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Terrorism, Military Operations and Counterterrorism Strategies for Pakistan

Dr. Saqib Khan Warraich

Assistant Professor
Department of Political Science
GC University Lahore.

Correspondence: saqibkhanwaraich@gmail.com

Dr. Muhammad Mumtaz Ali Khan

Director (Administration)
Punjab Higher Education Commission

Imran Alam

Assistant Professor,
Punjab University Law College,
University of the Punjab,
Lahore.

ABSTRACT

Terrorism has been a major challenge in Pakistan for last two decades. Pakistan is a hotbed of religious extremism and the spread of terrorism due to political and economic instability, post-colonial crisis, corruption, lack of national unity and Pakistan's partnership in War on Terror. However, it was only after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 that religious extremism and intolerance were systematically spread among the Pakistani people to help the Afghan resistance. Therefore, religious extremism, militant outfits and sectarianism increased in the 1980s and 1990s. On September 11, 2001, after AL-Qaeda's attacks on the United States, Pakistan was forced to fight against Taliban, many of the people it created and supported in Afghanistan in 1979 and onwards. Since 9/11, Pakistan has almost completely changed its policies. This change in policy was forced by the United States and made Pakistan the front line role as non NATO ally of the United States in the global war against terrorism. Although it is a well-known fact that no Pakistani was involved in 9/11 attacks on America. Pakistan's war on terror was formally launched in 2002 and since then it has lost about 70,000 citizens, about 8,000 security personnel and about 126.79 billion dollars (Economic Survey of Pakistan, 20017-18). Pakistan has conducted several military operations to curb the menace of terrorism and make way forward strategies. The main objective of this paper is to analysis of military operations that conducted by the Pakistan military and formulate some steps and policies to curb terrorism in Pakistan. The descriptive and analytical method of research is being used in this research paper.

Keywords: *Terrorism, Extremism, Military Operations, Counterterrorism Strategies, Pakistan.*

Introduction

Terrorism is one of the most pressing concern of the contemporary world. Pakistan is a terrorist ridden country. Many terrorist outfits have international links and so have much broader scope. To know how to curb terrorism, one should need to understand terrorism, and then formulate steps and policies to curb terrorism. Terrorism is a complex phenomenon. It has many definitions, types and verities in

the world. According to a research terrorism has more than 200 definitions. However, a research by Schmid and Jongman collected over 90 definitions and did their content analysis. Their research found out that according to the various definitions' terrorism involved of, 84% concept of violence, 65% have some sort of political goals, 51% causing fear and terror, 21% indiscriminate killings, and 17.5% victimizing civilians. This content analysis carves out the general features of terrorism (LaFree, & Dugan, 2009). There is no consensus on the definitions of Terrorism. Terrorism is different for different people, societies and states. The meaning of terrorism is socially constructed (Matusitz, 2013). The transformation of old terrorism to new terrorism and modern terrorism to postmodern terrorism make terrorism more multifaceted and for states it is very challenging how to curb terrorism? Pakistan chose both military and non-military measures to combat terrorism. The military option includes heavy-handed military operations in the former tribal areas of FATA, PATA, and Baluchistan (Fani, 2005). It involved full-scale battles with militants using the army, paramilitary forces, and intelligence agencies. Non-military measures include dialogue making engagements and legislative aspects. The Pakistani government held talks with the militants and various peace agreements were signed with the militants. For example, under the "Shakai Peace Agreement" with Naik Muhammad Wazir in april 2004, Peace deal with Taliban 2005, Peace agreement with Taliban leader Baitullah Mehsud in May 2008, Swat Agreement with Taliban, to resolve matters without military actions (Chandran, 2006). However, with the Taliban attack on the Army Public School in 2014, the government has decided not to engage with the Taliban anymore and eliminate them at any cost. As far as legislative measures are concerned, various legislations have been enacted for counter-insurgency purposes. Presidential measures and parliamentary laws, as well as the banning of several militant groups at various stages throughout the country. With the passage of the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) in 1997 or the NACTA Act in 2013, successive amendments were passed in 2017 and 2020. Special ATCs (Anti-Terrorism Courts) were formed to enforce various laws. Enhancing the prosecution of terrorists that are arrested under special laws designed to combat terrorism. In 2014, the National Action Plan (NAP) was formulated as a counter-terrorism strategy by the APC (All Party Conference), which launched simultaneous military operations in the tribal areas and non-military areas. Most recently, the Government of Pakistan and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) jointly developed Pakistan's Action to Counter-Terrorism (PACT) on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The joint venture upgrades the skills and knowledge of law enforcement officials, investigators and judges (Christine & Jones, 2009).

Operation AL-Mizan (2002-2006)

After 9/11 US started its 'War on Terror (WOT)' and eventually attacked and defeated the Taliban government of Afghanistan. As a result, scores of militants from Afghanistan settled along porous Pak-Afghan border, especially in erstwhile FATA (now KPK) and PATA. These international terrorists created a nexus with local elements based on ideological appeal, old Jihadi connections, financial clout and extortion to combat foreign troops in Afghanistan as well as threaten the sovereignty of Pakistan. This became evident when in 2002, terrorists attacked and killed 12 security personals in South Waziristan Agency (SWA). Realizing the gravity of the situation Pakistan army launched 'Operation Al-Mizan' that consisted

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of small and large range security operations; particularly in SWA and generally in whole of Ex-FATA. Armed forces were deployed in Ex-FATA with key objective of neutralizing and containing of foreign fighters and international terrorists and their facilitators who challenged the writ of the state. With no experience of such warfare and inaccurate intelligence, Pakistani forces initially faced heavy losses against the well settled and organized militants (Abbasi, 2013).

Operation Kalosha (WANA, South Waziristan Agency) March 2004)

Militants began attacking military camps in January 2004. In response, the Frontier Corps, led by Lt. Gen. Muhammad Safdar Hussain, launched a "search and destruction" operation in the Kalosha area of the SWA. It is also known as 'Operation Kalosha'. However, heavy casualties were inflicted by the security forces which forced them to negotiate with the Taliban and a 'Shakai Agreement' was agreed upon between the Pakistani government and Ahmadzai Wazir tribe led by Naik Muhammad Wazir. Naik Muhammad was killed in a US drone strike in 2004, followed by Baitullah Mehsud, a popular militant leader. In February 2005, the government of Pakistan signed a "Sarrogga Agreement" with Baitullah Mehsud to maintain peace and stability in South Waziristan. These agreements legitimize militant rule in the region. Until now, the militants have been divided and dispersed, and their main goal has been to counter US and NATO forces across the border in Afghanistan. Many extremist groups rise across Ex-FATA and PATA so that they could openly challenge the state's writ (Christine & Jones, 2009) (Seth G. Jones, 2010)

Operation Sher-e-Dil (Lion Operation) 2008

Local militants with several foreign fighters joined hands and formed the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in 2008, under the leadership of Baitullah Mehsud. Operation Sher-e-Dil was launched on September 9, 2008 in response to the devastating militant attacks in Bajaur District. Bajaur District share the border with Afghanistan's Kunar Province, which is considered a hub for local and transnational terrorist groups. The TTP, led by Baitullah Mehsud, supported militants to enter various urban areas of Pakistan for terrorism. Militant outfits led by Qari Zia Rehman looted banks, shops, kidnapped government employees and carried out suicide attacks on government offices. The Pakistani military had launched Operation Sher-e-Dil in Bajaur to eliminate the militants, which posed a threat to locals as well as security forces. By December 2008, it was over one thousand militants and 63 security personnel were killed. Pakistani forces found tunnel enclosures that were used to hide people and store supplies (Abbasi, 2018).

Military Operations in Swat (2007-2009)

In former FATA and northern areas of PATA, a major Islamist group called the Tehreek-e-Nifaz Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM) began to gain considerable influence in 2007, with the help of the TTP. The Pakistan Army had to conduct three major military operations to retake Swat and drive out the TNSM.

Operation Rah-e-Haq (2007)

The operation was launched in November 2007 with the help of local police to clear the Swat Valley. By the end of the year, security forces had successfully evacuated almost all buildings, such as police stations, schools and, most importantly, TMS

chief Fazlullah's headquarters, and pushed the terrorists back into the mountains. (Ishrat Afshan Abbasi 2018).

Operation Rah-e-Haq-II in Swat Valley and Shangla (2008)

The second phase of the operation began in July 2008. This operation continued throughout the year. At the request of the provincial government, a focused operation was carried out in the Swat Valley. By the end of this phase of the operation, about 36 security personnel, 9 civilians and 615 workers were either killed or displaced.

Operation Rah-e-Haq -III in Swat valley and Shangla (2009)

Having had enough of the militants in Swat and its adjacent areas the military launched the short-lived phase 3 of operation Rah e Haq in Swat in January 2009. This time they adopted a hardline policy of shoot-at-site. The retaliation of TNSM was very powerful and by February the military stopped, and an agreement was reached with TNSM; in the shape of the Malakand Accord, whereby the government allowed TNSM to impose Sharia in Malakand Division.

Operation Rah-e-Rast or Swat Operation (2009)

The army was expected to lay down its arms to the militants after the peace agreement and the implementation of Sharia law in the Malakland Division. Two months later, militants recaptured shops, public buildings and entered Shangla and Buner districts. In response to the horrific attacks on schools and police stations, the NGO's army has also called for a "Swat operation" to retake Swat from the Taliban and the TNSM. By May 2009, the armed security forces had successfully eliminated terrorist hideouts and regained control of Mingora, the capital of Swat (Khan, 2011).

Operation Zalazla (2008)

Operation 'Al-Mezan' could not root out militants, instead the peace deals encouraged the creation of TTP under the leadership of Baitullah Mehsud. In January 2008, Baitullah's men captured 'Srarogha Fort in South Waziristan and killed many Pakistani security forces. To counter the spreading influence of TTP in FATA and South Waziristan the government of Pakistan initiate 'Operation Zalazla' in South Waziristan with the aim of capturing or killing key elements in Mehsud's network who threatened country's sovereignty. The operation cleared many areas of SWA of TTP's control especially 'Spinkai' TTP's stronghold. As indicated by a report, security forces devastated more than 4,000 houses in South Waziristan, moreover 'Operation Zalazla' dislodged about 200,000 local people, causing huge hostility (Ishrat, 2018).

Operation Rah-e-Nijat (2009)

Operation Zalazla had failed in achieving its aim completely and the huge destruction and displacement of the locals had increased the support and ranks of TTP, helping it initiate a series of huge violence throughout the country. There were 2,148 terrorists, insurgent, and sectarian attacks in 2008 in Pakistan conducted either directly or indirectly by TTP. This surge of violence compelled the government for another major operation in Waziristan and its surrounding areas. This operation was

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called 'Rah-e-Nijaat' which translates to 'path to salvation. It started in summer 2009 and by October of 2009, ground forces started pouring in. The main purpose was to push back TTP, disrupt its supply line and takeover their strong holds of Ladha, Makin, and Sararogha. Pakistani forces were also supported by U.S. military and CIA. By December almost all the strong holds of TTP were taken over by the military. The military was serious this time because many resources and unites were relocated from eastern front to Waziristan for success of the operation. Although much was achieved in the operation but once again it had led to huge number of displacement of civilians (Ishrat, 2018) (Khan, 2011).

Operation Zarb-e-Azb (2014)

Zarb-e-Azb was launched against all terrorist organizations, including the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, al-Qaeda, Jundallah and the Haqqani network, on 15th June 2014 with the basic intention to wipeout all the sanctuaries of terrorists in Waziristan (North Waziristan particularly). The presence of different militant groups had created instability in Pakistan by launching atrocious and destructive attacks; and ultimately with the attack on Karachi Airport the government decided to eradicate the anti-state forces once and for all. Around 30,000 Pakistani soldiers were involved in Zarb-e-Azb. It was described as a "comprehensive operation" because its aim was to flush out all foreign and local militants hiding in North Waziristan and its adjoining areas (Abbasi, & Hussain, 2018). The success of 'Zarb-e-Azb' operation, through the valor of our armed forces, compelled different actors both at national and global level to generously acknowledge and praise the role of Pakistan and its military against terrorism. The success can also be judged by the fact that the overall security situation improved and terrorist attacks in Pakistan dropped to a six-year low since 2008 (Khan, 2014).

Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad (2017)

It was an intensive nation-wide operation in support of local law enforcement agencies across all states of Pakistan with the aim eliminate the threat of terrorism and consolidating the gains of Operation Zarb-e-Azb. The operation involved the participation from Pakistan Army, Pakistan Air Force, Pakistan Navy, Pakistan Police and other Warfare and Civil Armed Forces managed under the Government of Pakistan. It has improved the border security as well as elimination of the various terrorist organizations operating within the country and their sleeper cells. Radd ul Fasaad successfully destroyed and broken the backbone of terrorists throughout the country since 2017 by eliminated remaining terrorist elements from Lahore, Sehwan Sharif, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the erstwhile FATA. This operation resulted in nearly complete elimination of foreign militants who had harbors in tribal areas. Pakistan's success and achievements in this operation was praised on a global level. Pakistan has been praised for its services to counter terrorism. There is a long list of leaders who have praised the struggles of Pakistan to combat terrorism (Feyyaz, 2020).

Other Important Operations

Along with all the major military operations mentioned above, the security forces were also indulged in other operations like: Operation Sirat-i-Mustaqeem in Khyber Agency (2008) and a series of other military actions in Khyber Agency against TTP and other major international terrorists for whom the 'Tirah valley' was a sanctuary

and a safe heaven. Another operation was 'Operation Black Thunderstorm in Buner, Lower Dir and Shangla district (2009)' to help eradicate the scattered members of TTP and TNSM.

Operation Brekhna in Mohmand Agency (2009) was initiated against the anti-state forces in the Mohmand Agency and to eradicate Taliban from there because it was an important border area. Else than this, thousands of small-scale operations have been done by police, paramilitary and other security agencies inside the urban areas of the country, especially Karachi against ethnic terrorism groups. Moreover, against the sectarian terrorist groups as well (Rehman, & Shahbaz, 2017).

Ground Zero Clearance Operation (2020)

Ground Zero Clearance Operation was started in 2020 against the terrorist Baluch Liberation Army, who are constantly working to destabilize Pakistan. Since May 2020, the BLA has been targeting Pakistani Army in bomb attacks. They even attempted an attack on the Karachi Stock Exchange to bring down the economic system, which was beautifully repelled by the Pakistani Police Forces. Amid this, operation the fighting has intensified and thus Pakistani Army is again helping the nation by defeating these unknown forces as their main objective is to disrupt the China Pakistan Economic Corridor, which is bringing enormous opportunities for Pakistan (Feyyaz, 2020).

Impacts of Military Operations

The impacts of the many military operations have been immense. The first and foremost important affect is the curbing of terrorism and subsequently extremism from Pakistan. According to South Asian Terrorism Portal Index (SATP), terrorism in Pakistan has declined by 89% in 2017 since 2009. With the decrease in violence and extremism the government of Pakistan finally gave way to other pending and pressing concerns of the civilians like developing industries, initiating developmental projects, focusing on energy crisis. Moreover, Pakistan got an uplift in the world affairs and its importance and reputations increased internationally, giving to growth of i.e., tourism and other service sectors. With peace in Ex-FATA, it was finally taken out of its dark ages of FCR and merged with KPK so that its inhabitants could also enjoy all the rights and privileges that are available to the people of other parts of Pakistan.

The process of countering terrorism is slow because in Pakistan there are many other problems of governance along with this. Apart from military operations following are the steps to curb Terrorism in Pakistan.

Effective Border Controls

Although this strategy seems to be quite costly and impractical, however in the long run this can have a very positive impact on the overall security of the Pakistan. The way TTP in Pakistan crossed borders in search of safe heavens made it very difficult for the State to eradicate them. Pakistan should secure its boarder from the side of Afghanistan to stop encroachments of militant terrorist organizations.

Through Aid

Aid can also play a huge role in combating the terrorist problem in Pakistan. Sometime the absence of a proper infrastructure can be a big hurdle in the way of

combating terrorism, and this can be solved only through the channel of Aid to build proper infrastructure. (Ryan 2019)

Strengthening of Regional Organizations

Co-operation and co-ordination are a main key to resolving any issue and regional organizations such as SAARC, ASEAN, SCO and BIMSTEC ought to play this role in countering terrorism. Strengthening these organizations to be able to resolve the contentions between states and bring them together against the common issue of terrorism, can be of great help. For example, SAARC have the potential but due to enmity between Pakistan and India it cannot play as much important role in local issues such as terrorism as it possibly can.

Legislation

Strong legislation is an important factor in curbing terrorism. It helps in defining the terrorism with keeping in mind the local realities and also underlines its punishment. This way the state is ready for any such activities and also in quick providence of justice.

Stable Political Situation

Stability of political situation is of paramount significance in keeping terrorism at bay. Stability in political arena ensures that the different organs of the state are working properly and there is no overlapping of roles. This stability results in better implementation of constitution.

Federalism in true spirit

Pakistan is considered multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and have diverse populations. It is therefore important that federalism is applied in true spirit so that the different groups are properly represented in legislative assemblies, and they don't feel left out and resort to illogical means like terrorism to get demands fulfilled.

Rule of Law

Rule of law means that everyone in the state is equal in the eyes of the law and the laws of the land equally applies to single person in that state disregarding of his family, ethnic, religious or any background or relation. This way justice will prevail and the weak and poor too will get their rights. With rule of law, there will greater quality among the citizens and everyone will feel attached to the country and never think of going against and indulging in any illegal activities.

Economic Stability

Economic stability is precursor to a stable political system and hence satisfied population. Only when a country is economically stable it can concentrate on other factors like curbing terrorism and avoiding it anymore. Extremism takes roots in instability and lack of resources, which can be cured with proper economic stability.

Equality and Equity

This means that the state should be welfare state and provide for its citizen's certain basic facilities so that the lower strata of society is benefited.

Employment Opportunities

With few resources and more population, the youth resorts to illogical activities and terrorism for earning income. Lack of employment, therefore, is one of a main cause of terrorism in south Asia. Hence, the government should work on economic growth and ensure that people get proper employment opportunities so as to cut the recruitment of terrorist outfits.

Regulation of the Flow of money

Regularizing finances and keeping a strict check on the flow of and transaction is a key factor in modern day world. Terrorist organizations are no different. They need money for their members, weapons, and other resources hence, by regulation of finances this kind of transactions could be traced, and terrorist organizations and extremist organizations stopped. Organizations such as FATF are working in this regard but they need to be strengthened and used properly for their sole purpose and laws placed so as to stop them from succumbing to any wrong lobbying (Azad, 2016).

Corruption

Corruption at any level breeds bad governance and indirectly leads to inequality in society and hence, a general dissatisfaction as it leads to incompetence and wastage of resources. Corruption is one of the main factors that makes the developing countries an attractive and vulnerable spot for terrorism and also leads to its breeding, as the dissatisfied population is quickly attracted to it (Simpson, 2014).

Education

Education forms the bases of citizens as well broadens his comprehensive powers. It is hard for an educated person to be easily influenced by extremist ideas compared to an uneducated person. Hence, education should be expanded, and more resources allocated to it Pakistan to make better and responsible youth and save them from being affected by the menace of terrorism or other forms of extremism. Reforms should be introduced in Madrassas education and all type of sectarian teaching should be banned.

Other reasons

Steps such as increasing police force, regularization of arms industry and regularization of activities on social media as well as other forms of media are also important in curbing terrorism. Improving governance and initiating policies that improves national integration and cohesion so that people

Conclusion

Terrorism is a pervasive phenomenon and it is effected all societies and civilizations but Pakistan is the most effected country of the world. One can find many terrorist outfits of all kinds and levels operating here due to Pakistan being so much vulnerability. Terrorism was and is the most recent and most important problem and a hurdle in the path of glory for Pakistan. It started in 2001, following the dreadful event of 9/11. Terrorists have been well settled in many border regions of Pakistan especially the region of Ex-FATA. Terrorism started in 2001 and reached its peak in 2009, but due to the sacrifices of the people and military, terrorism is having a downfall since. This happened mostly due to the series of military operations against groups such as al-Qaida, TTP, TNSM, ISIS-K and others. This series of military operations have restored the writ of the state and strengthened its sovereignty along

Terrorism, Military Operations and Counterterrorism Strategies for Pakistan with ensuring peace and harmony in the country. Pakistan suffered both human and economic as well as infrastructure related losses, which will take a long time to recover.

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