

RESURGENCE AND RESPONSE: EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PAKISTAN'S COUNTER-TERRORISM STRATEGIES AMIDST RISING TERRORISM THREATS

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ABSTRACT

The current review paper critically examines the effectiveness of Pakistan's current counter-terrorism policies in the context of the resurgence of terrorism. This paper is based on a systematic review of the relevant themes and addresses the successes, challenges, and complexity entailed in Pakistan's counter-terrorism measures. The prolonged military campaigns have been instrumental in breaking the backbone of the terrorist group, which has led to a significant decline in the number of events and deaths. Nevertheless, there are still many questions related to the viability of these achievements. Some of the critical challenges include long-lasting stability, reconstruction of regions in conflict, re-emergence of threats from extremists, etc. A significant criticism of Pakistan's counter-terrorism strategy lies in its selectivity when it comes to handling specific militant groups. In addition, the paper also points out the socio-political and economic dynamics that allow for acts of terrorism. These factors are political instability, socio-economic gaps, and regional and international repercussions. It also discusses profound internal security lacunas, human rights issues and financial challenges – the case of Pakistan being put on the Financial Action Task Force's 'Grey list' is raised. The paper concludes that although the counter-terrorism policies in Pakistan have achieved significant successes, adopting a comprehensive strategy to balance security interests and socio-economic development should be blended with human rights considerations. Addressing both external and internal threats is required for proper accountability of the terrorism menace to build lasting peace.

Keywords: Terrorism, Resurgence of terrorism, Counter-terrorism policy, Effectiveness, Pakistan

INTRODUCTION

Background of Terrorism in Pakistan

Terrorism has morphed into a worldwide menace in the modern era, impacting humanity at large. Consequently, nations must devise all-encompassing counter-terrorism tactics to confront this formidable challenge. It remains an open secret that the United States and Pakistan nurtured militants during the Cold War and deployed them in Afghanistan against the former USSR (Hayden, 2021; Imran et al., 2022). According to Mazhar and Goraya (2020), the remnants of the Afghan Jihad, in conjunction with certain warlords and indigenous anti-state factions, inhabited the tribal regions of Pakistan adjacent to the Afghan border. Javaid (2020) highlighted that the circumstances were propitious, and neither the United States nor Pakistan encountered any significant issues with this burgeoning entity until 9/11. Eventually, Pakistan found itself obligated to partake as a coalition ally in the battle against terrorism.

In response, Pakistan made a consequential decision, resulting in a strange and miscalculated scenario, as documented by several researchers, that "friends turned into foes" (Waheed, 2018). The country's leadership crafted policy supporting the American-led alliance to put an end to the Taliban

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regime in Afghanistan. Pakistan became contributory in numerous ways, i.e., logistics support, intelligence sharing, and air bases. As Ahmed (2020), Jevglevska et al. (2019) stated that Pakistan vowed to give the US 'overflight rights,' guarantying access to Pakistani naval, land, and air bases, thereby destructing domestic elements used by terrorists against the US and her allies, and culminating all diplomatic and logistic support to the Taliban. Thus, Khan (2018) found that Pakistan was the frontline ally in getting rid of Al-Qaeda and its networks in the tribal regions and Afghanistan. What was alarming and ill-advised of the consent to join the war on terror, however, is that after the US attack in Afghanistan, militants associated with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Taliban, and Al-Qaeda became refugees in tribal areas.

Meanwhile, the US launched a tough offensive on Pakistan, so the then FATA started falling like dominos in operations one after another (Mazhar and Goraya, 2020). Thus, Tankel (2018) points out that as a part of the anti-terrorism campaign, Pakistani forces captured and eliminated hundreds of militants directly or indirectly related to Al-Qaeda. In the war against terrorism, nearly 80000 civilians and security personnel lost their lives (Lodhi, 2022; Khan & Pratt, 2022). Apart from social, cultural, and political devastation, the country also severely damaged the economic infrastructure of around 126 billion USD (Kharl et al., 2019; Rashid et al., 2023). According to Gul (2022), Pakistan claimed these twenty years-long wars to be successful and has effectively curtailed terrorism at the expense of the mentioned huge amount of losses and devastation since 9/11. Owing to the claim of private and Pakistani military estimates, these relentless operations have decreased terrorist violence by 85% until early 2022 (Gul, 2022). Nevertheless, the country has once again been entrapped in the menace of terrorism, raising public concerns about the efficacy of its counter-terrorism measures. Given this, the proceeding section delves deeper into the justification and analysis of the resurgence, keeping in view the recent trends and instances.

The Resurgence of Terrorism

Despite significant investments in human, military, political, and economic resources and state assertions of combating terrorism, Pakistan continues to face a resurgence of terrorist activities. According to D'Souza et al. (2023), the re-emergence of the Taliban in Afghanistan has emboldened groups like the Tehrek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), especially in Pakistan's northern regions, leading to a spike in terrorist incidents and public protests against this renewed threat. Reports from sources like Jamestown Foundation (2023) and Relief-Web (2022) corroborate this resurgence, highlighting increased terrorist activities, including attacks and extortions, particularly in the northern region. This alarming trend is further quantified by statistics from the Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies, indicating a 51% rise in terrorist attacks between August 2021 and August 2022, resulting in significant fatalities, most notably in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region. The more recent PIPS (2024) further highlights that terrorist violence was upped by 17% in 2023. This further highlights the increasing concern and urgency to respond adequately to the emerging security threat. The recent trends and instances referring to the resurgence of terrorism are elaborated on and analysed in the literature review section.

As evident from the above sources, the resurgence of terrorism in Pakistan has attracted wider public concerns, thereby questioning the efficacy of the state counter-terrorism policies. How terrorism erupted once again and what changes are needed with the state counter-terrorism policy are some of the questions that bother the civilians in the country. Owing to the severity and urgency of the issue, the current paper embarks on a scholarly endeavour to evaluate Pakistan's counter-terrorism policy critically. The rationale behind considering the policy is to primarily focus on its shortcomings while analysing the existing literature about the area under study.

Scope and Limitations

The scope of this paper primarily revolves around a comprehensive analysis of Pakistan's counter-terrorism policies, their effectiveness, and the multifaceted challenges they face. It delves into the socio-political dynamics, regional and international influences, internal security gaps, and the adaptability of counter-terrorism strategies in response to evolving threats. The paper also examines the broader societal and economic consequences of these policies and their implications on human rights. The findings and recommendations are based on a thorough review of recent and relevant literature, including security studies, policy analysis, and expert commentaries. However, the paper has limitations. It depended largely on secondary sources of data that might not provide current ground realities or new trends in terrorism or the counter-terrorism situation found in Pakistan. In addition, the paper does not have any primary research contributions through field interviews with the policymakers,

law-implementation officers or affected communities that could, in fact, offer certain depths and hidden meanings. In addition, the geopolitical world and the nature of terrorist threats are rapidly changing; therefore, some substances used in this analysis may become outdated very soon, so they will have to be newly added sooner or later.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Evolution of Terrorism in Pakistan

1: Historical Context

The evolution of terrorism in Pakistan is deeply intertwined with its political and historical context, dating back to the late 1970s and early 1980s. The inception of this era of terrorism can be traced to the Soviet-Afghan War (1979-1989), during which Pakistan, supported by the United States and Saudi Arabia, played a crucial role in training and arming Afghan mujahideen to fight against Soviet forces (Tobin, 2020; Hashemi, 2019). This period witnessed the proliferation of weapons and a culture of militancy that seeped into the fabric of Pakistani society. The post-war period did not see a demilitarisation of these groups; instead, many mujahideen turned their focus towards Kashmir and internal conflicts within Pakistan, giving birth to various militant organisations (Reshi, 2018).

According to Khan and Shah (2020), the Islamization policies of General Zia-ul-Haq's military dictatorship resulted in radicalism and emerged from changing Pakistani society's fabric, the institutionalised religious education that helped extremist madrassas to grow. At the same time, the strategic depth doctrine of the military added radical elements to the nation's security system (Shah, 2021). This time was marred by sectarian tensions between the Sunni and Shia militant factions, which showed that Pakistan suffered from ideological differences. As a result, the multiplicity of issues in political terms, ideals as well as religion oftentimes during this revolutionary period planted seeds for modern terrorism that continues to plague many state houses with counter-terror activities (Rafique & Manan, 2019).

Recent Trends and Resurgence of Terrorism

However, despite such a tremendous amount of investment, i.e., humans, military, political and economic, and claim of the state about the end of terrorism, we still see the existence of terrorism in the shape of its resurgence in different parts of the country. Following the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan, Tehrek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has retaken its position, particularly in the northern areas of Pakistan, as manifested by a number of recent incidences discussed earlier. The resurgence of the armed groups in these regions resulted in widespread public protests, resisting terrorism and related incidents at all costs (Shahzaib, 2023). According to the Jamestown Foundation (2023), once driven out through military operations, terrorist groups are seen to be regaining their position.

Similarly, an International Report by Relief-Web (2022) also endorses the new wave of terrorism, quoting the latest incidents by the Taliban, particularly in the Swat region, such as attacks, abduction, threats demanding extortion, etc. The report further maintains that citizens have expressed deep concerns over the reappearance of terrorist activities demanding safety and security by the government and concerned agencies (Relief-Web, 2022). Following a deadly blast on the counter-terrorism police station, a report claims the government's fragile truce with the Taliban in November 2022 to be responsible for the reappearance of the militants and the cause of the re-emergence of terrorism in the region (Pakistan's, 2023).

Since August 2021, terrorist attacks have been rised up to 50% in the country, with 376 attacks in 2022 (miqbal, 2023). According to a report by PIPS (2022), the country has witnessed a 51% rise in terrorism between August 2021 and August 2022, resulting in 500 fatalities. The report further maintains that out of all these, 79% of the attacks and 89% of the deaths have occurred only in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region, where the district of Swat is top-listed. Additionally, its latest report documents that since the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan, the number of terrorist incidents increased up to 73%, while the number of people killed in these attacks has also risen by 138% (PIPS, 2023). Similarly, in the latest Pakistan Security Report released by PIPS (2024), Pakistan's response and focus were no match to the mounting challenge of terrorism and militancy. The incidence of terrorist violence marked an upsurge of 17 per cent in Pakistan in 2023. The key factors of terrorist violence were also more pronounced in the year 2023; over 82 per cent of the terrorism-related deaths resulted from attacks perpetrated by three major groups.

The re-emergence of terrorism in Pakistan has been marked by a string of violent incidents that have shaken the country. Among the most notable ones was the Peshawar Mosque bombing, which took place on January 30, resulting in the death of 84 people (Dawn.com, 2023). This assault, given its densely packed mosque that took place within the Police Lines compound of Peshawar, highlighted one human cost caused by terrorism. The other ghastly incident was the bomb strike in Bajaur that left 27 persons injured and martyred five policemen after an explosion near a police van (Hayat et al., 2024; Tribune, 2024). The assault was aimed at a police jeep carrying approximately 25 officers on duty against the polio drive, which addresses pregnancy with terrorism and public health actions. Therefore, these incidents, among others, paint a concerning picture of the evolving and persistent threat of terrorism in Pakistan. They highlight the urgent need for effective counter-terrorism strategies and underline the human and societal costs of such violence.

The current trends show that terrorism is increasing in Pakistan. This suggests a change in strategies and target populations of terrorist groups. Additionally, Tabassum (2019) found that the issue of 'terror urbanisation' has posed new problems for law enforcers and intelligence agencies in cities throughout Pakistan. At the same time, the state of Afghanistan is also one of them, especially after taking back control by the Taliban. Moreover, Bashir (2023) stated that the porosity of the Pakistan-Afghan border has been a challenge to regulating militant movement from and into both countries throughout history. However, Shah and Mahmood (2022) argue that the instability in Afghanistan creates a favourable setting where terrorist groups can regroup and mount cross-border attacks into Pakistan. The emergence of the Islamic State and its regional branch, Islamic State-Khorasan Province (IS-KP), creates another dimension for Pakistan's complicated terrorist environment (Bukhari, 2022). Although the presence of IS-KP is still small when compared to threats such as TTP, their ability to inflict deadly attacks poses a danger.

Counter-Terrorism Policies in Pakistan

1: Overview of Existing Policies

Pakistan's counter-terrorism strategies have evolved significantly over the years, particularly in response to the changing landscape of terrorist threats within the country. This is a wide range of approaches, from military campaigns to legislative reforms and socio-economic policies. The National Action Plan (NAP) served as the foundational aspect of Pakistan's counter-terrorism strategy since 2014, after the Peshawar school attack (Basit et al., 2021). The NAP provides a holistic approach to dealing with the challenges through strategies like making Counter-Terrorism forces stronger, disrupting the financing of terrorist groups and endorsing hate speech – extremist narratives (Trojanowska et al., 2018).

Moreover, Nadeem et al. (2021) analysed Pakistan in terms of regional and global interaction with the partners to address emerging challenges associated with terrorism. Such relationships involve a lot of information sharing, combined action operationally and also, where necessary, concessions in arrangements framed under the international counter-terrorism protocols. Recently, treatment programs designed for ex-jihadists and works on the topic of reintegrating them into society have become more popular. Nonetheless, the enforcement of these strategies encountered many obstacles, such as political commitment, abuse of resources, and information sharing among the agencies. Nevertheless, these obstacles apart, such policies illustrate the fact that Pakistan is still committed to dealing with terrorism as a multi-dimensional issue both from the national security perspective and also socio-political viewpoint.

A research initiative reveals that the National Action Plan NAP against violent extremism of the Pakistani government concentrates on too many forces. It inadequately addresses the causal elements of violent extremism (Gohar et al., 2022). The government of Pakistan, up to this point, has focused on the war against terrorism and violent radicalisation using conventional disarmament approaches. The absence of policy regarding soft approaches to preventing and countering violent extremism has been the case in Pakistan (Javai, 2020). The research implied that the National Action Plan NAP would also need a lasting remedy, dealing with problems like political corruption and a broader ideological atmosphere instigating violent violence. This translates to the fact that NAP should not just address the symptoms but also the violence triggers. To curb violent extremism, a 'whole of government' policy is necessary (Martín 2018).

2: Legislative and Legal Framework

The legislative and legal infrastructure combats terrorism in Pakistan as a part of the strategy, describing several strategies. This framework covers different types of laws and acts designed to support the work of law enforcement agencies and also courts. At the heart of this framework is the 1997 Anti-Terrorism Act, which was introduced to tackle terrorism, a budding concern at that time (Raza, 2021). The ATA clarifies what constitutes a terrorist act, creates the Anti-Terrorism Courts (ATC), and also prescribes connected punitive measures. The changes in the nature of terrorism have called for frequent amendments to this Act, strengthening provisions to prosecute and trial conducted offences by terror (Raza, 2021). There is another critical legislation known as the Protection of Pakistan Act that was passed in 2014, which provided an extension to law enforcement agencies' powers for detention and investigation purposes while at the same time boosting their capacity within judiciary systems concerning terrorism cases (Iqbal, 2015). Though the PPA demonstrated commitment to enhancing counter-terrorism endeavours, it also emerged as a structure that depicted human rights abuse, especially with cases of civil liberties under threat, which further complicated the issue surrounding security and constitutional orders.

The formation of the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) underlined its establishment through the NACTA Act in 2018, which dawned considerable measures towards a centralised approach to coordinating and executing national counter-terrorism policies (Ahmed, 2020). The role of NACTA covers intelligence provision, research, and policy-making, providing a holistic platform for various counter-terrorism players. In a bid to fight the vice of terrorism financing, Pakistan also strengthened its laws in the Anti-Money Laundering (AML). As a member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), Pakistan pledged compliance with global norms to fight against money laundering and terrorist financing (Mukhtar, 2018).

Apart from these legislative actions, Pakistan initiated the notable effort named Paigham-e-Pakistan, symbolising the state's plan of action against extremist narratives (Babur and Noor, 2023). This national story, blessed by theologians from different sects, labels terrorism a wrong path and advocates that the message of peace satisfies conservatively. Still, Babur and Noor (2023) argued that Paigham-e-Pakistan is a crucial step towards using ideological and theological tools to address the radicalisation processes resulting in terrorism.

Even with a legislative and legal framework that is considered to be comprehensive, the implementation process in Pakistan has had its own share of challenges, such as judicial delays, limitations on the law enforcement capacity and the need for further better coordination between federal agencies along with provincial authorities (Sifarish & Liaqat 2023). The legal framework has also been criticised in terms of human rights issues, more specifically due to the preventive detention and overly broad definitions of terrorism, which could be used as a tool for targeting political dissent or minority communities. However, this reflects better a need for constant review and reform supplemented with balancing out security needs versus human rights obligations.

3: Role of Intelligence and Law Enforcement

Pakistan's intelligence and law enforcement agencies play a pivotal yet controversial role in the country's fight against terrorism. Agencies like the notorious ISI and the Counter Terrorism Department lead surveillance, infiltrations, investigations, and also arrests of suspected militants (Ghani, 2018; Shah, 2016; Khalid, 2017). However, their shadowy nature and the lack of oversight raise alarms about human rights violations through extrajudicial killings and also disappearances (Arif et al., 2020). On the other hand, effectiveness is further hampered by poor training, coordination, and also resources (Shah, 2016; Khalid, 2017). Yet recent reforms show some promise in strengthening the counter-terror capabilities (Ali et al., 2022). Still, progress remains very slow in enabling interagency cooperation and intelligence sharing, which is vital for success (Islam et al., 2020). Pakistan continues to walk a very fine line between security and also liberty. Its intelligence agencies evoke fear and begrudging support in the fight against militancy. Achieving lasting gains requires a balanced approach that builds accountable institutions without compromising the operatives' ability to penetrate complex terrorist networks. The path forward lies in thoughtful, deliberate reforms rather than in reactionary policy shifts.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design of choice in this review paper is qualitative. Hennink et al. (2012) also argue that for such a complex phenomenon as the effectiveness of counter-terrorism measures, given the increasing terrorist threats, qualitative research methods can be highly valuable in providing detailed descriptions of the studied variables. It is in this line that the paper adopts an investigative approach to probe deep into the intricate details, reasons and underlying factors indicative of its development with terrorism springing up sporadically within Pakistan. The benefits of qualitative research, in this case, are that we can look at and analyse multiple dimensions of the problem, which includes considering the views of various stakeholders involved, understanding within a historical context, and understanding how the nature of terrorist threats has changed over time. It transcends plain numbers, giving a lot more to the notion.

Data Sources

The review mainly refers to data sources, such as policy papers, academic documents, and research studies undertaken after 2017, to ensure the findings' veracity or relevance. The reason for making the decision is that there are new issues and changes in Pakistan's counter-terrorism capacities. The use of the data on policies and strategies adopted in dealing with terrorism since 2017 in the current methodology to be set up regarding information recently gathered from such development. The data sources were reports, academic journals, international publications, government documents, media portrayals, and expert accounts. For accuracy, the latest information in literary circles was used for our basis of analysis; we prioritised credible sources that were peer-reviewed.

Analysis Techniques

The technique employed in this study was thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a systematic and rigorous method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns or themes within qualitative data (Castleberry and Nolen, 2018). This allows for a structured examination of qualitative data and enables the uncovering of key insights, trends, and variations in the data and the challenges and successes of counter-terrorism policies. By adopting this method, the paper aimed to identify recurring themes and patterns related to the effectiveness of Pakistan's counter-terrorism strategies.

ANALYSES AND DISCUSSION

Following a rigorous criterion for review, the themes identified are critically discussed in the forthcoming section. These themes are carefully crafted, keeping in view their relevance to the current paper's objective. The themes are presented here:

Theme 1: Analysis of Policy Effectiveness

Successes in Counter-Terrorism Efforts

Pakistan's counter-terrorism (CT) endeavour has been characterised, particularly since the mid-2010s, as a conviction of a combination of military and nonmilitary strategies with notable successes but also confronting difficult challenges and criticisms. Basit (2023) and Gohar et al. (2023), among others, maintain that some of Pakistan's military operations completed recently have contributed to the crippling operational efficacy through constant corralling on terrorist organisations such as TTP or Haqqani Network. Such operations resulted in the targeting and complete elimination of infrastructure that plays a key role for the terrorists, such as IED factories, training grounds or media under full control of terrorist organisations. It is important to note that the only way in which terrorist activities can be disrupted is through the strategic and decisive nature of these operations (Khattak et al., 2018). Ahmad (2020) reported that as a result of these missions, the number and scale of terrorist acts in Pakistan have decreased dramatically. This reduction is an indicator of a well-implemented CT strategy, which eventually leads to increased national security and stability (Fayyaz, 2019). Furthermore, Khan et al. (2023) also endorsed that Pakistan's involvement in the global counter-terrorism mechanism by cooperating with international agencies and following provisions of the cross-national treaties has contributed to developing its ability to isolate terrorist networks. Fair (2019) further argued that this cooperation has been very central to the fight against cross-border terrorism and obtaining outside assistance in CT operations.

Challenges and Critiques on the Effectiveness of CTP

The findings show that Pakistan's counter-terrorism efforts have achieved significant successes; these have also encountered many challenges and shortcomings. Identified through various studies and

analyses, these issues highlight the complexities and multifaceted nature of combating terrorism in the country.

Sustainability Concerns: The military operations have debilitated terrorist groups up to a considerable extent. However, there are concerns about the long-term sustainability of these successes, but issues like ensuring continued vigilance, rehabilitation of affected regions, and preventing the resurgence of extremism remain significant challenges (Shakoor, 2016; Ahmad, 2019; Naseer et al., 2019).

Selective Approach: One of the primary critiques of Pakistan's counter-terrorism strategy is its selective approach towards different militant groups. While criticising the state's approach, various scholars have maintained that Pakistan has been accused of distinguishing between 'good' and 'bad' militants, targeting hostile groups like the Pakistani Taliban while allegedly employing others for geopolitical gains (Tankel, 2018; Dorsey, 2018). This selective approach undermines overall counter-terrorism efforts and impacts Pakistan's international relations, particularly with its neighbours and global partners (Yaseen & Naveed, 2018).

Internal and External Security Challenges: The resurgence of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the rise of Islamic State-Khorasan Province have posed new security challenges for Pakistan (Shah & Mahmood, 2019). The complexities of dealing with these groups are exacerbated by domestic political instability and a need for a coherent political settlement with the TTP. The current situation requires Pakistan to work closely with the Afghan Taliban to address cross-border terrorism, adding another layer of complexity to its counter-terrorism strategy (Ahmad, 2022).

Humanitarian Impact: As effective as military operations have been in the disruption of terrorist networks, they also came alongside massive internal displacements and humanitarian issues. This has been coupled with social and economic effects such as heightened poverty levels, leading to job loss in those regions (Yousufi & Mustafa, 2019). All these hurdles have to be tackled to ensure that counter-terrorism practices, as well as radicalisation-prevention apparatuses, remain very effective in the long run (Feyyaz, 2019).

Human Rights Concerns: The counter-terrorism efforts in Pakistan have been probed for various human rights abuses. Such abuses relate to the extrajudicial murders and also disappearances (Waheed, 2018; Durrani, 2020; Jawad, 2020). Thus, the need to apply successful security practices worthy of such respect for human rights represents an important challenge in terms of eliminating terrorism as a country's threat (Arif et al., 2020; Wahab, 2021).

Financial Challenges and International Pressure: Some of the problems that Pakistan has grappled with include money laundering and also terror financing, which have serious implications for its reputation internationally. Notwithstanding the countering measures, regulatory weaknesses within the financial system have enabled terrorist groups to continue receiving funds up to 2021 (Zagaris & Bannister, 2020). This has contributed to Pakistan's being included in the Financial Action Task Force FATF 'Grey List,' demonstrating that more robust mechanisms, legal and financial, need to be taken (Zia et al., 2021).

Theme 2: Adaptability and Responsiveness of Counter-Terrorism Strategies

Response to Evolving Threats

Pakistan's counter-terrorism (CT) strategies have evolved to adapt to the changing nature of threats. This evolution is evident in the various aspects of Pakistan's approach to combating terrorism. It encompasses strategic and tactical innovations and agency coordination (Sahill, 2018). Javed et al. (2022) recorded that the CT strategies used in Pakistan went through a dramatic shift after 9/11 and concentrated on disassembling the operational capabilities of terrorist organisations such as Al-Qaeda. This included massive military actions in the tribal belts' regions as well as bordering Afghanistan (Javid & Shafiq, 2022). Similarly, the 2014 Peshawar School Massacre also marked a new dawn in Pakistan's counter-response that resulted in the creation of NAP (Rehman & Rashidi, 2022). The NAP approach included a set of actions, such as military operations, judicial reforms and a de-radicalisation campaign (Shah, 2016; Tan, 2018). However, regardless of the wider perspective offered by NAP implementation, challenges still persist. For example, the military has poor efficiency due to its chosen counter-terrorism approach (Ahmad, 2016).

Innovations in Strategy and Tactics:

The Pakistan Army has been at the heart of CT efforts, especially through operations such as Zarb-e-Azb and Radd-ul-Fasaad (Irfan et al., 2022). Mahmood (2020) claims that these operations helped to destroy the terrorist structures and also decreased the total number of acts perpetrated by

terrorists. Additionally, Pakistan has also paid attention to counter-radicalisation through diverse means. These include the reform of madrasas and active information campaigns aimed at curbing the spread of radical ideas (Feyyaz, 2019; Ahmad et al., 2022).

Coordination among Various Agencies

Effective coordination among military, intelligence, and civilian law enforcement agencies has been critical to Pakistan's CT efforts. However, challenges remain regarding inter-agency communication and joint operations (Mahmood, 2020; Ahmad, 2021). Similarly, Pakistan's collaboration with international allies regarding intelligence sharing and capacity building has been crucial (Rahim & Kasi, 2020). Ahmed (2022) argues that the ups and downs of Pakistan's relationship with the United States have significantly enhanced Pakistan's countering capabilities. The dynamics between civilian authorities and the military in formulating and implementing CT policies have been complex. The military's dominant role in CT efforts has sometimes overshadowed civilian initiatives and questioned the balance of power (Islam et al., 2020; Javed et al., 2022).

Theme 3: Factors Influencing the Resurgence of Terrorism

The resurgence of terrorism in Pakistan is influenced by an intricate interplay of socio-political (Ismail & Amjad, 2014), economic (Malik et al., 2015), regional (Abbas & Syed, 2020), and international factors (Rabbi et al., 2021), along with significant internal security gaps (Rafique, 2019). Each of these dimensions contributes to the multifaceted nature of terrorism in the country, which necessitates the effectiveness of countering responses.

Domestic Elements

The socio-political landscape of Pakistan, marked by perpetual political instability and socio-economic disparities, plays a crucial role in the growth of terrorism. Regions surrounded by militancy are grappling with weak social structures and economic challenges. The grim economic situations (Ullah, 2021), compounded by poor education and health facilities (Rafiq, 2019) and a lack of social justice (Khan, 2021), catalyse violence and challenge state authority (Ismail & Amjad, 2014). The plight of vulnerable populations, particularly women and children, is exacerbated in the post-9/11 socio-economic and political milieu. It has increased victimisation and societal instability (Bushra & Amjad, 2017).

Additionally, the cultural and environmental context and ideological and religious motivations are often deepened by socio-economic deprivation, providing fertile grounds for terrorist recruitment and radicalisation (Zada, 2018; Rauf, 2019). In the same row, unemployment, poverty, and income inequality are significant contributors to terrorism (Bagchi & Paul, 2018). Makki and Akash (2023) state that the economic burden of fighting terrorism has led to economic distortions, affecting growth and stability. This economic instability creates conditions exploitable by terrorist groups to recruit and radicalise individuals (Ali & Li, 2016).

Regional and Global Influences

The country's geographical location, as well as her participation in regional conflicts, meant a lot to how internal security was achieved within Pakistan, especially due to its influence on Afghanistan. The fact that groups like the TTP are reappearing and others, such as IS-Khorasan Province, are emerging presents new security dynamics for Pakistan to manoeuvre through in this multilayered regional political landscape (Omarkhail & Guozhu, 2023). As Surahio et al. (2022) stated, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor also offered numerous economic possibilities but simultaneously embodied a certain challenge due to security reasons and attracted various terrorist organisations attempting to disorganise affairs in this area. Scholars have maintained that, however, the presence of an active role played by regional powers such as Saudi Arabia and Iran has further aggravated the situation, including furious sectarian terrorism nurtured within Pakistan (Faqr et al., 2020; Ghazali & Hussain, 2021).

Internal Security Framework

A careful analysis of Pakistan's internal security structure reflects a substantial room which fuels terrorism. As we have explained above, the vast legal infrastructure of the counter-terrorism regime suffers from some structural deficiencies that do not allow for any effective actions against terrorism (Imran & Idress, 2020). The legislation must be more comprehensive and detailed to adapt to changing security trends. Key issues include the capacity-building of the judiciary and law enforcement agencies, acceptance of innovative investigation methods, and amendments in procedural laws (Ahmed, 2021; Jawad, 2022). Ibrahim et al. (2021) also state that the issue of counter-terrorism capacity and resource distribution is essential, pointing to improving financial power and establishing various socio-economic

projects aimed at helping territories impacted by terrorism cases. However, there are many impediments to the fight against financing terrorism in a country, such as money that is often moved through unofficial means (Shaikh, 2021).

CONCLUSION

The analysis of Pakistan's current counter-terrorism policies in light of the resurgence of terrorism marked by both achievements and challenges reveals a multifaceted landscape. It is concluded that although military operations like Zarb-e-Azb and Radd-ul-Fasaad have been instrumental in diminishing the operational capabilities of groups like the TTP, concerns remain about the sustainability of these successes and the region's long-term stability remain. In fact, these operations were effective in the short term but have also led to significant internal displacement and raised humanitarian concerns, highlighting the need for a balanced approach that respects human rights while ensuring security.

The criticism directed towards the CT practice of Pakistan vis-à-vis its fragmented policy is towards heterogeneous groups in militancy and the influence of internal as well as external dynamics. The re-emergence of TTP and the upsurge in IS-Khorasan represents a changing landscape of threats. There should be integrative strategies of CT that ensure the socio-economic differences are considered, cooperation between the agencies, and strengthening relations with foreign nations is made a priority. In the same way, the level of poverty in a region and the inequalities that are witnessed can act as important economic drivers to fane terrorism. It is very important to solve these socio-economic problems since it will contribute a lot to ensuring the success of anti-terrorism initiatives in the long term and reducing radicalisation.

Moreover, the geopolitical situation of Pakistan and its participation in regional conflicts has also contributed to making things worse. This has also complicated further the country's efforts to counter-terrorism. The implications of the various regional and international dynamics, such as the influence of CPEC or the position of powers like Saudi Arabia and Iran, also should not be underestimated in this regard.

Recommendations and Future Directions

Pakistan is standing at a precipice in its anti-terror campaign. Although some significant strides have been achieved over the past few years, there remain critical deficiencies that enable them to spread extremist ideologies and also for terrorist groups to function. Closing these gaps will need a pragmatic strategy based on cultural understanding, regional and global collaboration, respect for human rights and the empowerment of communities. Policymakers have to enhance the coordination between civilian and military and revise legal frameworks; they also need a wise combination of using hard power methods for prevention with soft-power ones. Neighbouring countries such as Afghanistan, India, and Iran should combine their efforts to fortify the regional intelligence-sharing arrangements with border security regimes. The ally's partnerships can establish law enforcement and messaging capabilities. In the end, however, any progress is likely to be sustainable only if it occurs at that level, from empowering citizens and civil society to counter-balance extremist narratives and empowering moderate voices. By making thoughtful consideration and inclusivity, Pakistan's authorities can develop a very holistic approach towards the war on terrorism while addressing rights issues as well as the traditions and also relationships within society. The way forward requires a lot of strength, synergy, empathy, and dedication from all the spheres in the community.

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