

Soft Approaches of the Islamic Republic in dealing with the Crisis of Terrorism in Sistan and Baluchistan Province

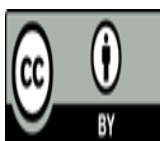
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1-Introduction

The victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 not only brought about a significant transformation in the political and social structure of the country but also led to profound changes in regional and global dynamics. The Islamic Revolution, with its slogans of independence, freedom, and the Islamic Republic, turned Iran into an independent nation that opposed the dominance of global powers. This independence and defiance provoked the anger and dissatisfaction of global powers and their regional allies, prompting them to confront the nascent Islamic Republic system. One of the methods employed by these powers was exploiting the initial instability following the revolution and inciting ethnic and religious minorities in various regions of Iran. These provocations were particularly evident in the province of Sistan and Baluchistan, which possesses unique geographical, ethnic, and religious characteristics. In this context, the Islamic Republic of Iran faced counter-revolutionary threats, which manifested in the form of ethnic and religious terrorism. These threats not only jeopardized Iran's national security but also impacted the stability and development of border regions, particularly Sistan and Baluchistan. In response to these threats, the Islamic system, drawing on organized experiences and diverse measures, moved to counter the counter-revolutionary movements. Among these efforts, non-military approaches and cultural, social, and economic initiatives, alongside security measures, played a significant role in reducing tensions and

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combating terrorism. Documenting and analyzing the experiences and actions taken in countering the counter-revolution, particularly in the realm of ethnic and religious terrorism, is of great importance. These experiences can serve as valuable knowledge in the field of defense and security governance and can also be transferred to other regions and countries facing similar challenges. Therefore, the aim of this article is to identify the strengths and areas for improvement in the non-military actions and approaches of the Islamic Republic of Iran in combating terrorism in Sistan and Baluchestan province. This understanding can contribute to the enhancement of future policies and strategies aimed at ensuring sustainable security and balanced development in the region. The main question of the article is: What soft approaches has the Islamic Republic of Iran employed to address the crisis of terrorism in Sistan and Baluchestan Province? The hypothesis of this study is that "soft approaches to countering terrorism are often proactive and preemptive in nature. However, while they contribute significantly to mitigating threats, they do not result in the complete physical destruction or elimination of terrorist structures. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, soft approaches play a crucial and effective role in complementing and advancing security and military strategies".

2- Methodology and Conceptual Framework

In this research, the qualitative method of thematic analysis has been employed. This method allows researchers to identify key themes and patterns within the data through an in-depth examination of texts and interviews. To collect data, researchers engaged in discussions with various commanders and officials, presenting them with the research questions. Additionally, three high-level documents related to the research topic were utilized. To further complement the data, 13 interviews were conducted with top officials of the time. In total, 16 textual-documentary sources were used in this study.

Countering terrorism, as a complex and multidimensional phenomenon, requires diverse and comprehensive approaches. These approaches are generally divided into two main categories: armed approaches and non-armed approaches. Armed approaches primarily focus on the use of military force and direct security measures to suppress terrorists. In contrast, non-armed approaches encompass a set

of plans, decisions, and actions that are implemented indirectly with the aim of isolating terrorists from society and weakening their capabilities. These approaches are inherently non-armed and typically fall into two domains: cultural-social and legal-judicial.

A. Cultural-Social Approaches

These approaches focus on isolating terrorists from society and raising awareness about the nature of terrorism and the objectives of terrorists. Actions such as public education, anti-terrorism propaganda, strengthening national and religious identity, and enhancing social awareness fall under this domain. The primary goal of these approaches is to reduce the appeal of terrorist ideologies and prevent the recruitment of new individuals into terrorist groups.

B. Legal-Judicial Approaches

These approaches are based on legal frameworks and regulations and include measures such as proactive prevention of terrorist activities, issuing warnings to terrorist groups, and legally punishing them. These approaches aim to establish legal frameworks for countering terrorism and ensuring justice for terrorist actors.

This dual approach, combining cultural-social and legal-judicial measures, provides a comprehensive strategy for addressing the root causes and manifestations of terrorism while ensuring long-term stability and security.

3- Discussion

In the process of analyzing the data and research findings, two main sets of themes were identified: "Cultural-Social Approach" and "Legal-Judicial Approach." These themes were extracted after conducting interviews, reviewing documents, and aligning supplementary texts with theoretical themes. Using the MAXQDA software, 22 final themes were identified, which included themes that were supportive (confirming), opposing, or contrasting (differing). These themes reflect the various dimensions of the non-armed approaches adopted by the Islamic Republic of Iran in countering terrorism in the Sistan and Baluchestan province.

4- Conclusion

The primary objective of this research was to explore and analyze the non-armed approaches of the Islamic Republic of Iran in countering terrorism in Sistan and Baluchistan province over the past four decades. Using qualitative methods and thematic analysis, all theoretical and normative dimensions related to this topic were examined through elite interviews and high-level documents. The findings revealed that the legal-judicial and cultural-social approaches of the Islamic Republic of Iran in combating terrorism have been effectively identified and analyzed in alignment with scientific theories and methods. Additionally, at the secondary categorization level, new and contrasting propositions were identified within the cultural-social approach that had not been observed in previous research. These propositions include:

- Ensuring Fairness in Establishing Security
- Addressing Essential Economic and Livelihood Needs
- Adhering to Ethical Considerations in Conflict
- Non-Compliance with Combat Principles in Some Cases
- Efficacy of Legitimacy-Building Authority
- Responsible and Authoritative Actions

These propositions are recognized as the distinctive features of the security measures of the Islamic Republic of Iran and represent the innovations and knowledge production of this research. These findings not only contribute to a better understanding of the non-armed approaches of the Islamic Republic of Iran in countering terrorism but can also serve as a model for other countries and regions facing similar challenges.

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