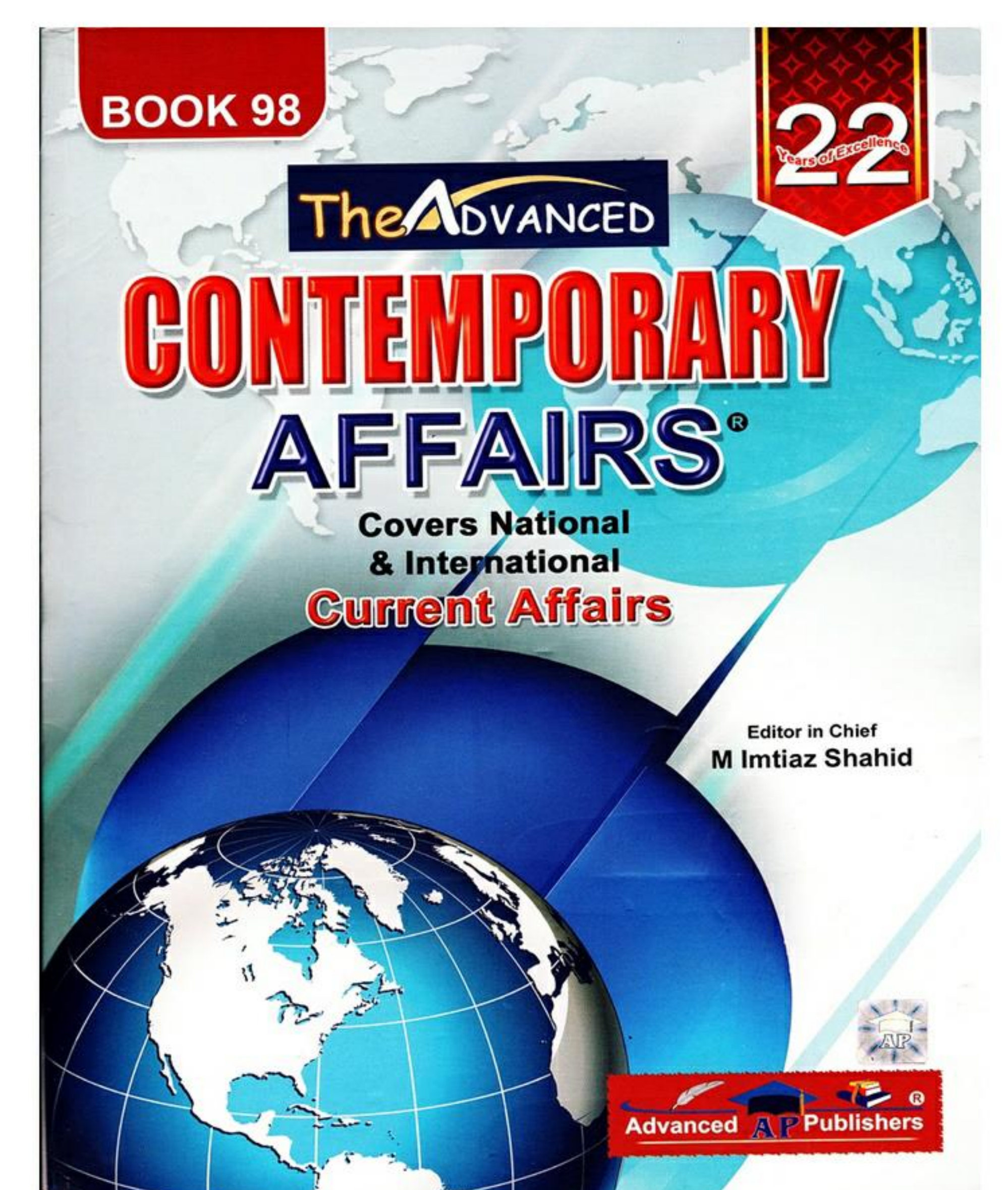
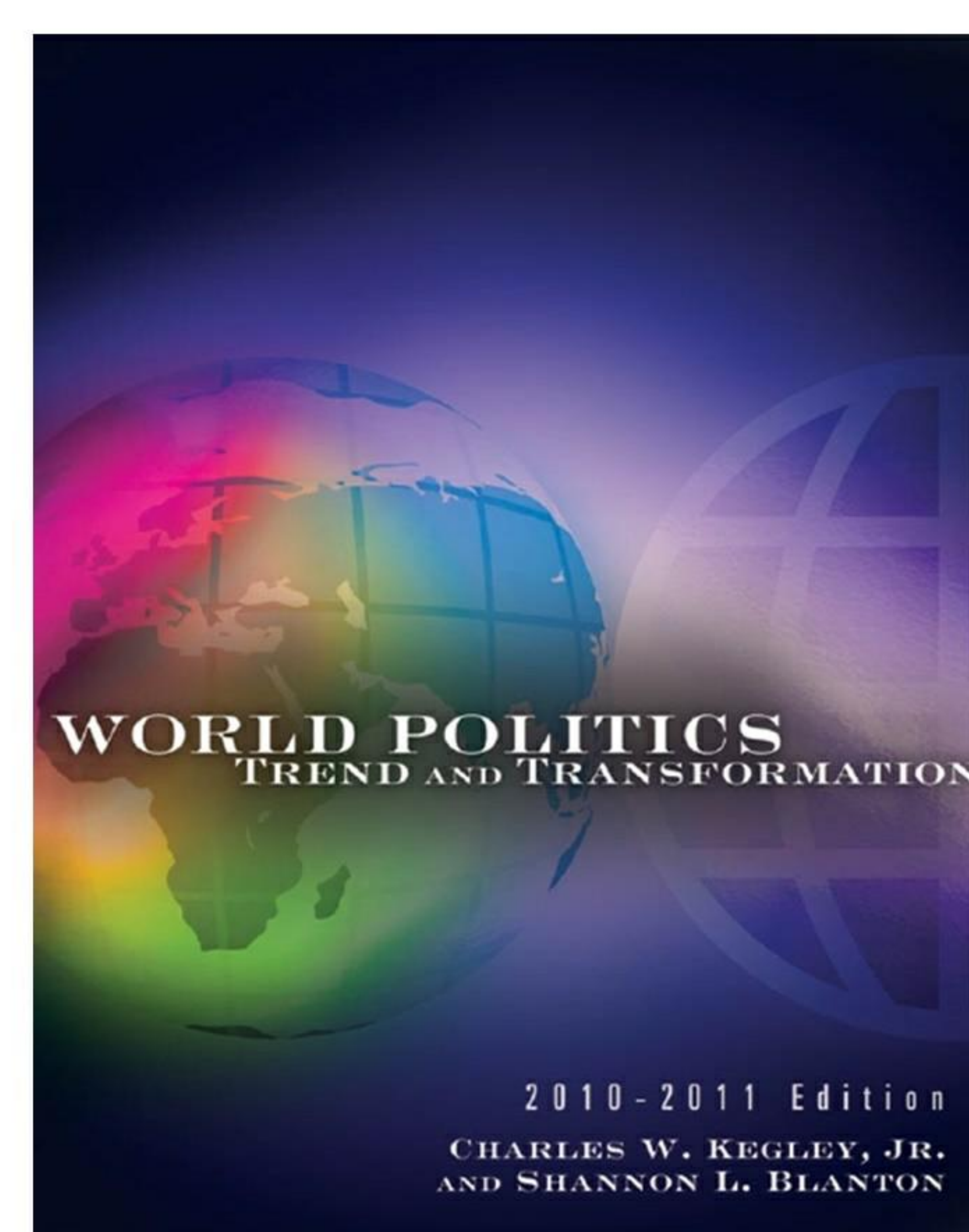
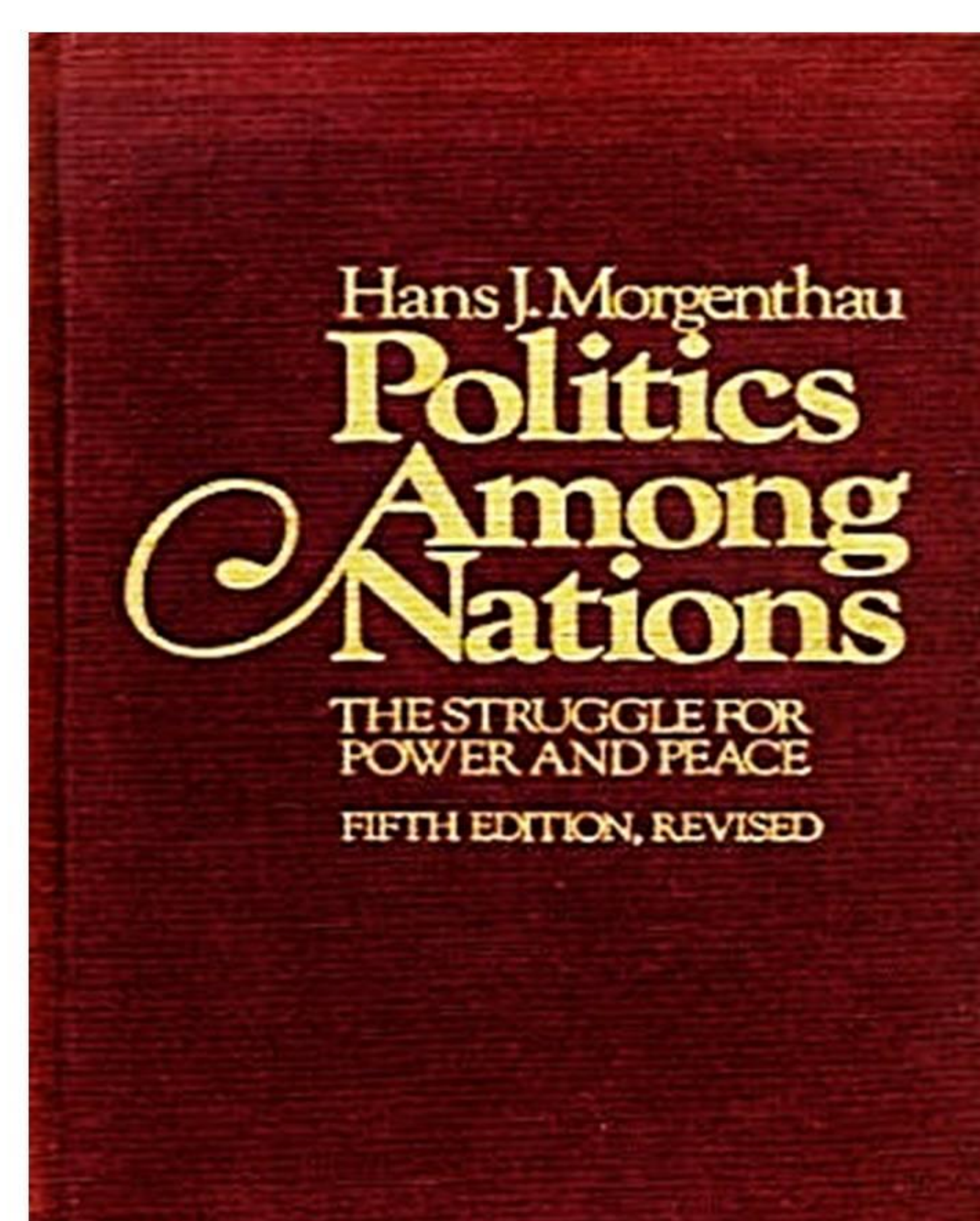
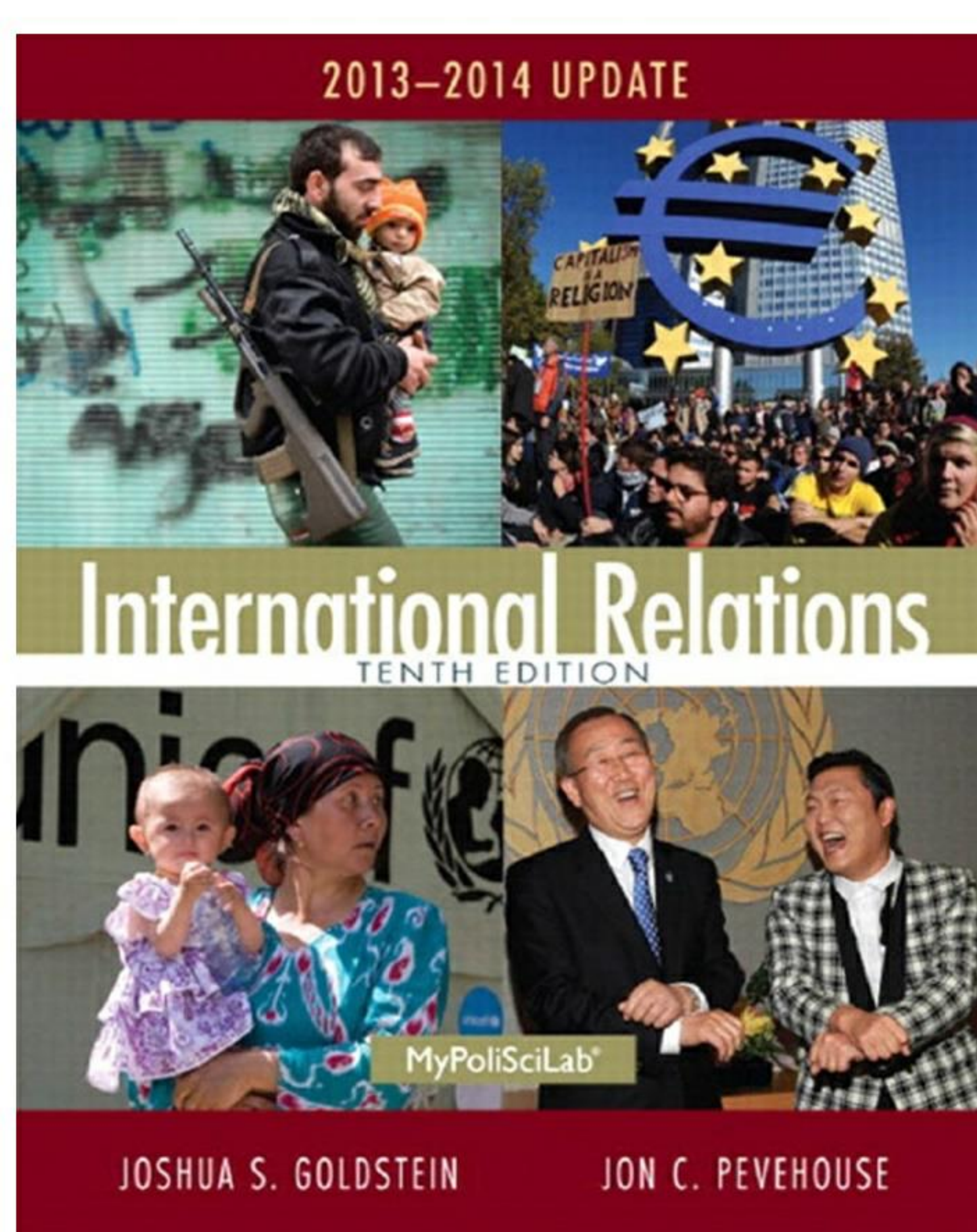


**Discuss in detail the efficacy of counter terrorism measures adopted by the government, especially with reference to the National Action Plan.**

**ANS: OUTLINE:**

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. All about the National Action Plan**
- 3. Counter terrorism measures and their efficacy**
  - i. Establishment of military courts
  - ii. Structuring the counter terrorism force
  - iii. Countering the hate speech
  - iv. Policy shift towards Afghan refugees
  - v. Reconciliation efforts in Baluchistan
  - vi. Effective operation in Karachi
  - vii. Resolve to conclude the operation Zarb-e-Azb
  - viii. Border management
  - ix. Measures against abuse of Internet and use of social media for terrorism



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- x. Execution of convicted terrorists

#### **4. Neglected counter terrorism measures envisaged in NAP**

- i. Registration of Madrassahs
- ii. Revamping and reforming the criminal justice system
- iii. Zero tolerance for militancy in Punjab
- iv. FATA Reforms
- v. Choking the financing for terrorists and terrorist organizations
- vi. Ensuring against re-emergence of proscribed organizations
- vii. Strengthening and activation of NACTA

#### **5. Conclusion**

The 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States forced Pakistan to make hard choices. Before attacking the Afghan soil, the government of the United States of America coerced Pakistan to choose either between them or the Afghan Taliban. Therefore, after drying out all other options Pakistan decided to align with the West within the ambit of the so called war against the terrorism. Since then, Pakistan has suffered more than any other country both in terms of economy and human loss. The terrorism unleashed against Pakistan by different terror outfits and their offshoots inflicted upon Pakistan about \$80 billion economic losses through the destruction of infrastructure and slowed down the whole economic progress of the country. Due to this war, Pakistan has also lost about 50,000 people. The end to these losses does not seem closer as the threat has not been averted yet. After the Army Public School attack in Peshawar, the government launched a 20 point National Action Plan to curb the menace of terrorism for good. This National Action Plan promised some serious measures and a relatively complete plan of action to deal with the barbaric acts of terrorism and their planners. Had this Plan implemented in the same spirit in which it was framed, then 90 percent of the problem would have already been resolved. Pakistan did gain some momentary achievements initially, but the failure to implement the plan as a whole denied it to reap the anticipated success.

The December 16, 2014 terrorist attack on an Army Public School in Peshawar constrained the government to chart out a unanimous plan of action to combat terrorism and extremism. The plan was formed with the consensus and input from all the stakeholders across the country. The National Action Plan had a 20 point agenda that was started to be enforced throughout the width and breadth of the country by January, 2015. The National Action Plan being termed as a single solution to all terrorism related problems envisaged to lift the ban from executions, banning the armed militias from the country, formation of special military courts, checking the hate speech and material related to extremism, plugging the terrorism financing, actions against proscribed organizations, restructuring the counter terrorism force, steps against religious persecution, Madrassah reforms, banning the media from glorification of terrorists and terrorist organisations, Reforms in FATA, Disrupting the communication system of terrorists, checking the internet and social media abuse, action against militancy in Punjab, concluding the Karachi operation, launching efforts of reconciliation in Baluchistan, dealing with sectarianism, solving the problem of Afghan refugees and reforms in criminal justice system. After initial buzz, the government failed to enforce the plan the way in which it should have been enforced to get the desired results. To evaluate the efficacy of the counter terrorism measures, a cursory glance is necessary towards all the measures recommended by NAP and measures independent of it.

First of all, the government decided to establish military courts under the National Action Plan to try the terrorists and militants with speedy procedures. The other reason behind this was the inefficiency of the existing justice system and the threats emanating from the terrorists to the judges, witnesses and the lawyers. Therefore, through the 21<sup>st</sup> constitutional amendment, the military courts were established. If one looks at the performance of these

courts after the passage of almost two years, one would come to know that the establishment of these courts has produced mixed results. They have sentenced a few battle hardened terrorists. Many of those conviction cases are lingering in the Supreme Court. The critics also are of the view that the accused have not been given the proper chance of hearing and presenting their point of view. All criticism and slowness of the system aside, the output of restructuring this judicial system has remained below the par.

The National Action Plan also presented the idea to structure a counter terrorism force. To materialize this goal, all the four provinces endeavoured to establish separate units within the existing policing system. Therefore, anti-terrorism squads and safe city projects were introduced in every province. New recruitments have also been made in this respect. Also, the provincial governments have upgraded their training methods keeping in view the requirement of the counter terrorism strategy. Despite of all these efforts, the question of effectiveness of these forces remains unanswered in the wake of continued terror activities in different parts of the country.

Controlling the hate speech and hating materials has also been tasked by the National Action Plan. To curb this menace from the society, the government has taken several steps over the past two years. A new law named as The Sound System Ordinance has been promulgated to check the use of loudspeakers for terrorism purposes. In this regard, the provincial police has been directed to enforce the law in letter and spirit. Moreover, the publication of hate materials has also been tried to stop. Various publication houses were raided and obnoxious material seized during these raids. Regardless of all these efforts, the situation has not improved on the ground as much as was expected.

Further, the National Action Plan also recommended to resolve the issue of 1.5 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan. The government took several policy measures like identifying those who had attained identity cards and other papers in connivance with the NADRA officials. Also, several raids were made in their colonies especially in Islamabad and Peshawar. The federal government also formed a new policy for the repatriation of the refugees named as the National Policy on Management and Repatriation of Afghan Refugees. No doubt, after the introduction of this new policy the stalled repatriation process has took a significant pace.

To counter the terrorism, the government also adopted the policy of reconciliation in Baluchistan. The warring Baloch tribes were offered to lay their arms and get a chance of reintegration in the society. The estranged Baloch leaders like Harbiar Marri and Brahamdagh Bugti were also reached out under this reconciliation policy. Although, several armed groups laid their arms but the efforts towards ending the conflict altogether by convincing the leaders of bigger factions like Baluchistan Liberation Front and Baluchistan Liberation Army could not succeed. Therefore, more concerted efforts should be entailed to make this process fruitful.

Another counter terrorism measure that has been taken is an effective operation in Karachi. After the year long kidnappings, targeted killings, extortion, money laundering and mayhem, the government launched an all-out operation in Karachi. The main focus of the operation was to manhunt the criminal elements, open up the no go areas and dismantle the armed groups. Hundreds of criminals have been arrested so far. A large number of arms has also been captured. The collection of Bhatta and Alms have been checked. Various powerful figures of the city have also been arrested and tried for their role in deteriorating the law and order and other criminal activities like inciting violence, ordering targeted killings, facilitating terrorists, money laundering and china cutting. Therefore the Karachi operation has remained successful overall and the environment of the city has improved significantly.

The most effective counter terrorism measure of all is the operation Zarb e Azb. The operation started in June 2014 from North Waziristan Agency with the resolve to act indiscriminately against all sorts of militants and terrorists. After the launch of operation, the terrorism related acts started to die down. The civilian fatalities due to terrorism has declined to 70 percent over the past 2 years according to analysts. About 90 percent of the area bordering Afghanistan has been cleared. The sanctuaries of terrorists have effectively been eliminated. Further, t

government and the security forces resolve to take that operation to its logical conclusion. The only problem that has remained to be addressed is the large scale displacement of the local population and their rehabilitation in the areas that have been cleared already. Therefore, the government should pay special attention towards the issue of IDPs.

Given the porous nature of the Pak-Afghan border, the terrorists flee to Afghanistan whenever pressure mounts on them from Pakistani security forces. After the launch of operation Zarb e Azb, the TTP and its leadership like Mullah Fazlullah also fled to Afghanistan and started attacking Pakistan from there. Therefore, the management of this border became a priority for Pakistan to counter the terrorists from their hit and run spree. The effective management of border was also necessary to make the ongoing National Action Plan a success. For this purpose, the security forces enhanced vigilance and erected few gates at various crossing points like Torkham although against the wishes of Afghanistan. Consequently, these steps not only succeeded to some extent in checking the illegal crossings by civilians but also obviated the terrorists to flee or enter the country. Even so, there is required a lot to be done in this respect. The government should bring the Afghan government on card to seal the border in the better interest of both the nations. Also, the security of border with Iran should be relooked and appropriate steps should be taken there as well to prevent the entrance of non-state elements into the country.

Yet another counter terrorism measure that has been taken is acting against the use of internet and use of social media for terrorism and violence. The government in this regard, has blocked various sites and accounts of terrorist elements or people having inclinations towards terrorism. Apart from blockage of accounts, a number of arrests and raids have also been made against the hate mongers. A cybercrime bill has also been passed by the Parliament to plug that menace. Despite of having all these efforts, there are several loopholes and grey areas that remain to be touched. There still, remain many sites of terrorist organizations that remain to be blocked. Moreover, the Cyber Crime Bill needs to be revisited. All the controversies regarding the bill should be removed and its effective implementation should be secured. A separate anti cybercrime force should be constructed and its operations should be made on non-partisan and non-political basis. Accordingly, this measure of the government still remains inconclusive and still lots of efforts are required in this field.

Lastly, the government also took a forward step to lift the moratorium of the death sentence that was extended by the previous government. The government resolved to execute especially the persons convicted of the terrorism charges. Since lifting the ban, about 350 executions have been made. Among which, only one in six prisoners are linked with militancy and terrorism. Therefore, the target of executing all the terrorists still remains to be achieved. Still and all, the government seems satisfied with the outcomes of executions. According to the government, lifting of moratorium indeed helped in reducing the terrorist attacks in the country. According to the official statistics, the terrorist attacks have decreased from 1,823 in 2014 to 1,009 in 2015. Fatalities from attacks have also decreased from 1,761 in 2014 to 1,081 in 2015. On actual ground, the lifting of ban from the executions may have deterred few terrorists to act, but that move has not proved much fruitful if the given surge of terrorist activities are any yardstick.

There are also some points in the National Acton Plan that have not been bothered to be implemented yet. These recommended measures include the all-important issues of registration of religious seminaries, revamping and reforming the criminal justice system, controlling militancy in Punjab, much needed reforms in FATA, choking the finance for terrorists and terrorist organizations, timely activation of National Counter Terrorism Authority and curbing the resurfacing of proscribed organizations. Without an effective implementation of the remaining points of National Action Plan, the outcomes of the steps already taken are likely to be wasted.

To conclude, it can safely be assumed that the government's efforts towards countering the hydra-headed pitfall of terrorism have not proved to be as successful as the people of Pakistan and the world at large was expecting. The full implementation of much touted National Action Plan remains a distant dream even after the lapse of two years.

This failure of the government in generating an effective response towards terrorism is mainly due to a weak power, persistent political crisis in the country, non-existence of a coordinating body between a host of counterterrorism agencies, incompetency of the anti-terror forces and lack of coordination from the regional countries. Still, the government can control the issue of terrorism by implementing the NAP thoroughly. Any further leniency towards this cancerous disease would tantamount to self-destruction.

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