**[Mainstreaming non-state actors](https://nation.com.pk/23-Nov-2020/mainstreaming-non-state-actors" \t "_new)**

Masud Ahmad Khan November 23, 2020

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The creation of Pakistan was based on the two-nation theory. Hindus and Muslims were not able to live together, therefore Jinnah’s vision was that Muslims should have an independent state. Pakistan is a nation which consists of different ethnicities, distinctive cultures, customs, traditions and languages. Quaid-e-Azam, while addressing the Quetta municipality, on January 15, 1948 said, “We are now all Pakistanis—not Balochis, Pathans, Sindhis, Bengalis, Punjabis and so on”.

Over a period of time, the Pakistani society has developed vibrantly but at the same time it has also been divided into different groups to include liberals, leftist, rightest, sub-nationalist, radicals and others created on sectarian and ethnic lines. These groups have divided the country, promoted violence, subversion and some are even working for hostile intelligence agencies. All of them can be characterised as non-state actors, or non-violent actors, who have influenced segments of society across the country—trying to promote violence, agitation, propaganda and western narratives in society. Let us have a look at these groups one by one.

The Communist Party of Pakistan was formed in 1948 and was influenced by the former Soviet Union. Subsequently, it was also banned in 1954. Then there was an Azad Pakistan Party which later merged with the National Awami Party. There were also a number of student federations who advocated for and promoted leftist policies. With the passage of time, Pakistan’s cooperation with the west to combat communism sidelined the leftists and they lost their importance. Today, the leftists are more secular in their approach towards religion, race, culture, human rights, anti-war and according to them religion has nothing to do with politics. Some of the parties which were considered leftist are not following these policies anymore and never remain committed to their founding principles.

The other class in Pakistan is the liberals who are willing to respect different behaviours and opinions. They are the most tolerant towards religion and believe in liberty while opposing religious based supremacy. They rose to prominence during Zia’s regime when he introduced the Islamisation process in the 1980s.

The Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) was planned, organised and launched inside Pakistan by hostile agencies—a subversive attempt to incite patriotic Pashtuns against Pakistan. Anti-state slogans chanted in PTM gatherings were exploited by foreign agencies as they were unhappy with the return of peace and stability in the erstwhile FATA. Some of their demands are genuine and must be addressed within the framework of the constitution. In fact, majority of their demands have been addressed by the Pakistan army, like the clearance of land mines and Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and the tracing of missing persons.

Military check posts were gradually abolished and leadership is being handed over to the civil administration. The army’s demining teams were deployed to defuse mines and IEDs placed by the militants. The Pashtuns have sacrificed more than any other ethnic group in the war on terror in Pakistan. If anyone deserves appreciation for their contribution rights from 1947, it is the Pashtun people.

There are small sub-nationalist groups in Gilgit-Baltistan and AJK with different agendas though they do not enjoy any significance in the region. Some dissidents from abroad are running a campaign to instigate the people of Gilgit-Baltistan and AJK against CPEC and Pakistan. The so-called nationalists, using the issue of the constitutional status of Gilgit-Baltistan, are trying to pollute the minds of the people. The federal government has now addressed this issue as Prime Minster Imran Khan announced on November 1, 2020 that Gilgit-Baltistan would be made the fifth provisional province of the country. The opposition parties of Pakistan have agreed to support the move to make Gilgit-Baltistan a province of the country.

The growth of many non-state actors and non-violent actors challenge the authority of state and disrupt the routine functioning of state. They are gaining importance and prominence because of the media and the financial support of west. In Pakistan, we have different ethnicities like Sindhis, Balochis, Punjabis, Pashtuns, Sirakis, Muhajirs, Kashmiris, Gilgitis and Baltis, all of which are bounded together by Islam. The media too, is fanning the viewpoint of anti-state elements under the banner of the right of expression. Real freedom of speech is when everybody accepts each other. The media has to play a constructive role by projecting issues of national integration and national interest.

According to Professor Gautam Sen in his book, The New Arthashastra, “The interests of state are more important than local interests, collective interests and individual interests”. There is a requirement to bring all non-state actors to the mainstream through a cooperative and sensible approach. There must be a reconciliation drive with those who show allegiance to the constitution of Pakistan. There is no harm in allowing all factions in society to play a constructive role for the betterment of Pakistan.