN

Based on the underlying factors that contribute towards terrorism and extremism in the country, Islamic Research Institute (IRI) based in Islamic University Islamabad formed a national narrative called Paigham-e-Pakistan. With the consent of 1,829 clerics, key religious institutions, and Madrassa Boards in the country, an alternate narrative developed to counter deeply rooted religious beliefs and practices. Inspiration was drawn by Quranic verses and teachings of era of Prophet Muhammad PBUH. Positive interpretation of Quran, and practical life of Prophet has been intricately incorporated into the Paigham-e-Pakistan to base the alternate narrative to six different challenges to Pakistani nation <sup>(8)</sup>.

These include a) waging a war against Islamic State, b)terrorism against state and general public, c) Sectarian Divide, d) misinterpretation of Jihad, e) taking law into one's hands and f) disregarding national citizen charter <sup>(9)</sup>.

As a result of the process, a joint declaration was issued which is in consonance with the constitution of Pakistan and Quranic teachings.

- **T**he 1973 constitution of Pakistan is Islamic and democratic. Every citizen of Pakistan shall have to fulfill its oath of loyalty to the country.
- **E**very citizen of the country has a guarantee to fundamental rights within the parameters of the law in accordance with the constitution of Islamic republic of Pakistan.
- **U**nder the constitution, sovereignty belongs to Allah Almighty and He is the supreme ruler of the world.
- **U**pon negligence or inaction on the constitution of Pakistan in no way justifies the denial of Islamic identity. No one is allowed to declare government, military, and security agencies as infidels. Any armed activity against them is considered rebellion and heinous crime.
- **S**uicide attacks have been declared prohibited jointly by all major schools of thoughts.
- **S**ectarianism and imposing one's ideology on others are a violation and shall be dealt under national law and constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan<sup>10</sup>

# SUCCESSSES

1

Considered a large-scale consensus by the major jurists in the country after the 1973 constitution consensus by the religious leaders, institutions, and parties<sup>(11)</sup>.

2

Paigham-e-Pakistan has been successfully included in the Friday Sermons providing a national narrative to the local people broadening understanding and building consensus to counter terrorism and extremism. Local civil society working on issues of peace, inter-religious harmony, and tolerance also included the national narrative in their training manuals, and information and communication material on countering extremist narrative.

3

Local mosque leaders adopted Paigham-e-Pakistan and spread this narrative in their religious institutions and followers.

4

With key stakeholder support, Paigham-e-Pakistan narrative brought to the institutions of higher education which were discussed and adopted for creating ownership and penetrating into students and faculty. A number of Vice Chancellor conferences were held in various cities that stressed the need to adopt the narrative and include in the curriculum<sup>(12)</sup>.

5

Paigham-e-Pakistan is translated into various international languages and shared with embassies in the western world to create a positive image of the country<sup>(13)</sup>.

# CHALLENGES

1

Localizing this narrative at the grass root level is a challenge for the Paigham-e-Pakistan team as it requires big push and resources which they lack<sup>(14)</sup>.

2

Despite a large-scale consensus on the narrative major religious and political-religio parties and institutions are not able to take this narrative down to their lower ranks<sup>(15)</sup>. There are sympathizers of violent groups within these parties who on many occasions also give public and media statements to support their divisive narrative and justify their heinous actions<sup>(16)</sup>.

3

Paigham-e-Pakistan is unable to garner support from local stakeholders including district government, religious leaders, academia, and civil society. This results into a weak ownership of this national narrative at the local level<sup>(17)</sup>.

4

Being kept within security framework of the country, the civil administration and other stakeholders including wider civil society has not provided enough support to the national narrative on broadening its acceptability and adoption at mass level<sup>(18)</sup>.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

1

Paigham-e-Pakistan should forge partnership and collaboration with the local stakeholders including District Administration, local civil society organizations and religious leaders to deepen its outreach in the local communities creating resistance to divisive and extremist narrative<sup>(19)</sup>.

2

Major religious parties in the country should send the Paigham-e-Pakistan in local language to its members, followers and sympathizers to increase its acceptance and outreach.

3

A comprehensive media campaign on various aspects of Paigham-e-Pakistan should be designed by utilizing various mediums including national and regional TVs, local FM stations, and social media<sup>(20)</sup>.

4

In collaboration with key stakeholders such as Madrassa Boards and religious parties, religious magazines which are often read in its own circles of influence should cover the stories on various aspects including sectarian harmony of Paigham-e-Pakistan.

5

Federal government should provide an annual budgetary support to Paigham-e-Pakistan to schedule and implement its core activities on sustainable basis for increasing outreach and creating bigger impact.

- 1: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1404161>
- 2: <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-pakistan-swat-factbox/factbox-facts-about-insurgency-in-pakistans-swat-valley-idUKTRE51N2OY20090224>
- 3: <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PW89-Domestic%20Barriers%20to%20Dismantling%20the%20Militant%20Infrastructure%20in%20Pakistan.pdf>
- 4: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/17/world/asia/taliban-attack-pakistani-school.html>
- 5: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2014/12/24/pakistan-announces-a-national-plan-to-fight-terrorism-says-terrorists-days-are-numbered/>
- 6: <https://www.longdom.org/open-access/history-of-sectarianism-in-pakistan-implications-for-lasting-peace-2332-0761-1000291.pdf>
- 7: Pages 41, 42, and 46 of Paigham-e-Pakistan documented accessed at <http://www.paighamepakistan.com/wp-content/uploads-/2019/09/Paigham-e-Pakistan-English-11-01-2018.pdf>
- 8: Pages 11-48 of Paigham-e-Pakistan accessed at Paigham-e-Pakistan website
- 9: Pages 50-60 of Paigham-e-Pakistan accessed at Paigham-e-Pakistan website
- 10: Pages 50-60 of Paigham-e-Pakistan accessed at Paigham-e-Pakistan website
- 11: Paigham-e-Pakistan document
- 12: <https://nacta.gov.pk/vice-chancellors-policy-development-round-table-conference/>
- 13: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26758936?seq=1>
- 14: Interview with Hasnain Tirmizi, a senior journalist and analyst with Channel 5
- 15: Interview with Mansoor Ahmad Qazi, senior anchor person with Capital TV
- 16: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/630232/controversial-remarks-army-demands-apology-from-munawar-hassan>
- 17: Interview with Salman Abid, senior journalist working with Express Group and serving as an analyst on various news channels
- 18: Interview with Shahharyar Warraich, a senior journalist working with the New International.
- 19: Interview with Mansoor Ahmad Qazi, senior anchor person with Capital TV
- 20: Interview with Salman Abid, senior journalist working with Express Group and serving as an analyst on various news channels

# Youth Development Foundation

Youth Development Foundation (YDF) is a not-for-profit and non-governmental youth-led organization that has been working on interfaith harmony, social inclusion, local government, preventing and countering violent extremism (CVE) since 2010. YDF brings together youth from diverse cultural, religious and geographical backgrounds to prevent and counter growing trends of extremism through innovative ideas that lead to demonstrable solutions. YDF has been able to bring positive cultural changes in three Pakistani provinces by directly engaging more than 12,000 young people in the last 7 years. Due to its contribution for positive social change in Pakistan, YDF had the opportunity to present youth contributions in conflict mitigation at UN Minority Forum 2013, Geneva, UNAOC Global Forum 2016, Baku, and NEXUS 2016, New York. YDF has had the privilege to work with USAID, European Union (EU), UKAID, USIP, UN agencies, World Faith, and the Swiss Mission Office and Government of Punjab and Sindh. YDF works with multi-stakeholders including District, Provincial and Federal governments on the promotion of youth-oriented policies and strategies that celebrate cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and religious diversity. Most recently, YDF is working with the Ministry of Human Rights, Minority Affairs, and Interfaith Harmony on drafting a tolerance strategy for Punjab province and dedicated media campaign to counter discrimination, hate-speech and stigmatization during COVID19.

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