

Security and Counter-Intelligence: Pakistan's New Regulations Regarding International NGOs

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Pakistan's recent regulation of International NGOs (INGOs) must be followed up by additional security measures by the counter-intelligence services in order to root out the rest of the foreign intelligence agents that have embedded themselves inside the country, but any possible gains on this front won't be sustainable unless Islamabad properly addresses the socio-economic issues that make it susceptible to INGO infiltration in the first place.

It's been roughly two and a half months since Pakistan decreed that 18 International NGOs (INGOs) had 60 days to discontinue their operations in the country prior to reregistering their organizations after complying with Islamabad's new requirements, making this an appropriate moment to reflect on what might come next. The author's previous piece on this topic discussed how "[Pakistan Hit Back At Hybrid War Plots By Restricting Hostile INGOs](#)" and briefly elaborated on some of the methods that foreign intelligence services have utilized to infiltrate the country under the cover of international aid groups, explaining just how serious of a threat this has become in Pakistan and other "Global South" countries.

Keenly aware of this, the state boldly made the decision to curtail the activities of the most threatening INGOs but prudently allowed them the possibility of continuing to operate in the country as long as they purged themselves of the hostile elements that were interfering with Pakistan's domestic political processes and surreptitiously carrying out surveillance activities against its citizens. This pragmatic decision could conceivably see some INGOs return to their apolitical socio-economic roots in carrying out important humanitarian functions designed to help the local populace, but it can't be taken for granted that this will happen unless the proper security measures are in place.

All countries across the world have permanent military, intelligence, and diplomatic bureaucracies (or "deep states") that work behind the scenes to secure the citizens' interests, but none are more important in ensuring Democratic Security than the counter-intelligence operatives who are responsible for identifying the foreign intelligence agents embedded within the country. They probably played a role in exposing how certain spy agencies were abusing INGOs in order to carry out their Hybrid War plots against Pakistan, so it makes sense for them to continue their work in going as high up the chain of command as possible in order to uncover these groups' in-country handlers.

Foreign intelligence agencies spilled into Pakistan after 9/11 and have been a problem ever since, but it's only in recent years that Pakistan began to take active measures to root out these threats. It's in this context that the INGO regulatory move should be seen and from

where one can better predict the direction that it might naturally lead. The individuals who abused their INGO roles to carry out hostile activities against the Pakistani state were presumably being handled by foreign intelligence agents inside of the country, so it's incumbent on the relevant authorities to do everything within their power to identify and remove these forces.

Even in the best-case scenario where the counter-intelligence services fully succeed with their mission, that still won't be enough to secure the Pakistani state unless a sustainable solution is spearheaded that properly addresses the socio-economic issues that make the country susceptible to INGO infiltration in the first place. These organizations are operating in Pakistan because the state is unable to meet the needs of a certain segment of its population, but China's [Belt & Road Initiative](#) (BRI) could be expanded from its hard infrastructural focus into the realm of social development to assist its ally with this ambitious task.

China, which has one of the world's strictest INGO regulations, clearly understands the Hybrid War risks that these groups could pose, so it's in its best interests to help Pakistan liberate itself from these forces by financing Pakistani-run NGOs that will gradually replace them. Just like the US has USAID, BRI could experiment with BRI-Aid in Pakistan prior to perfecting this model for export all across the Silk Road. The host government (in this case Pakistan) could cooperate with local stakeholders to carry out feasibility studies and facilitate China's financing of the most important projects, thus representing the most effective solution in the long term.

It needs to be remembered that Democratic Security can only be ensured through a combination of counter-intelligence and socio-economic development whereby the nation's security services deal with Hybrid War threats while its civil society works to remove the conditions that helped them take root. There's no doubt that the Pakistani state is more than capable of handling the first-mentioned of these requirements, but it might need some help from China to finance the latter half of this solution if it's to guarantee that foreign intelligence agents aren't ever able to infiltrate back into the country under the guise of INGO workers.

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