

AIPS Travel grant, Final Report: Highlight the significance of this presentation on Pakistan Studies

This presentation is significant for Pakistan Studies for a number of reasons. Violent extremism has manifested in myriad ways over the past decades 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.

This paper is part of a larger book project, *Countering Violent Extremism in Pakistan: Local Actions, Local Voices*. It is based on original field research conducted in Pakistan in mid-2016 and January-March 2017 (additional field research will be conducted September 2017-March 2018). For this paper in particular, it focuses on state entities (the Government of Pakistan and the military) and the compelling roles of non-state entities in their respective efforts to counter violent extremism.

I first addressed the various activities and campaigns that state entities have pursued to counter violent extremism, and analyzed the reasons behind problematic outcomes of these efforts. I then provided an overview of the various efforts by individuals and NGOs underway in Pakistan that I have already learned about, and then focused in on two distinct efforts. The first is something I have found is incredibly insightful and influential: how Pashto poetry is being used to reassert sociopolitical identity and counter violent extremism. I recited poetry in English (that I have had translated from Pashto) by Abdul Rahim Roghani and Usman Olasyar in Swat, and by Hasina Gul in Mardan. I then turned to the 'Rang dey Karachi' (The Colors of Karachi) movement that emerged from painting over hate speech on public walls in Karachi in 2010, and how it has metamorphosed into the 'Parsakoon Karachi' and the 'I Am Karachi' movements. The photographs that I showed of their stencils and wall paintings impressed the audience, and how the Rang dey Karachi painters deliberately painted their earlier stencils high on walls so bus passengers could see them.

There is very little known about such efforts outside of Pakistan – even within Pakistan – and this research is significant in its efforts to reveal what is actually occurring in Pakistan, as opposed to sensationalized news reporting.