

Exploring The Origin and Drivers of Terrorism in Pakistan and Counterterrorism Strategies

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Abstract

There has been a discernible pattern to terrorist violence, with the 1990s being the most stable and the 2000s being the deadliest in terms of terrorist activities. The patterns of sectarian violence have been distinct from those of ethnic and non-sectarian religious terrorism.

Pakistan has suffered greatly from terrorism, especially since 9/11, with significant losses to its infrastructure, economic, and human lives. The present status of the topic will be investigated using this analysis. Poverty, illiteracy, grievances, inequality, the judicial system, human rights abuses, official repression, etc. are the major factors of terrorism. The war in Afghanistan prepared the way for the emergence of sectarian violence. There is a lack of checks and balances in the madrasa education system. Terrorism has proven to be too much for civil institutions to handle, especially when it comes to education that addresses such current issues that the world is facing. Social justice and socioeconomic problems have been connected to terrorism. Through military operations and bilateral and multinational diplomacy, there are a number of strategies to eradicate the underlying causes of terrorism. Important tactics included the National Action Plan, anti-terrorist finance initiatives, and the strengthening of NACTA. Education reforms, economic growth, tighter anti-terror finance regulations, improved inter-agency collaboration, and the implementation of a sustained counter - narrative campaign are all essential to address the deep seated origins of extremist ideologies. These actions are essential for reducing terrorism and promoting enduring peace.

Keywords: Terrorism, National Action Plan, Security, Counterterrorism

Introduction;

The security of Pakistan's state and society is seriously threatened by terrorism. The nation with nuclear weapons has been called one of the most dangerous in the world, and the breakdown of institutions and the deterioration of state power are a nightmare for global security. The 1980s are the decade that gave rise to the nation's terrorist bloodshed. A number of historical events that occurred in the global political sphere were to have a long-lasting effect on Pakistan's political destiny. The Iranian revolution in 1979, the Soviet crossing of the Amu Darya into neighboring Afghanistan, and the 1973 coup led by Muhammad Daud (1909–1978) all played a significant role in forming the geopolitical landscape of Pakistan in the 1980s. This, in conjunction with opportunistic domestic politics and security imperatives, led to violent upheavals in the nation's political landscape. Following the overthrow of Afghan King Zahir Shah (1914–2007) in 1973,

Muhammad Daud began asserting his claim to the Pashtun lands of Pakistan. As a result, Islamist resistance to the Kabul government implicitly supported Islamabad.

Internal political unrest in Afghanistan ultimately led to the communist takeover in 1978. But the Soviet invasion in 1979 was the result of growing Islamist insurgency and communist factions warring among themselves. The Soviet 40th Red Army's invasion created shock waves that transported tremors from Islamabad all the way across the Atlantic. This occurred during a period of intense dispute in Pakistani domestic politics. The military junta in Islamabad became isolated after General Zia-ul-Haq (1924-1988) staged a coup in 1977 and subsequently oversaw the execution of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1928-1979), the elected prime minister.

As noted by Luqman et al. (2018) The Afghan conflict's spillover into Pakistan during this decade was the cause of terrorism in that nation. The terrorist attacks during this decade were believed to have been orchestrated by the Afghan intelligence agency KHAD, in collaboration with Soviet KGB. The primary technique used was bombing in public areas with the intention of causing the greatest number of casualties, with the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as the primary target. The Khomeini-led Iranian revolution during this time widened the rift between Shiite Iran and the Sunni Gulf. The study conducted by Fazal et al. (2022) reveals that Poverty always poses a serious risk and can be used by terrorist groups to recruit individuals for their actions. In Pakistan, a large number of people have complaints about the state, the police, and the government.

Some of individuals resort to terrorism, as seen in the cases of Baluchistan, Fhe other regions., when these grievances and injustices are combined with anger, aggression, and resentment. Pakistan still faces a revival of terrorist operations in spite of large investments in political, military, economic, and human resources as well as claims by the government that it is fighting terrorism. D'Souza et al. (2023) claim that the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan has emboldened organizations like Tehrik-e-Taliban (TTP), particularly in northern areas of Pakistan, which has resulted in an increase in terrorist attacks and public demonstrations against this resurgent threat. This comeback is supported by reports from organizations such as the Jamestown Foundation (2023) and Relief-Web (2022), which emphasize a rise in terrorist actions, including extortions and attacks, especially in the northern region.

Rehman Habibur et al. (2023) emphasize that terrorist violence increased by 17% in 2023, according to the more current PIPS (2024). This emphasizes even more how urgent it is to address the new security danger and how concerned people are becoming. The literature review part elaborates and analyzes contemporary trends and incidents pertaining to the resurgence of terrorism. The military and civil authorities have made the decision to work against the Taliban. In order to combat the Taliban who are working against Pakistani interests, the Pakistani army has conducted four large-scale counterterrorism operations and about eight medium-to-small-scale counterterrorism operations. In Pakistan, the main operations were conducted under the names Khyber 1, Zarb-e-Azb, Rah-e-Rast, and Rah-e-Nijat. The Taliban's operational capacity in Pakistan has been undermined by these operations, making it impossible for them to continue their terrorist actions there. The purpose of these surgeries is to eliminate their physical facilities for their operations. These procedures are a first-stage solution, but education at various stages can enable the correct handling of such problems. Both inhabited areas and Federal Tribal Areas continued to see intense military operations against terrorist organizations. Conversely, civil leadership included both legislative and engagement elements. To combat this threat, the National Counter Terrorism Authority bill was passed by the Pakistani National Assembly in 2013. On February 25, 2014, Pakistan launched its first National Internal Security Policy (NISP) following the outcome of a parliamentary discussion. The Army Public School in Peshawar was targeted by terrorist organizations.

The research conducted by Ibrahim et al. (2021) indicates that The 21st Amendment to the Constitution was ratified by the Parliament on January 7, 2015, following a significant terrorist attack, and the National Action Plan became lawful following the parliament's approval. "We

shall not relent until all terrorists, their financiers, abettors, facilitators, and sympathizers are brought to justice," said Gen. Raheel Sharif, Chief of Army Staff, on the defense day. The significant Operation Zarb-e-Azb was carried out for a number of reasons. These organizations were contesting the state's writ. Both domestically and internationally, the important questions surfaced. The writ of the state in Pakistan was a concern for the western states. Terrorism's effects are felt across the nation.

Research Inquiries:

- . How does Pakistani terrorism impact regional security, especially in relation to India and Afghanistan, its neighbors?
- . What role do sectarian, ethnic, and local tensions play in Pakistan's terrorism problem?
- . What are the strengths and weaknesses of Pakistan's National Action Plan (NAP) in combating terrorism?

Purpose of Research:

- . The first goal of the study is to examine the origins and development of terrorism in Pakistan.
- . To identify and examine the social ,economic, religious and ideological factors contributing to the rise of terrorism within Pakistan.
- . To assess how well Pakistan's counterterrorism tactics are working.

Significance of study:

Studying terrorism in Pakistan and its counterterrorism tactics is important because of its significant influence on social stability, economic growth, and national security. Since extremist violence has resulted in thousands of deaths and extensive disruption, it is crucial to comprehend the causes, trends, and reactions to terrorism in order to develop effective policies. This study adds to academic research, regional security discourse, and public awareness in addition to helping policymakers and security agencies improve their methods. The findings have ramifications beyond national boundaries due to Pakistan's strategic location and terrorist past, making the subject extremely pertinent for both international peace initiatives and national resilience.

Literature review:

Generally speaking, terrorism is associated with a few purported root reasons that have fueled different types of political instability, including as street protests and uprisings, revolt insurrections, national conflicts, and the worldwide armed struggle. Poverty, dictatorship, repressive governance, or societal and religious customs are some of the obvious underlying factors. Corte (2007)

The dearth of thorough research that compare and contextualize the junction of several circumstances, including poverty, dictatorship, oppressive governments, and social/religious rituals, is one of the reasons Corte ignores when discussing the origins of terrorism. While a great deal of research has been done on individual causes, less has been done to examine how these elements work together to foster an atmosphere that is favorable to terrorism in various locales and cultural contexts. Furthermore, there is a knowledge deficit regarding how local grievances might escalate into globalized forms of violence because existing research often concentrate on either domestic or global contexts individually. Future studies could examine how these variables interact dynamically as well as how transnational networks, media impact, and international initiatives contribute to or hinder terrorism.

The immediate solution to combating terrorism is obvious, but it presents challenging questions about the appropriate and moral use of force, the distribution of information in society by vote, and the defense of fundamental liberties.

It is unclear if crucial power choices like counter-fundamentalism, the establishment of a popular

government, and the financial reversal of events actually address the "fundamental motives" of terrorism. According to Robert Jarvis, there is little reason to think that we can actually manage in this situation, regardless of whether needs, financial disparity, political abuse, or helpless states were the primary drivers. That's his opinion: "There isn't any solid proof that doing so would have a big effect" (Rineheart, 2010).

The lack of solid proof connecting long-term counterterrorism tactics—like advancing democracy, lowering economic inequality, and combating political repression—to a quantifiable decline in terrorism is the research gap mentioned in this topic. Even though these strategies are strongly supported in academic and policy circles, there is still a lack of empirical evidence to support their efficacy in addressing the underlying causes of terrorism. Further investigation is also required into the ways in which these tactics interact with governmental capability, ideological motivations, and local settings. This gap necessitates more thorough, empirically supported research that examines the true effects of non-military actions on terrorism prevention and reduction.

The development of terrorism in Pakistan, which began in the late 1970s and early 1980s, is intricately linked to its political and historical background. The Soviet-Afghan War (1979–1989), in which Pakistan, with assistance from the US and Saudi Arabia, was instrumental in preparing and equipping Afghan mujahideen to combat Soviet forces, is where this period of terrorism began (Tobin, 2020; Hashemi, 2019).

The lack of investigation into how Pakistan's participation in the Soviet-Afghan War and its affiliation with superpowers like the US and Saudi Arabia influenced the long-term internalization of militancy and the development of domestic terrorism represents the research gap in this context. Although Pakistan's strategic role throughout the war has been acknowledged in the literature, there aren't many thorough, empirical studies examining how the infrastructure, regulations, and ideological networks put in place during that time served as the groundwork for later extremist organizations within Pakistan. To link past foreign policy choices to the rise and continuation of terrorism in the nation's sociopolitical fabric, more investigation is required.

Weapons were widely distributed at this time, and Pakistani society became ingrained with a militant culture. These groups did not demilitarize in the post-war era; rather, many mujahideen shifted their attention to Kashmir and Pakistani internal strife, giving rise to a number of militant organizations (Reshi, 2018).

The dearth of studies on the long-term effects of the post-Soviet-Afghan War militarization on Pakistan's internal security and social structure is a research gap. Although it is widely accepted that the inability to demobilize the mujahideen contributed to the emergence of militant organizations and a militancy culture, thorough studies on the effects of this shift on Pakistani local communities, governance, and intergroup relations are lacking. Furthermore, additional empirical research is required to examine the ways in which these terrorist networks developed and assimilated into Pakistan's political and ideological environment, especially with regard to the war in Kashmir and sectarian violence.

General Zia-ul-Haq's military dictatorship's Islamization efforts, which changed Pakistani culture and institutionalized religious instruction that aided the expansion of extremist madrasas, led to radicalism, claim Khan and Shah (2020). Meanwhile, the military's strategic depth doctrine introduced radical components to the country's security framework (Shah, 2021).

However, he omits the inadequate empirical investigation of the ways in which the military's strategic depth doctrine and General Zia-ul-Haq's Islamization initiatives contributed to the institutionalization of radical beliefs in Pakistan. Although previous research has recognized the emergence of extremist madrasas and the incorporation of Islamic radicalism into state policy, a thorough examination of the ways in which these policies altered security, religious, and educational establishments is lacking. The long-term effects of these shifts on youth radicalization, civil-military relations, and Pakistan's overall sociopolitical trajectory have also received scant attention.

But even with all of this investment—human, military, political, and economic factors coupled with state assertion that terrorism is no longer a problem, we continue to witness its resurrection in various regions of the nation. As evidenced by several recent incidents previously mentioned, Tehrik-

e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has regained its influence after the Taliban retook power in Afghanistan, especially in the northern regions of Pakistan. Widespread public protests against terrorism and associated incidents at all costs were a result of the armed organizations' rise in these areas (Shahzaib, 2023).

Despite massive investments in counterterrorism measures and repeated claims of success, there is still a lack of knowledge of why terrorism persists and resurfaces in Pakistan. Although there is recognition of the rise of organizations such as Tehrik

- e - Taliban Pakistan (TTP) after the Taliban regained control of Afghanistan, a thorough examination of the efficacy, constraints, and unforeseen ramifications of Pakistan's counterterrorism tactics is lacking. Further studies are also required to look at the local community's reactions, like open demonstrations, and how grassroots opposition could alter or contradict state-led security structures in impacted areas.

Theoretical Framework:

Frustration-Aggression Theory:

According to this hypothesis, resentment and perceived unfairness, especially when it comes to underprivileged people, are the root causes of terrorism. This may have to do with Pakistan's sociopolitical and economic inequalities as well as regional conflicts (such those in Pashtunistan and Balochistan) that support militant and separatist movements.

Coercive Diplomacy :

According to this view, by applying pressure to the states or organizations that commit acts of terrorism, the use of force, threats or sanctions can deter terrorism. According to this concept, Pakistan has fought terrorism and extremism through both military and intelligence operations.

Counter-Insurgency theory:

This emphasizes all encompassing military political and economic measures to stop insurgencies, which frequently turn into acts of terrorism. Particularly in regions where insurgency activities are common such as FATA and Balochistan, Pakistan's counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations sometimes intersect.

Research Methodology:

In order to give a through grasp of terrorism in Pakistan and the efficacy of counterterrorism measures this study uses a qualitative approach. Interviews with those who are familiar with Pakistan's terrorist past and local residents from impacted areas provided primary data. To obtain qualitative data, public opinion was gathered through the distribution of questionnaires. In order to provide context for results and bolster the interpretation of primary data, secondary sources such as news, articles and scholarly journals were examined. By improving the research's depth and dependability, this methodology gives a comprehensive analysis of the problem.

Results and Discussions:

According to the questionnaire's results, there is broad popular agreement that terrorism has seriously harmed Pakistan's economy, security and reputation abroad. Foreign meddling, political unrest and religious fanaticism were cited by the majority of respondents as the main causes of terrorism. Military operations like Zarb-e-Azb and Radd-ul-Fasaad were widely supported because many people they were successful in lowering insurgent activity. Participants also underlined that more than just military might is needed for long-term success, urging

advancements in socioeconomic development, education , governance and deradicalization initiatives. All things considered, the statistics demonstrated a consensus that a thorough, multifaceted Strategy is necessary for long-term peace ad stability.

History of Terrorism in Pakistan:

In the present day, terrorism has evolved into a global threat that affects all of the humanity. To meet this enormous threat, countries must therefore develop comprehensive counterterrorism strategies. The fact that Pakistan and United States supported extremists is still a well known fact. Against the former USSR in Afghanistan during the Cold war(Hayden, 2021;Imran et al.,2022) Mazhar and Goraya (2020) claim that Afghan Jihad's surviving members lived in Pakistan's tribal areas close to Afghan border alongside some warlords and local anti-state groups. According to Javaid (2020) the timing was ideal and until 9/ 11 neither Pakistan nor the United States had any serious problems with this emerging organizations.

Then FATA began to collapse like dominoes in operations one after another as a result of the US's aggressive onslaught against Pakistan (Mazhar and Goraya, 2020). Therefore, Tankel (2018) notes that as part of the fight against terrorism, Pakistani forces apprehended and killed hundreds of militants with ties to Al-Qaeda, either directly or indirectly. Nearly 80,000 civilians and security personnel died in the fight against terrorism (Lodhi, 2022; Khan & Pratt, 2022). In addition to causing political, social, and cultural destruction, the nation also suffered significant economic infrastructure damage of over USD 126 billion (Kharl et al., 2019; Rashid et al., 2023). At the expense of the aforementioned enormous losses and destruction after 9/11, Pakistan asserted that these 20-year conflicts were successful and had successfully reduced terrorism (Gul, 2022).

According to Pakistani military estimates, up to early 2022, these unrelenting operations reduced terrorist violence by 85% (Gul, 2022). However, the nation has once again fallen victim to the threat of terrorism, which has led to public skepticism regarding the effectiveness of its counterterrorism policies. In light of this, the next section explores the rationale and analysis of the resurgence in greater detail, taking into account current patterns and examples

The Resurgence of Terrorism:

Pakistan still faces a revival of terrorist operations in spite of large investments in political, military, economic, and human resources as well as government claims that it is fighting terrorism. D'Souza et al. (2023) claim that the Taliban's resurgence in Afghanistan has given them more organizations such as the Tehrek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), particularly in the northern parts of Pakistan, which has caused a surge in terrorist attacks and public demonstrations against this resurgent danger. This revival is supported by reports from organizations such as the Jamestown Foundation (2023) and Relief-Web (2022), which emphasize a rise in terrorist assaults and extortions, especially in the northern area. . Statistics from the Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies further quantify this concerning trend, showing a 51% increase in terrorist attacks between August 2021 and August 2022 that resulted in a large number of fatalities especially in the area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Additionally, the more current PIPS (2024) shows that there was a 17% increase in terrorist violence in 2023. This emphasizes even more how urgent it is to effectively address the new security danger and how concerned people are becoming.

Counter Terrorism Strategies:

Subsequently, multifaceted strategies were developed to combat terrorist organizations' operations in Pakistan.

The two facets of counterterrorism policy are as follows:

1. The NISP, or National Internal Security Policy
2. The NAP, or National Action Plan

NATIONAL INTERNAL SECURITY PLAN:

Pakistan is a tranquil nation. It has never before encountered such a dire terrorism situation. The National Internal Security Policy (NISP) must be formulated by Pakistan in order to safeguard its national interests. To combat terrorism, the National Counter Terrorism Authority of Pakistan (NACTA) was founded in December 2013. The Pakistani government initiated the National Internal Security Policy (NISP) (Report, 2016). The country of Pakistan is extremely concerned about security issues.

The strategy was founded on the ideas of integrating national efforts and mutual inclusivity. Based on discussions with many stakeholders, the NISP policy included three main principles. Its main goal was to cut off the terrorist organizations' networks of support. The ability of the security forces to prevent terrorist organizations from posing a danger to our internal security system across Pakistan and to deter them could be improved (Government of Pakistan, 2014). After being made aware of the delicate nature of the situation, the people of Pakistan may end up serving as our troops' front line.

Additionally, the secret portion of the NISP is kept private. The following were the main tenets of the NISP for Pakistan's counterterrorism implementation:

- The establishment of the Directorate of Internal Security (DIS) under NACTA's supervision, integration of military and civilian intelligence grids covering tactical, operational, and strategic levels under a unified framework.
- To create a state-of-the-art, fully equipped federal Rapid Responsive Force (RRF) to facilitate coordination between law enforcement and counterterrorism organizations.
- The incorporation of mosques and other places of worship into the national and local educational systems.

In order to publicly endorse these measures, there should be a comprehensive national arms control regime and a comprehensive overhaul of our educational system.

NATIONAL ACTION PLAN:

The announcement to create the special military courts was welcomed across the nation. It was required due to the seriousness of the terrorism problem. The judiciary lacked decisiveness, especially when it came to implementing anti-terrorism measures. It seemed that these courts were the norm. The period of time determined for these courts was set for two years. For long-term effects, these courts ought to be required to be involved. Suspected individuals, but not the offender, were granted the constitutionally guaranteed priority of fundamental human rights. The civilian leadership ought to understand the value of the state apparatus and the military tactics that were used to better manage state affairs (Malik, 2015). The following items are on the national action plan agenda:

- Establish special trial courts supervised by military commanders.
- Execute terrorists who have received death sentences.
- Prohibit all armed groups
- Activate and strengthen the National Counter Terrorism (NACTA).
- Take action against that literature.
- Remove all organizations' financial sources.

Conclusion:

In Pakistan, terrorism has consistently threatened social cohesiveness, economic advancement, and national security. The problem, which has its roots in a complicated combination of internal governance issues, regional instability, and ideological extremism, has changed over time and necessitates a flexible and multidimensional approach. Major assaults have significantly decreased as a result of the nation's subsequent counterterrorism efforts, particularly military operations,

legislative reforms, and intelligence collaboration, even if terrorist activity peaked in the early 2000s.

However, a solely militaristic strategy is insufficient, as evidenced by professional analysis and popular opinion. Addressing the underlying reasons of radicalization through social fairness, work opportunities, education, and institutional reform is necessary for a lasting peace.

Equally important are fostering inclusive government, bolstering civil-military cooperation, and squelching extremist narratives via media and community involvement. Although Pakistan has made great strides so far, sustained dedication to an all-encompassing and inclusive counterterrorism policy is necessary for long-term stability.

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