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## **Challenges of ‘New Normal’ and Counter-Terrorism Strategies in Pakistan**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The pandemic of Covid-19 has changed life on the globe into a ‘New Normal’ phase which brings an abrupt change in all walks of life. The ‘new normal’ phase has altered the global perspective on security, social interaction and policy priorities of states around the globe. The changing patterns of life in all spheres has stamped on the notion that non-traditional security is as important as traditional security preparedness. New normal life needs structural adjustments in governmental efforts to cope with the emerging new patterns of terrorism. The study suggests modification in the existing policy of counter-terrorism to deal with the challenges of the contemporary world. The focus of the concerned study will be limited to the case of Pakistan. The study ends with the suggestions that change in government’s priority toward the health system must not harm the efforts to curb terrorism in society.*

**Keywords:** *Pandemic, New Normal, Terrorism, Extremism, Security*

### **Water: Threat to Human Security**

The spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) in Asia in late 2019 has created one of the major non-military global challenges of this century. The quick spread of this pandemic has formed a challenging health crisis that is still going on. All challenges and crisis have left the world with some basic lessons those leads toward fundamental structural changes. The appearance of Covid-19 has introduced mankind to a new way of living, a new way of social interaction as well as new style and opportunities in economic affairs. All these changes are relevant to a ‘new-normal’ phenomenon. Roger McNamee (2004) was the first who coined this term from the perspective of globalization, interconnectedness, changing security patterns, technological innovations, and global financial competition. The same wave of global transformation has marked the complete change in human life with the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic. Global changes have entirely modified the concept of security as well.

This study is an effort to relate changing security patterns and needs to cope with challenges in New-Normal world. This paper would focus on the challenges limited to Pakistan only.

It would be easy to understand the context of debate if basic relevant terms are defined.

### **New-Normal**

‘A previously unfamiliar or atypical situation that has become standard, usual or expected’ (Oxford Dictionary).

‘A hitherto unusual state of affairs that suddenly becomes standard or typical’ (Collins Dictionary).

### **Pandemic**

‘Pandemics are large scale epidemics afflicting millions of people across multiple countries, sometimes spreading throughout the globe’ (World Health Organization, 2010)

### **Terrorism**

‘Any action constitutes terrorism if it is intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants’ (United Nations, p.26).

### **Human Security**

Keizo (1999) added about human security, ‘comprehensively grasping all of the threats that dangers the survival, daily life and dignity of human beings and empowering the efforts to confront these threats’ (p.18).

Above mentioned key terms would be helpful to conceptualize the interlinked phenomenon of changing security patterns and challenges of counter-terrorism.

### **Changing the Paradigm of Security**

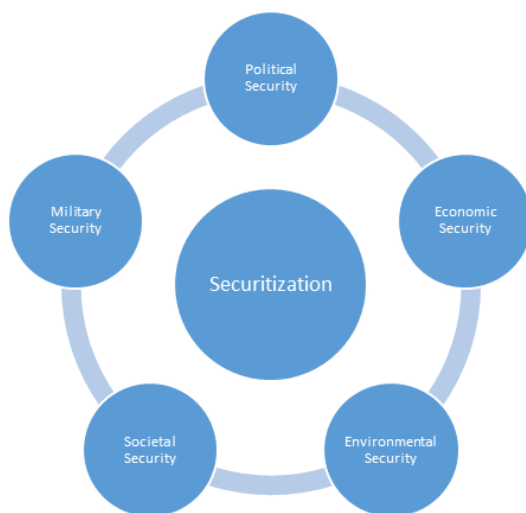
Terrorism and security both are connecting terms, if the notion of terrorism is discussed, security patterns and parameters are always colliding the way. Over time, the notion of security has taken many new shapes. Initially, the phenomenon of security covers traditional deterrence techniques, weapons, and expertise. Baldwin (1997) added that redefining security has become like a cottage industry with so many connotations. ‘Most efforts are concerned with the redefining the policy agendas of nation-states than with the concept of security itself’ (p.5). Buzan, Waever, Wilde (1998) stated that the traditional concept of security is revolved around the state itself with the ‘emphasis on military and political security’ (p.37). Lippman (1943) highlighted traditional security as, ‘a nation is secure to the extent to which it is not in danger of having to sacrifice core values, if it wishes to avoid war, and can, if challenged, to maintain them by victory in such war’ (p.53).

The traditional concept of security starts to take a new look after the cold war period. Globalization and interconnectedness have brought modifications in the classical phenomenon of security as a prevalent notion was unable to cope with emerging challenges. The traditional concept of security only served the interest of the state when the enemy is identified, or a nation has to fight only on borders. The new world order came up with many challenges for a nation-state which ultimately required the redefinition of prevalent concepts. In such a scenario, Buzan (1991) has presented a concept of security with new broader dimensions. He added five sectors to understand the concept of security which affect the core while interacting. Five major dimensions include, political, economic, military, societal and environmental. He stated, ‘these five sectors do not operate in isolation from each other, each defines a focal point within the security problematique, and a way of ordering priorities, but

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all are woven together in a strong web of linkage' (p.43). Kilroy (2013) believes that the theory of Securitization by the Copenhagen school of scholars has allowed the expansion of conceptual boundaries of security in other relevant sectors which provide a broader perspective of security. This notion authorizes states to redefine their identity, interest, and institutions at the domestic and international levels.

### Theory of securitization



After the tragic incident of 9/11, a new phenomenon of terrorism emerged as well as the security threat of non-state actors has been recognized globally. This condition has put a validation stamp on the redefined broader perspective of security. The soft security concept has become the norm of the day. War against terrorism has changed the traditional concept of security and made states think over policy formulations to counter a defaced enemy.

### Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism

The incident of 9/11 has introduced the world to a new type of threat known as terrorism. Jackson (2008) added that 'terrorism is not a causally coherent, free-standing phenomenon which can be defined in terms of characteristics inherent to the violence itself. It lacks a clear ontological status, which makes an objective definition impossible'. It is evident to observe in the literature that the phenomenon of terrorism is politicized to achieve specific interests by a specific group. It is a socially constructed phenomenon with multiple dimensions. Richard (2015) stated as 'the development of (socially constructed) norms and values is a vital part of human development, and within their particular discourses, conceptual clarity can have significant real-life consequences' (67). Generally, it is violence committed by politically motivated non-state actors on civilians.

Terrorism is a global phenomenon; no state is exempted from its effects. All states must formulate a special policy to counter the challenges imposed by terrorists. United Nations office of counter-terrorism has outlined five major functions in this regard.

1. Provide leadership in general assembly entrusted by mandate of United Nation's system regarding counter-terrorism.
2. Enhances coordination and coherence across the globe for uniform implementation of the strategy.
3. Strengthening the provision of capacity building assistance to member states.
4. Improve resource mobilization and visibility.
5. Enhancing the significance of the counter-terrorism strategies in the United Nation's system.

The purpose of this effort was to formulate a uniform comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy for the globe. The counter-terrorism strategy of any state is the reflection of its resources, sense of responsibility and respect for human rights.

#### Pakistan and Counter-Terrorism

Pakistan's security paradigm has taken a new turn after the incident of 9/11. Pakistan has faced more severe consequences for being the frontline state in the war against terrorism. Despite the huge loss of human lives, economic and infrastructural damage, Pakistan was demanded to 'Do More'. The following table shows the loss of human lives from 2002 to 2013, which is considered the peak period of terrorist activities in Pakistan.

Year	Number of Attacks	Killed	Injured
2002	56	102	311
2003	88	189	168
2004	159	863	412
2005	254	216	571
2006	675	907	1543
2007	1503	3448	5353
2008	2577	7997	9670
2009	3816	12632	12815
2010	3393	10003	10283
2011	2985	7107	6736
2012	2217	5047	5688
2013	911	4160	3794
<b>Total</b>	<b>18,634</b>	<b>52,671</b>	<b>57,344</b>

**Source:** Portal, South Asian Terrorism. *Annual Security Report 2008-2012*. National Crisis Management Cell, Ministry of Interior: Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies, 2013.

Historical Background of Pakistan's society shows that lack of coherent political stance, division on religious interpretations, sectarian and regional division has made it difficult to practice a uniform counter-terrorism posture.

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Afzal (2012) considered that terrorism is penetrated in Pakistan's society because of poor governance, a slow system of justice, unequal development patterns, feeling of deprivation in poor areas as well as the geostrategic position of state has increased security concerns. The revolution in Iran, the formation of the Taliban's government in Afghanistan and General Zia's policy of Islamization have impacted society with new directions.

### **Counter-Terrorism in General Musharraf's period**

After 9/11 when Pakistan, had joined the war against terrorism, this decision has impacted the law and order situation in State. During General Musharraf's rule (2002-2008) terrorist attacks on civilians and security forces were countered using force. This policy was started to take effect first in federally administered tribal areas (FATA). Then the use of force was replaced by negotiation with militants in 2004 which gave positive results until a drone strike sabotaged this peace agreement.

Gates & Roy (2014) added Military operation named Al-Mizan was launched in tribal areas against militants after the breakage of a peace agreement between armed forces and Nek Muhammad in FATA. The effort was done to keep peace talks with Baitullah Mehsood (hold the charge after the death of Nek Muhammad) but could not go successful and use of force was inevitable. The counter-terrorism strategy of General Musharraf was coercive and revolves around the use of force. After crushing the militants, the process of development and rehabilitation was ignored which gave birth to another humanitarian crisis. Such ignorance provides a feasible environment for militants to gather, create links at other places and reorganize their evil practices. Military operations were launched to cater for the situation including Zalzal, Sher-Dil and Daraghalam. Efforts were made to regulate Madrasah education.

### **Pakistan People's Party and Counter-Terrorism Strategy (2008-2013)**

After assuming the charge, the government of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has continued the same policy of use of force. Operation Rah-e-Raast and Rah-e-Nijaat were launched at swat, Malakand and South Waziristan agency respectively (Shah, 2011, 93). These operations went successful, but the militant's headship got to escape in Afghanistan and keep operating terrorist activities in the state. Overall, the counter-terrorism strategy of PPP revolves around Drone strikes by the United States.

### **Pakistan Muslim League (N) Government and Counter-Terrorism Strategy (2013-2018)**

The government of PMLN has decided to take a different stance on counter-terrorism. They choose the way of dialogue and negotiations but went fruitless as the conditions demanded by terrorist groups were unacceptable. Sherazi (2014) wrote, militants demanded to release their cronies from jails, withdraw the army from tribal areas and enforce sharia. These demands were unacceptable for the ruling elite. So as a last resort military operation Zarb-e-Azab was launched in 2014. This operation was huge in its number of troops employed. Another major development was anti-terrorism law (21<sup>st</sup> constitution amendment) which allows the formulation of military courts. Military courts were established to speed up the procedural judicial system for terrorists. After the tragic incident of Army Public

School (APS) Peshawar, the state has adopted a comprehensive and consensus counter-terrorism policy known as National Action Plan (NAP).

### **National Action Plan**

National Action Plan was an emergency measure to counter the ongoing wave of terrorist attacks. It was a defining moment for the state of Pakistan to formulate a cohesive national narrative over the issue of militancy. It was contained on twenty key points including the formulation of military courts, execution enforcement for terrorists, ban of armed organizations in the state, strengthen the functioning of NACTA (National Counter-Terrorism Authority), Monitoring of hate speech, curriculum modification, strict regulations on financing sources to terrorists, the establishment of anti-terrorism forces, ban on the adoration of material related to terrorism at print and social media, breaking communication network of militant groups, introduction of reforms in the criminal justice system, reforms and mollification for FATA and Baluchistan respectively, settlement of Afghan refugees, regulations for madrassas system of education and strict monitoring over terrorist organization for re-emerging with another names and logos.

### **Analysis of NAP's Implementation**

The minute analysis of NAP shows that it was a significant consensual effort of security institutions, political leadership, and civil society. This plan empowered security institutions legally which has impacted well to counter-terrorist strikes. It is also evident to observe that the structural setting (apex committee) has made the security institutions dominant over political voice. Rizvi stated, for instance, the 'focal entity for decision-making pushes the federal and provincial cabinets to the sidelines and bring the army formally into the civilian administrative domain' (Express Tribune). The process was started to regularize the madrasa education system but at a very slow speed. Mostly militant groups were banned and strictly monitored to not emerge again with a different identity. Political circles were divided between good Taliban and bad Taliban. The issue of terrorism's financing was not much satisfactory as in 2012 Pakistan was put on 'grey list' by International Financial Action Task Force (FATF) for ignoring the true implementation of resolution 1267. PTA has performed well by verification of phone SIMs. Unverified SIMs were blocked. It was a good step to break the communication chain of terrorists. FATA reforms and consideration of Baluchistan's reservations have created a good start toward stability. Earlier Frontier Crime Regulation (FCR) law was one of the reasons for spreading terrorism and lawlessness in tribal areas of the state.

Above mentioned steps were the traditional security measures. The next section will examine the challenges of the New-Normal world about terrorism in Pakistan.

### **New-Normal and Terrorism**

New-normal is a phenomenon that denotes radical changes in the existing environment. The same happened at the end of 2019 when the disease Covid-19 has emerged in China and spread to all corners of the world. The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared this disease a pandemic. The period after the emergence of Covid-19 is termed as new-normal as it brings radical changes in human life. This phase has changed social interactions, the pattern of work, business, the responsiveness of the political system etc. The phenomenon of new-normal has

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transformed the traditional notion of security. The emergence of this pandemic is an attack on human security with relevance to the domain of health.

There are a few similarities between terrorism and the pandemic of Covid-19.

1. Both are global phenomena, spread without any respect of state borders.
2. Both are causing deaths and loss of life.
3. Both phenomena are causing a major hit to the economies of affected states.
4. Both are multi-dimensional phenomena; they not only bring changes in political or economic life but the social pattern of living is changed totally. This scenario has increased mistrust among people for each other. Collins (2004) stated that terrorism has affected collective practices and gatherings such as solidarity rituals. The same situation applies to Covid-19 in the perspective of social distancing.
5. Both promote fear and insecurity in society.
6. Both are involuntary risks.

While the difference includes that terrorism is a man-made phenomenon that keeps going with specific plans and strategies while a pandemic is a natural calamity.

Above mentioned similarities describe that both are great fears of the contemporary world.

### **Emerging New Counter-Terrorism Challenges at the globe and in Pakistan.**

The new-normal world has brought fundamental changes and modifications in all walks of life. The same applies to the obscenity of terrorism that the world is facing since 9/11. Strategies were prepared by all states to counter this war against terrorism by keeping in view their resources, challenges, and level of threat. United Nations counter-terrorism office, Voronkov has shared their reservations 'this pandemic environment raises several strategic and practical challenges for counter-terrorism'.

Pakistan has prepared its counter-terrorism strategy which mostly falls under the traditional domain of security. The following counter-terrorism challenges are posed by the pandemic.

#### **A shift of Financial Resources to Health Sector**

It is evident to observe that the budget and financial resources are been used and shifted to combat the health crisis globally. The World Bank Report (2020) shows that the pandemic has given economic shocks to world markets which resulted in sharp recessions in many states. The report declares this downfall as the 'deepest global recession in eight decades' (p.XV). The consequence of economic recession would be harsher to bear for developing weak economies.

More resources are being deployed in the public health sector which ultimately affects the spending on counter-terrorism measures. Developed rich economies that were supporting allied counter-terrorism partner states will be affected because of a cut in funding.

In Pakistan, the budget allocation of 2020-21 shows the health budget was allocated double in number as compared to the defence budget. The defence department was allocated 7.7 Billion while health received 25 billion rupees. Health budget and infrastructure were focused by the government to cater to the ongoing health crisis. A huge amount was distributed in lower-middle-class families as alleviation support during the lockdown in the state. Such a shift in resources can harm the efforts of counter-terrorism measures.

### **Change in the focus of Policy.**

The pandemic has brought an economic crunch with it. Governments are trying to mitigate the challenges of both at the same time. The focus of government policies has been shifted from traditional security threats to health and economic boost strategies. This shift can pose serious threats to national security at the globe and in Pakistan, respectively. The change in focus of the government's priorities can benefit the terrorist groups to reorganize.

### **The Challenge of Cyber-security**

Cyber-security is the challenge of the modern digital world of the present century. Amoroso (2006) defined it as, 'cybersecurity involves reducing the risk of a malicious attack to software, computers and networks. This includes tools used to detect break-ins, stop viruses, block malicious access, enforce authentication, enable encrypted communications, and on and on'. In this domain of security, attacker's bout on critical infrastructure as governmental projects, operations to create fear in the public. Such attackers are known as cyber terrorists. Aviksoo (2008) and Pollit (1998) has defined cyber terrorists are, attackers who possess specific political and social motives and try to achieve those purpose. Their main weapon is a computer, and their main target includes critical and sensitive infrastructure.

The pandemic has changed the traditional mode of work and shifted it to online. The spread of Covid-19 has introduced a world with state policies of lockdown for three to four months since the end of February 2020. The lockdown period has put business activities, education, and other human interactions available in online mode. People have spent more time in front of gadget screens. This trend is still going on and the world seems unable to resume the traditional pattern of life. Such a scenario can be more beneficial for terrorist groups as they may organize, train or recruit through online sources. They can start propaganda to spread their narrative through social media. United Nations report indicates that almost 1 billion students spend more time on the internet. Participation of youth in unsupervised internet activities such as violent aggressive gaming platforms can provide opportunities to terrorist groups to inculcate their propaganda in young brains.

The threat of cyber-security must be treated seriously in the new-normal world. Pakistan is also following the virtual mode of work and study. There is a need to observe media content and preserve a strong monitoring system concerning extremism and radicalization which are the root cause of terrorist activities.

### **Psychological issues**

Covid-19 has brought health emergencies to the globe. The health crisis is not limited to physical health only. It has impacted mental health as well and created many psychological issues. The lack of social contact and ban on social gatherings



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for many months has resulted in feelings of depression, sadness, loneliness, and frustration, especially in a young group population. Duan and Zhu (2020) added that quarantine and social restrictions have resulted in many psychological problems in the general masses concerning mental health including depression, stress, anxiety, frustration, uncertainty and fear progressively. These things must be focused on by states seriously while making counter-terrorism policies. The weak or depressed mind can be easy prey for terrorist organizations to brainwash and inculcate their specific ideology or mindset.

Pakistan must also be vigilant in this regard as the state's 64 % of the population is younger than thirty years. Unsupervised online activities can harm healthy minds and have the potential to make them aggressive, violent, and intolerant.

The issues of mental health are increasing in Pakistan. Gulf News has reported that due to COVID-19 almost 75% of the population is suffering from moderate and severe stress and anxiety according to a study conducted by Agha Khan University. The study concluded three major causes of anxiety in the population includes, catching the virus, financial loss and fear of losing loved ones because of the pandemic. Social media is spreading rumours and misinformation which is creating misconceptions about the disease and mental stress.

### **Economic challenges**

The pandemic of Covid-19 has created economic challenges at the globe. Economies are suffering badly as some shows growth rate in a negative number. Such meagre economic resources will give birth to unemployment, poverty, inflation, vulnerability, and a weak social net. In a developing state like Pakistan, the consequences of steps taken to contain the pandemic have resulted worse in this regard. The measures of lockdown have hit badly economic situation and business activities, especially for daily wagers. These challenges have paved a way for food insecurity. United Nations world food program's report indicates that 36.9 % population face food insecurity in Pakistan. This situation is getting more pathetic during lockdown and closure of business activities. It is preempted that such a scenario will provide opportunities to terrorist organizations to exploit the general public in their favour by working on humanitarian grounds.

Due to the movement restrictions in the pandemic, they may try to strengthen their roots in the areas they reside in. They can pose economic challenges to the state by increasing the crime rate in society. Being involved in crimes, they used to get financial benefits to continue their cruel practices. Thony (2000) stated in his report, the major financing sources of terrorist organizations include drug trafficking, racketeering, abductions with ransom, precious stone's trafficking etc. Economic stability is the fundamental requirement to curb extremism and terrorism from the state.

### **Challenge of Societal Division**

The pandemic has brought social distancing but not suggested societal division. The increasing use of online mode for work, study and business has promoted this phenomenon of division (racial, ethnic, religious) in society. The purpose of a terrorist organization is to create fear and anxiety in society. Social media is unsubstantiated been used for spreading conspiracy theories about the pandemic. This social division is not contributing positively to contain this virus. Hate speech

is also being promoted on religious, ethnic, and racial bases to create division in society.

In Pakistan, the circulation of unauthentic information and conspiracy theories can increase the division in society. Terrorist organizations always see divided societies as their easy targets.

### **Test of State capacity**

The pandemic will prove the working capacity of state institutions whether poor states or rich. It's the management patterns that matter in this scenario. The handling of economic and health services in deprived areas are much more important. If governments remain unprepared to cater to this situation, then it can create opportunities for terrorists to indulge in public-serving and get legitimize their narrative in the eyes of the masses. Terrorist groups want to spread an element of fear in society to increase chaos and disorder. The prevalent turmoil in society will create frustration in masses against the government which ultimately benefit them to create a soft corner for their narrative. This pandemic will demonstrate as a test for state authorities to examine their management capacities.

### **A ray of hope for global cooperation**

Although the pandemic has created many challenges and altered the nature of threats. But it also comes up with a good tradition of global cooperation. The pandemic has shown that a more comprehensive, cohesive, and integrated plan of action can give benefit all. Cooperation among states has been noticed in the sharing of medical information, preventive techniques, and governmental strategies to contain the virus as well as the updates on vaccine formulation. The importance of multilateral institutions has got a position in limelight as well. The role and cooperation of the World Health Organization (WHO) have remained remarkable. It is also said that Covid-19 may be the reason for the revival of global cooperation. The same cooperation, intelligence sharing, and integrated approach are required at the global level to deal with terrorism.

### **A way forward for Pakistan**

Terrorism is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, which covers political, social, economic, and psychological domains. Pakistan has remained a victim of terrorism since 9/11 and suffers to date in all dimensions of this curse. National Action Plan (NAP) has remained a comprehensive agreed strategy to combat terrorism which needs to be implemented in full letter and spirit.

- The new-normal world of a pandemic has modified traditional security parameters. Pakistan must update its security policy accordingly. The approach of human security must be employed and investment in citizens must come on the governmental priority list.
- There is a need to stop or minimize radicalization or extremism at the grass-root level. Reforms and restructuring in the educational curriculum are very important.
- Madrasah education must be regularized, registered, and linked with career-oriented training.

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- The system of investigation must be speedy and the intelligence-sharing system must be cohesive between armed forces and police.
- Strict measures must be introduced in the legal system to stop terrorist financing and the flow of funding.
- The national record of a terrorist must be updated.
- Media (Social, electronic and press) must be supervised to avoid false propaganda, conspiracy theories and hate speech.
- The government should invest in creative technological solutions to avoid the predictable progression of illegal online content.
- Government expenditures must be controlled, and a handsome budget must be allocated for rehabilitation of terrorism's affected areas including FATA and interior Baluchistan.
- The option of dialogue must be open always and political representation must be ensured to deprived, ignored segments of society.
- Local community-driven peacekeeping strategy must be adopted to reduce radicalization.

### **Conclusion**

The domain of security has vast implications in the contemporary world. The new-normal world has changed life in all domains. The imprints of the pandemic will be long-lasting on human lives. It is evident to observe that the use of military approaches gives minimal results. The employment of a non-traditional security approach including securitization (economic, political, military, societal, and environmental) is the need of the hour. Socio-economic development is essential to create unity and harmony in society. If it is ignored, society can experience internal division and disorder.

The pandemic has created a new-normal world with radical changes in political matters, economic activities, and social interactions. This scenario has validated the importance of non-traditional security measures. New-normal has posed many challenges in the spectrum of counterterrorism but it also created opportunities for global cooperation and harmony. Covid-19 has replaced the news of terrorism with pandemics which has reduced the psychological impacts of terrorism on humans. The humanitarian approach must be employed to face both challenges including terrorism and disease. The cohesive, integrated method is required to face the defaced enemy. Badawy (2019) added, 'strong integration measures are essential to the success of counter-terrorism and the prevention of homegrown radicalization' (p.39).

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