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# **Contemporary Counter Terrorism in Pakistan and Its Efficacy.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The study aims to express counter-terrorism situation in Pakistan where terrorism has prevailed in last two decades. There have been more than 100,000 fatalities, the government bears 126 billion US dollars financially, 92 billion US dollars in terms of indirect losses and overall an estimated 10 million people nationally are affected by terrorism. NACTA was formed under National Action Plan to counter terrorism, it was the first step toward concrete anti-terrorism policy. This secondary data based qualitative research highlights efficacy of counter- terrorism policies. The results show the strengths and weaknesses of NACTA framework and its performance. The counter- terrorism strategies minimized security threats demonstrating considerable decrease in numbers of suicide attacks and violent activities.

**Key Words:** Counter-Terrorism, NACTA, SWOT Analysis, Effectiveness

## **Introduction**

Terrorism has been highly destructive phenomenon for last two decades, especially after 9/11 attacks and Pakistan's joining the 'War on Terror'. Approximately 100,000 non-combatant Pakistanis were killed by terrorists in post 9/11 era. According to the government analysis, the direct and indirect economic costs of terrorism up to 2017 have now surpassed \$126 billion whereas the other economic losses from the 'War on Terror' totaled \$7543 million between 2016-18 (see Table.1). The annual death toll in major terrorist attacks had risen from 164 in 2009 to 3318 in 2013.

**Table 1: Impacts of war on Terror in Pakistan**

| Years  | Losses <sup>1</sup> (Billion \$) | Cost of War (Billion \$) | Collateral Damage <sup>2</sup> |
|--|----------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2001-02  | 2.72                             | 2.67                     | N/A                            |
| 2002-03  | N/A <sup>3</sup>                 | 2.75                     | N/A                            |
| 2003-04  | N/A                              | 2.93                     | N/A                            |
| 2004-05  | N/A                              | 3.41                     | 787                            |
| 2005-06  | N/A                              | 3.99                     | 2,450                          |
| 2006-07  | N/A                              | 4.67                     | 8,801                          |
| 2007-08  | N/A                              | 6.94                     | 17,667                         |
| 2008-09  | N/A                              | 9.18                     | 25,447                         |
| 2009-10  | N/A                              | 13.56                    | 23,098                         |
| 2010-11  | 17.82                            | 23.77                    | 19,551                         |
| 2011-12  | 11.79                            | 11.98                    | 10,735                         |
| 2012-13  | 9.96                             | 9.97                     | 11,657                         |
| 2013-14  | 6.69                             | 7.70                     | 9,877                          |
| 2014-15  | 11.16                            | 9.24                     | 5,670                          |
| 2015-16  | 14.80                            | 6.49                     | 3,843                          |
| 2016-17  | 10.37                            | 5.47                     | 3,823                          |
| 2017-18  | 7.54                             | 2.07                     |                                |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>92.85</b>                     | <b>126.79</b>            | <b>143,406</b>                 |
| <b>Direct and Indirect losses of National Economy = \$219.64 Billion</b> |                                  |                          |                                |

The protracted violence and security risks made it essential to take viable counter-terrorism measures to prevent such destruction subsequently. National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) bill was passed by an act of parliament in 2013. The NACTA Act 2013 set up the framework of proposed organization. Accordingly, the NACTA was to be overseen by a board of governors. The prime minister was designated the chairperson of the NACTA Board of Governors whilst the other seats on the board of governors were filled by the other state officials and government members: the defence, interior, foreign, finance, law and justice ministers; a senate member; a national assembly member, the chief ministers of all

<sup>1</sup> For further details, see full report and annual expenditures. *Ministry of Finance*, Government of Pakistan, 'Pakistan Economic Survey 2017-2018'. Indirect Costs or Losses because of war against terrorists that includes Compensation to Affectees, Physical Infrastructure, foreign Investment, privatization, Industrial Output, Tax Collection, cost of Uncertainty, Expenditure Overrun and Other subjects.

<sup>2</sup> Includes deaths and injuries in overall incidents and attacks designed by terrorists, nationalists and extremists

<sup>3</sup> Data are Not Available in Economic Surveys from 2002 to 2010.

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four provinces, the prime minister of Azad Kashmir, the secretary interior, DG federal investigation agency, the chiefs of intelligence agencies, the provincial chief secretaries and police chiefs.

The board collects information and coordinates with all the relevant departments to formulate threat assessments with periodical reviews and presents to the federal government for making adequate and timely efforts to counter terrorist activities. It has authority to develop action plans against terrorism and reports to the federal government about implementation of plans periodically. The NACTA focuses on relationship with international entities to facilitate cooperation in concerning areas, reviews relevant laws and suggests amendments.

Pakistan has faced a severe security crisis that damages person, property and the economy. The NACTA aims to revitalize peace and security nationwide. This paper considers NACTA's counter terrorism drive and determines its effectiveness. It also analyzes all aspects of NACTA, its progress since its inception and establishes a picture of contemporary counter-terrorism and efficacy in Pakistan.

### **Review of Literature**

International counter terrorism drive was accelerated after 9/11 terrorist attacks. Many countries took some measures to strengthen security. The states started making policy and legislative changes through legitimate processes. Enders and Sandler examined several U.S. counter terrorism policies implemented between 1968 and 1988. They determined that one of the most effective policies was installation of metal detectors on the airports in 1973, and fortification of U.S. embassies in 1976. Each policy reduced terrorists' likelihood of success by increasing probability of apprehension. The metal detectors proved particularly effective in decreasing threats because the benefits to terrorist organizations of threatening attacks decreased when such threats were more likely to have been prevented by authorities before the threat could take place (Endler & Sandler, 1993). Chauncey discussed the five deterrence policies designed to reduce hijackings. He found that metal detectors produced the largest reduction in hijacking attempts (Chauncey, 1995). Enders et al. also analyzed the government actions to decrease the threat of terror attacks. They also asserted that meticulous policies helped to minimize threats (Enders, Sandler & Cauley, 1990). Dugan et al. (2005) also found that installation of metal detectors reduced all types of aerial hijackings.

Moreover, analyzing some legitimate actions, Chalk (1998) discussed the different government actions that helped Peru in counter terrorism struggle. To combat Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement and Sendero Luminoso, Peruvian government enacted several highly repressive certainty-based sanctions between 1992 and 1996. Bail of accused terrorists was denied, cross examination by defense lawyers was prohibited and defense lawyers were prevented from challenging judges' decisions. As per Chalk arguments (1996), repressive policies

effectively destroyed support bases of both groups and diminished threat greatly they posed previously.

Further, Albini (2001) analyzed non-conventional ways adopted by the law enforcement agencies while dealing with modern terrorists, using the Italian Red Brigades as a case study that changed the nature and composition of terrorism globally. He asserted that the outdated and conventional methods to overcome terrorism created frustration, anger and provoked terrorists to go for modern moves to retaliate. He further argues that states should overlook established counter terrorism policies and should adopt non-conventional approaches.

On the other hand, some scholars write that strict policies and combat operations, sometimes, can urge terrorists to retaliate with more strength and accuracy. In an assessment of United States' 1998 attempt to subdue terrorist activity in Afghanistan, Malvesti (2002) stated that the strikes increased Osama bin Laden's popularity and increased their power throughout the region. The military intervention intensified public anger toward U.S and might have contributed to the events of September 11, 2001. In this regard Roberts (2002) said that despite minimizing civilian casualties, U.S. targeted Taliban's military assets located in the centers of towns. The collateral damage caused by the bombings prompted accusations that United States placed little value of Afghan lives, thereby undermining the legitimacy of U.S. government.

Accordingly, Benmelech, et al. (2010) examined the effectiveness of house demolitions attempted to reduce Palestinian suicide terrorism. The house demolitions targeting the dwellings of Palestinian terrorists were deemed to cause "an immediate, significant decrease in number of suicide attacks". On the other hand, indiscriminate house demolitions against Palestinian community caused a significant increase in subsequent suicide attacks. Dugan and Chenoweth (2012) also studied similar reaction over counter terrorism. They found that backlash effect of repressing terrorism resulted in more potency when it was directed against non-combatant. Such actions can change a non-combatant citizen into a terrorist and extremist. Similarly, LaFree et al (2009) examined the six-high profile British counterterrorist operations against PIRA (Provisional Irish Republican Army) experienced significant increase in reactionary attacks.

Fielding and Shortland (2010) presented a similar conclusion in their analysis of insurgency in Egypt, where counter terrorism operations caused collateral damage and the government faced security threats when terrorists retaliated. According to Condra and Shapiro (2012), the attacks of coalition forces on Iraqi insurgents caused many civilian deaths. In reaction, that damages the activities of coalition force. On the other hand, Kaplan et al. (2005) said that Israeli target killings of terrorists led to the subsequent increase in suicide bombings.

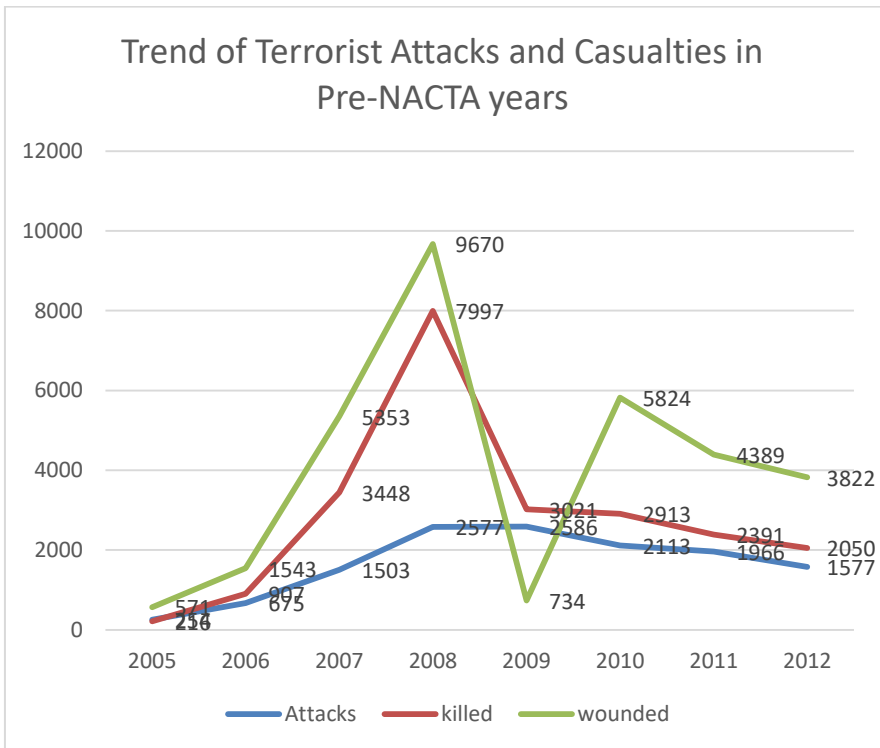
## **Terrorism and counter-terrorism: analyzing NACTA performance**

This chapter analyzes the role of NACTA as well as highlighting major terrorist incidents in Post-NACTA years (after 2013) and comparing them with Pre-NACTA years (before 2013) for better understanding of its efficacy.

### **3.1 Terrorism in Pre-NACTA years**

Pre-NACTA years were full of security risks. The numbers of terrorist attacks increased drastically from 2007 to 2010. The terrorists were attacking indiscriminately nationwide. There were 254 attacks were reported in 2005, by 2009 that massively increased to more than 2586 attacks. The numbers of attacks increased by 159 per cent in 2006 from that of 2005, 129 percent increased from 2006 to 2007, and 43 per cent increase was experienced from 2007 to 2009. Likewise, the casualties increased from 216 persons to 7997 persons and injuries increased from 571 persons to 9670 persons in just four years (2005-2008) (see figure.1). That trend sustained in attacks, killing and injuries in subsequent years from 2009 to 2012. The overall security situation was very weak and chaotic.

**Figure 1: Trend of terrorist attacks and casualties in Pre-NACTA years**



## **Terrorism in post-NACTA years**

### **3.2.1 2014**

The overall 1,206 terrorist attacks were carried out by the militants, extremists and violent sectarian groups. Total 1,723 civilians lost their lives and 3,143 got injured. The numbers of attacks decreased by 30 percent, which resulted in the numbers of killed and injured decreasing by 30 and 42 percent respectively compared to previous year. The government notified 436 terrorist attacks those were designed to target personnel, processions and law enforcement agencies. Further, 217 blasts directly targeted non-combatant evidently whereas 157 attacks had denominational targets like the holy places of Shia and Sunni communities. The members of tribal peace committees and *lashkars* (groups) were targeted in 66 terrorist attacks. However, 56 blasts were organized to assassinate political leaders while 40 attacks targeted the educational institutions.

The state installations including gas pipelines, power pylons, and railways tracks were targeted in 22 attacks whereas 10 attacks on the government officials and journalists, 21 assaults on NATO supplies, 13 attacks on media houses, and 8 strikes conducted against members' minorities. Political agents in FATA, tribal elders, non-Baloch settlers in Baluchistan, NGOs employees and civil society, private property, alleged spies, and foreign diplomats and other prominent persons were also targeted by terrorists.

Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) were used in 516 attacks and 501 attacks aimed target killings and firings. Other tactics used by extremists included 79 grenade blasts, 52 rocket attacks, 18 sabotages, 12 motor cases and 2 beheadings. Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan and affiliated groups (Jamaatul Ahrar, Jundullah, Lashkar-e-Islam, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Sepah-e-Muhammad, Jaish-e-Muhammad and Lashkar-e-Taiba) were some of the groups involved.

### **3.2.2 2015**

The sectarian, militant and extremist oriented organizations carried out 626 attacks in 76 districts. Substantially, 48 per cent decrease was experienced in total numbers of attacks. Although, 1068 fatalities and 1444 injuries were assessed the reductions on the previous year were 39 and 55 per cent respectively. The numbers of people killed in sectarian attacks were 7 per cent more comparatively. Overall 1,076 civilians and 356 security personnel were injured in terrorist activities. The civilians were directly targeted in 90 attacks, another 41 attacks were conducted against political leaders and anti-militant peace committee members. However, 63 attacks targeted religious and sacred places. Moreover, the state installations, the government officials, polio workers, educational institutions, media houses and journalists were targeted in 65 attacks. Additionally, in 20 suicide attacks sectarian groups used improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Other methods utilised by the

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groups include 28 grenade blasts, 24 rocket attacks, 9 of sabotage and 4 motor fires.

#### **3.2.3 2016**

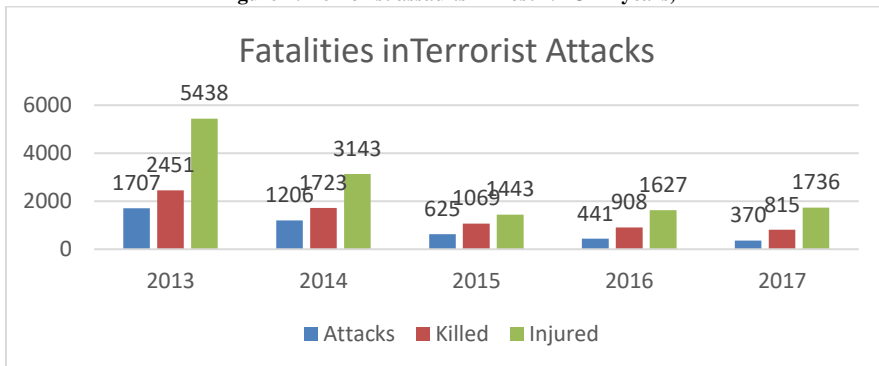
The overall 441 terrorist attacks occurred in 58 districts killed 910 people and 1,627 people were injured. Moreover, the numbers of fatalities totalled: civilians (550), the security forces and law enforcement agencies; policemen (206), army troops (27), and levies (21). Injured civilians numbered 1156 and the security forces 470.

Around 20 attacks were targeted political leaders. Members of Shia and Sunni communities and places of worship were targeted in 34 attacks whereas the state installations were targeted in 30 attacks. Religious minorities were also targeted by terrorists, such as one attack on an Ahmedi community, one suicide attack on a Hindu community and one on a Christian community. Apart from that, 6 attacks were directed at educational institutions, 4 attacks killed polio aid workers, 2 attacks against journalists and 4 attacks against foreigners. Improvised explosives devices (IEDs) were used in 39 per cent of the total terrorist activities; other methods included grenade blasts (24), rockets (8), motor fire (1) and sabotage (3).

#### **3.2.4 2017**

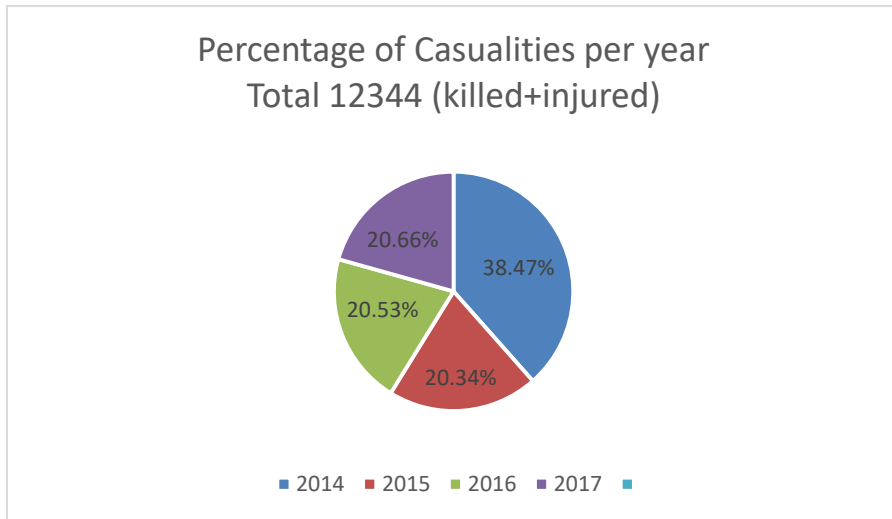
According to the official data, overall 370 assaults were conducted nationwide resulting in 815 fatalities and 1736 people were wounded. Generally, 138 attacks had been organized by national insurgents that killed 140 people and 265 people got injured. An estimated 213 attacks were carried out by militants caused 604 deaths and injuries of 1374 people and 19 sectarian attacks digested 71 lives and 97 were hurt. Further, 58 percent of total attacks were claimed to be committed by Tehreek Taliban Pakistan and ISIS related wings. Amongst all casualties, 563 were civilians and 217 personnel of forces like 46 of federal force, 110 policemen, 42 army men, 16 from levies and 3 of paramilitaries.

**Figure 2: Terrorist assaults in Post NACTA years,**



Source: Pakistan Security Report

Figure 3: Percentage of casualties' year wise.



Source: Pakistan Security Report

## Counter-terrorism in post-NACTA years

### 3.3.1 Zarb-e-Azb

The Pakistan armed forces instigated an operation named *Zarb-e-Azb* on 15 June 2014 in the aftermath of the attack on Jinnah International Airport in Karachi on 8<sup>th</sup> of June. This operation worked within a short span of time. Approximately 2100 terrorists were killed by December 28, 2014, as reported by Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the media wing of Pakistan Army. Overall 30,000 soldiers participated in this “comprehensive operation” to pursue all foreign and local militants who had camouflaged themselves in North Waziristan. The Operation reduced overall terrorist activities to a six year low (BBC News, 16 July 2017). ISPR released a further press report stating that approximately 3400 terrorists were killed by December 12, 2015. The operation successfully broke the network of the militants of North Waziristan and aggressors moved to other areas. The Pakistani Government began regeneration of the geographical area of North Waziristan that was damaged by the militants (The Express Tribune, 29 June 2015).

### Khyber-I

Operation Khyber-I was initiated under umbrella of Operation Zarb-e-Azb against Mangal Bagh group of Lashkar-e-Islam that had control in Tirah and Bara valleys. The operation began on 17 October 2014 with airstrikes which killed 21 militants, including Mangal Bagh, and destroyed their three key bases. The main objective



was to reduce the threat in Bara and Tirah valleys from terrorists. In this operation 21 strikes were conducted, and 122 terrorists and rebels were killed while 64 were injured.

## **Khyber-II**

The operation was announced on February 2015 and set up on March 2015, with an objective of clearing Tirah valley and main target was Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan. Tirah valley is an area of deep valleys and high mountains. The selection of a proper and suitable time made the operation successful. The operation was accomplished on 15 June 2015, the one-year anniversary of Operation Zarb-e-Azab (PIPS, 2015). Resultantly, 572 terrorists killed in 29 strikes and 80 militants were wounded.

## **Khyber-III**

Khyber-III was launched to clear the areas besides Tirah Valley close to Durand line. The sophisticated arm apparatus including heavy magazines guns, rocket launchers, grenades and machine guns were taken into custody. Furthermore, 40 terrorists were killed and 21 got wounded. The operation ended with success of reducing the numbers of militants across the border (Times of Islamabad, 22 August 2016).

## **Khyber-IV**

The 4<sup>th</sup> phase of Khyber operations was launched on July 15, 2017 to clear Rajgal Valley. It was a joint operation with Afghan forces (The Dawn, 16 July 2017) and took actions in their side to attack terrorists who try to cross the border. The operation was completed on August 21, 2017 and achieved its objective of clearing Rajgal Valley from terrorists' hideouts. During 24000 search operations, 52 terrorists were killed, and 253 square kilometers of area had been cleared. Of Government forces, 2 soldiers were killed, and 15 military personnel were wounded during operation. The army also established 91 check posts to keep an area in control subsequently (Geo News, 21 August 2017).

## **Operation Radd-ul-Fasad**

Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad was launched on February 22, 2017 including air force, navy and other paramilitary forces. It was fully fledged operation acquiring all areas of battle field. The operation continued gaining victories. More than 200 successful search operations were conducted across the country and more than 600 suspects were arrested. Assessing one year of its success, more than 108 terrorists were killed including most wanted, more than 200 militants surrendered in return for amnesty, and 4510 suspects were apprehended: 2692 from Punjab, 335 from

Sindh, 261 from Baluchistan and 1247 from FATA, KPK and Kashmir (Khan, 2017).

## **Special operations**

Special operations are small scaled operations launched on direction of NACTA. The special operations killed 2,530 militants in 2014. Meanwhile, 137 terrorist activities were prevented because of swift action. According to the reports, 9 military personnel, 2 Police Officers, 6 army troops, and one rangers were killed, and the operation killed 1930 militants and injured 150 in 140 strikes. Moreover, 2061 militants were targeted and killed in 2015 whereas 76 terrorists were killed by the law enforcement agencies in defusing the explosives. The crackdown was constituted part of the military operation launched in North Waziristan; 143 operational strikes resulted in 1545 fatalities and 173 insurgents were severely wounded. In 2016, 809 militants were killed during skirmishes between the security forces and militants. These operations were set up throughout the country and captured more than 1400 suspected terrorists and rebels. In 2017, almost 315 raids killed 480 terrorists and 35 militants were wounded (PIPS, 2015).

## **Area wise counter-terrorism operations**

During 2014 to 2016, 96 operations were launched in Baluchistan, 39 operations took place in KP, 140 operations were conducted in FATA and 99 raids were carried out in Sindh, mostly in Karachi and 23 strikes in Punjab (PIPS, 2014).

**Table 2: Overall Counter-Terrorism Operations in Post-NACTA years**

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Operations</b> | <b>Killed</b> | <b>Injured</b> | <b>Arrested</b> |
|-------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|
| <b>2013</b> | 90                | 673           | 252            | 3390            |
| <b>2014</b> | 130               | 1930          | 172            | 2247            |
| <b>2015</b> | 75                | 1560          | 173            | 2455            |
| <b>2016</b> | 95                | 492           | 49             | 1418            |
| <b>2017</b> | 75                | 296           | 47             | 908             |

Source: Pakistan Security Report

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In 2014, 2,247 terrorists and members of radical organizations were arrested across the country including 1,079 suspected of terrorism. They were apprehended mainly from KP, FATA and Karachi. Moreover, 32 terrorists of Al-Qaeda or their foreign affiliates including Central Asian militants were also arrested. The security forces made those arrests in 298 search operations (PIPS, 2014).

Table 3: Counter-Terrorism Search Operations in Baluchistan

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Operations</b> | <b>Killed</b> | <b>Injured</b> |
|-------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------|
| <b>2013</b> | 19                | 54            | 33             |
| <b>2014</b> | 13                | 88            | 19             |
| <b>2015</b> | 31                | 152           | 36             |
| <b>2016</b> | 38                | 141           | 14             |
| <b>2017</b> | 39                | 95            | 13             |

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The operations mostly affected KPK province, from 2013 to 2017, the considerable decrease can be seen in attacks, casualties and detention.

Table 4: Counter Terrorism Search Operations in KPK

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Operations</b> | <b>Killed</b> | <b>Injured</b> |
|-------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------|
| <b>2013</b> | 6                 | 28            | 3              |
| <b>2014</b> | 6                 | 16            | 21             |
| <b>2015</b> | 6                 | 10            | 0              |

|             |   |    |    |
|-------------|---|----|----|
| <b>2016</b> | 5 | 8  | 0  |
| <b>2017</b> | 8 | 27 | 10 |

Pak Institute for Peace Studies

Total 2,455 terrorists were arrested including 1021 suspected militants of TTP and affiliated radical wings. The foreign militants were arrested too: 113 terrorists of ISIS and 17 militants of Al-Qaeda.

**Table 5: Counter Terrorism Search Operations in Punjab**

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Operations</b> | <b>Killed</b> | <b>Injured</b> |
|-------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------|
| <b>2013</b> | 0                 | 0             | 0              |
| <b>2014</b> | 5                 | 12            | 8              |
| <b>2015</b> | 5                 | 22            | 13             |
| <b>2016</b> | 13                | 77            | 11             |
| <b>2017</b> | 7                 | 43            | 3              |

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Additionally, 746 nationalist insurgents were apprehended from Baluchistan and Sindh in 438 raids.

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Table 6: Counter Terrorism Search Operations in Sindh

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Operations</b> | <b>Killed</b> | <b>Injured</b> |
|-------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------|
| <b>2013</b> | 5                 | 10            | 0              |
| <b>2014</b> | 9                 | 42            | 3              |
| <b>2015</b> | 26                | 111           | 5              |
| <b>2016</b> | 15                | 44            | 2              |
| <b>2017</b> | 3                 | 7             | 6              |

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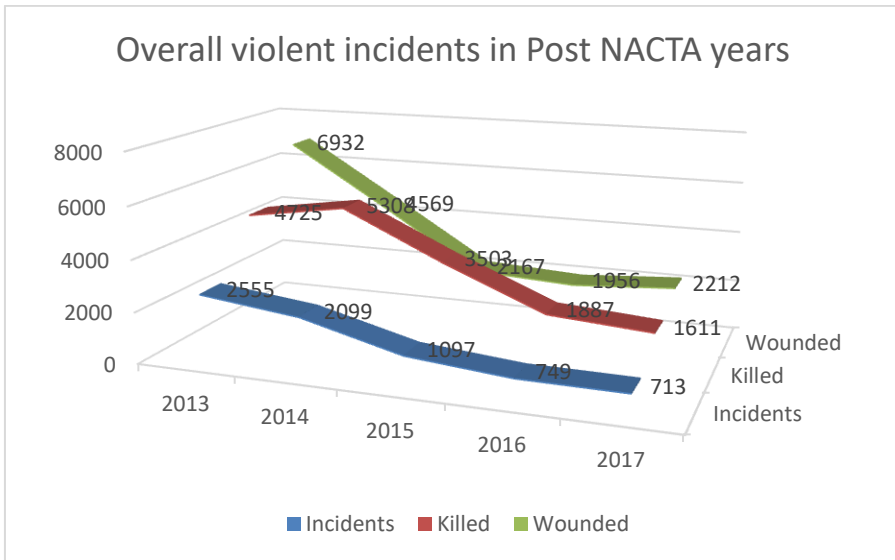
FATA was the most affected area by terrorism throughout the country. Almost 3000 terrorists were detained in FATA and most of them were belonged to TTP.

Table 7: Counter Terrorism Search Operations in FATA

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Operations</b> | <b>Killed</b> | <b>Injured</b> |
|-------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------|
| <b>2013</b> | 60                | 581           | 198            |
| <b>2014</b> | 101               | 1784          | 147            |
| <b>2015</b> | 75                | 1265          | 119            |
| <b>2016</b> | 24                | 222           | 22             |
| <b>2017</b> | 18                | 124           | 15             |

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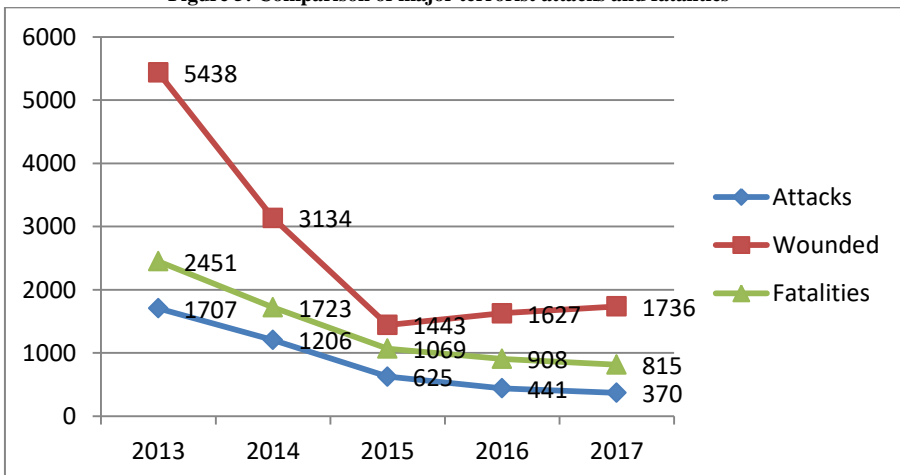
Figure 4: Trend of overall incidents of violence in Post-NACTA years



PIPS

In 2011, around 3,000 terrorist activities were recorded in Pakistan and terrorists were attacking in all parts of the country not only in KP or Baluchistan but also Karachi, interior Sindh and Punjab (PIPS, 2011). In 2013, those incidents reduced to 2555 that further declined into 2,099 in 2014 reported in the official reports. It included terrorist attacks, ethno-political violence, drone attacks, inter-tribal and inter-militant's skirmishes, sectarian clashes, communal violence, cross-border attacks, clashes among rival criminal gangs as well and with the security forces.

Figure 5: Comparison of major terrorist attacks and fatalities



The overall incidents decreased by 66 per cent from 2,099 in 2014 to 713 in 2017. The overall fatalities in terrorist attacks decreased by 70 per cent from 5,308 to 1611 in just four years (2014- 2017). Additionally, 70 percent eclipse had been experienced in injured civilians. The 2017 year, was a successful year in terminating and encountering terrorism and extremism in Pakistan.

### **Counter-terrorism force**

The counter-terrorism force was recruited in all provinces under NACTA umbrella. First batch of Punjab Counter-Terrorism Force passed out 421 corporals in 2015 (Naqvi, 2015). The second batch of 500 corporals in KP completed their training in January 2015. The third batch of 405 soldiers completed training course that engrossed Navy, Rangers, Army Strategic Force (ASF) and Gilgit-Baltistan police (The Dawn, 28 January 2015). Baluchistan's Anti-Terror Force comprised 200 personnel including 18 women whereas Sindh government approved formation of in 2015 while commissioned in 2017. Now all provinces including Gilgit Baltistan have their own Anti-Terrorism Forces.

### **Military courts**

Military courts were established through 21<sup>st</sup> amendment of the constitution in 2015. After Swat operation (2008) many terrorists arrested and remained incarcerated till 2014. They had not been convicted even after six years of their arrest (2008 to 2014) due to immense numbers of pending judicial cases. It was needed to formulate courts which could convict terrorists quickly. Therefore, 11 military courts were established, and 717 cases were referred to them; 546 cases have been finalized while 171 are in progress as of late 2018. Those 31 convicted terrorists also included four militants who had attacked APS (Army Public School) on December 16, 2014. Late December, 310 people were sentenced to death, 234 were convicted up to 5 years of incarceration to lifetime imprisonment and 2 were acquitted by the courts since the moratorium was revoked in 2014 (ISPR, 16 December 2018).

### **Weakness**

Despite considerable achievements in last few years, there were still measurable loopholes that affected the counter-terrorism approaches. For example, NACTA was not structurally stratified initially that created financial issues for counter-terrorism strategies. A special budget was not allocated for the NACTA in fiscal year from 2015-16. The organisation demanded 2 billion rupees but received only 100 million rupees. In December 2015, the federal interior minister informed the parliamentarians that service rules of NACTA have yet to be finalized (Express Tribune, 23 July 2015).

Moreover, the security forces have captured thousands of terrorists - many of those are still waiting for their judicial trials. Delays to conviction resulted in opportunities for detainee escapes. The two cases were reported in Dera Ismail Khan and Banu in 2014 and then in Karachi but was made unsuccessful. It was reported that some jails were not only providing safe havens to the terrorists to perpetrate their activities but also serve as induction centres for terrorist groups (PIPS, 2015). The prison security is an important challenge for police and local security forces.

Furthermore, the illicit trade of weapons is also a major challenge for security forces in their counter-militancy drive. According to the collected data by Pakistan Customs, 1.2 billion rupees of different weapons were imported from 2010 to 2014 (Arfeen, 2015). Similarly, madrassas should also be regularized. According to the NACTA reports, there are 20,000 to 33,000 madrassas in Pakistan. The former interior minister told that 90 per cent of madrassas had no connection with terrorism (Shahzad, 2015) but what about remaining 10 per cent? They could be threats for national security if they would serve as recruiting centers. These madrasas play the vital role in recruiting process and fund-raising camps for terrorists. According to the Islamabad police report, twenty madrassas were being investigated for affiliation with TTP and at least two gave “jihadist training classes to students” (International Crisis Group, 2015). According to the Sindh home ministry survey of 2013, the province had over 12,500 madrasas and 120,000 to 150,000 students. Over 2,100 madrasas were deemed “dangerous”. Karachi’s central district, a hotbed of sectarian violence, has over 800 jihadi madrasas (Chisti, 2013).

Additionally, terrorism funding is proved to be oxygen for terrorists to conduct vicious activities. In March 2015, the government claimed to freeze accounts of \$100 million worth that were used to finance the terrorist organizations from abroad and had recovered over \$1 million. The state bank also froze 120 accounts of different banned organizations over the NACTA direction. The NACTA doesn’t have access to the other illegal methods of money laundering like *hundi*. Foreign donors used these tactics to finance terrorist groups. Middle Eastern philanthropists had reportedly channelled an estimated \$100 million annually in charity to Sunni extremist madrassas in Punjab alone. In February 2015, it was reported to Senate committee that at least 950 million rupees were sent to the extremist sectarian madrassas from Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and fourteen other Muslim and non-Muslim countries (International Crisis Group, 2015). Without revoking terrorist funding, the war against terrorism cannot be won.

## **Conclusion**

The countrywide counter-terrorism operations such as *Rah e Najat*, *Raddul Fasaad*, *Zarb e Azb*, Khyber I, Khyber II, Khyber III and Khyber IV led a mission of stability with the help of NACTA’s effective policies. Additionally, the

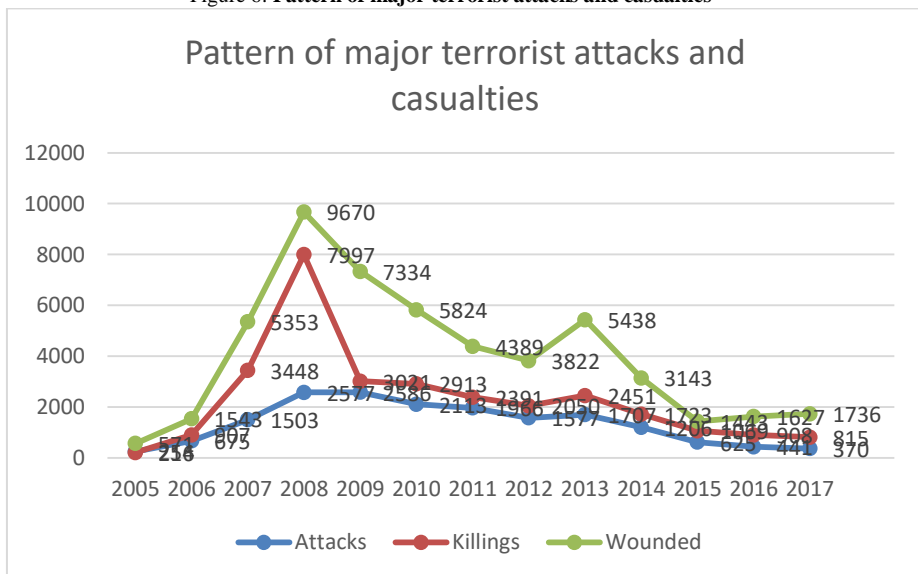


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hundreds of search operations and raids by Anti-Terrorist Forces were also carried out to destroy safe havens of terrorists countrywide. Significantly, the counter terrorism drive was accelerated after APS attack in December 2014 and the series of national counter terror operations were launched to restore peace and stability that helped to improve security condition in the country.

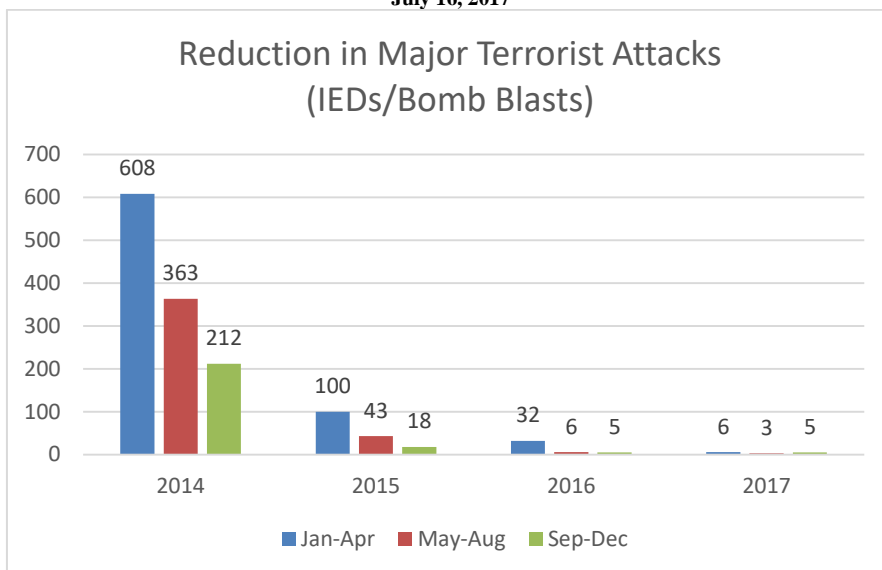
Likewise, the death penalty by military courts created a sense of apprehension among terrorists and abettors. The installation of metal detectors and strict checking at entry and exit points of airports, railway stations, bus stations, academic institutions, public places and renowned food streets and shopping markets proved an effective tool to minimize the security threats. The madrassas have been regularizing and their courses would be approved by ministry of education through National Action Plan. The nationalistic, political and sectarian hatred speeches are strictly prohibited in the holy places and processions. Biometric verification drive of mobile sim cards also proved an effective policy and about 27.5 million fraudulent connections were blocked (Gulf News Pakistan, 16 May 2015). All above-mentioned measures were taken by concerned departments on the directions of NACTA and helped to counter terrorism nationwide. If we compare the numbers of terrorist attacks, casualties and injuries of Pre-NACTA years with Post NACTA years, it clearly demonstrates the achievements of NACTA that is an evident of NACTA’s efficacy. The NACTA reduced the lack of coordination nationally and the security condition changed dramatically in just five years (2013-2017). Approximately, 78 per cent decrease was experienced in terrorist activities, 67 per cent decline is an evident in fatalities and 75 percent decrease in injuries that is an evidence of NACTA’s efficacy and performance (see figure.6). It is an incredible downfall that demonstrates effectiveness and success of the security forces through NACTA.

Figure 6: **Pattern of major terrorist attacks and casualties**



The country achieved progressive improvements because of the anti-terrorism operations and assimilative policies such as border fencing across the Durand Line to control infiltration of terrorists. FATA (Federal Administered Tribal Areas) has been merged into Khyber- Pakhtunkhwa through 25<sup>th</sup> Amendment in the constitution. Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) is being replaced with Pakistan Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act. It resulted in major decline in casualties and the numbers of attacks.

**Figure 7: Trend in Major terror activities from 2014 to 2017, Source: ISPR Press Conference July 16, 2017**



This improvement is also acknowledged in Global Terrorism Index Report 2017, accordingly Pakistan secured 8.4 points out of 10 and secured 5<sup>th</sup> position out of 163 states that previous was 4<sup>th</sup> (Pakistan Economic Survey 2017-18, 2018). This major decline clearly reflects the serious measures to terminate terrorism and extremism and NACTA’s efficacy.

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