



WAR ON TERROR IMPACTS ON SOCIAL FABRIC: INTRA-STATE SECTARIANISM AND SOCIAL COHESION IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

This paper examines the profound impacts of Pakistan's involvement in the global war on terror, initiated in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. As a frontline state bordering Afghanistan, Pakistan became a non-formal ally of the U.S. in this conflict. However, the consequences have been detrimental, affecting various facets of Pakistani society. The study delves into the social, political, economic, and religious ramifications of the war on terror, exploring how it has hindered economic development, disrupted the social fabric, and altered political landscapes. The research underscores the intensified conflict, reaching densely populated areas like the federally administered tribal areas, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, northern areas, and Karachi. The findings reveal a significant inverse relationship between terrorist activities and political, economic, and social advancements. Moreover, the security situation in Pakistan rapidly deteriorated, necessitating military operations within the country to counter terrorism. Overall, the war on terror has left a lasting impact on Pakistan's political, economic, social, and religious dimensions.



Key words: War on Terror, Impacts, Social Fabric, Intra-State Sectarianism, Social Cohesion, Pakistan

Introduction

The "war on terrorism," initiated by the United States post-9/11, aimed to reshape global relations akin to the Cold War's complexity and impact. This multifaceted campaign left enduring consequences on surveillance, civil rights, international laws, collaborations, and democratic accountability. (Brzezinski, 2007). The "war on terrorism" involved major conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, clandestine operations in Yemen, increased military assistance to allies, and a surge in military spending. On the intelligence front, it led to restructuring, enhanced funding for intelligence capabilities, global efforts to apprehend suspects, expanded collaborations with foreign intelligence, and rigorous monitoring of terrorist financing. (Croft, 2006). The "war on terrorism" encompassed diplomatic efforts to build global coalitions, counter anti-American sentiment, and legislative measures like the USA Patriot Act. Security institutions, such as the Department of Homeland Security, were established, and preventive detention, surveillance, and intelligence programs were implemented by agencies like the NSA and FBI. Security measures at public events, airports, and borders were reinforced (O'Connell, 2005).

On September 11, 2001, nineteen militants affiliated with Al-Qaida hijacked four planes, executing suicide attacks on various targets in the United States. Reports indicate that nearly three thousand Americans lost their lives in these terrorist acts (Howell et al., 2009). Under President George Bush's leadership, extensive counter-terrorism initiatives were ignited following the 9/11 attacks. The predominantly Islamic terrorists, motivated by perceived grievances, including U.S. support for Israel and military presence in the Middle East, were financed by Al-Qaida, led by Usama Bin Laden. Some spent almost a year in the U.S., undergoing flight training, while others infiltrated the country in the months leading up to September 11, serving as key operatives in the operation. (Demir & Guler, 2021). In the aftermath of the attacks, President George Bush delivered a televised address to the nation, expressing condolences for the loss of American lives and outlining a vision for a global eradication of terrorism. Emphasizing the resilience of the United States, he asserted that while terrorists could impact physical structures, they could not undermine the fundamental strength of the nation. Characterizing the attacks as atrocities that might damage steel but not the resolve of America, he pledged an unwavering commitment to pursue justice. In a resolute declaration, President Bush assured the nation that there would be no distinction made between the terrorists responsible for such acts and those who provided them shelter, alluding to the decisive military response by the United States. (Bush, 2021). In response to President Bush's speech, "Operation Enduring Freedom" commenced on October 7, marking an international effort spearheaded by the United States to oust the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and dismantle Usama bin Laden's terrorist network. The U.S. military swiftly eliminated the Taliban from operational control within two months, yet the conflict persisted as American and coalition forces sought to



quell a Taliban insurgency concentrated in neighboring Pakistan. The operation stood as a dedicated initiative to eradicate terrorism on a global scale. (Acharya, 2007).

Pakistan Joining the War on Terror

In a focused context, Pakistan informally aligned with the United States in the global war on terror, primarily due to its status as a haven for fugitive terrorist groups. The justification remains debatable, but Pakistan bore immense costs, including military losses and financial burdens. A study suggests that Pakistani society underwent a profound transformation, marked by increased intolerance and extremism as the war infiltrated its territory. (Tellis, 2008). Pakistan, once considered one of the most perilous nations globally, was particularly deemed precarious during Musharaf's tenure. The country's anti-terrorism strategy has consistently fallen short of expectations. Following the events of September 11, Pakistan faced an imminent military threat from the United States, compelling Musharaf to position Pakistan as a crucial ally in the war on terrorism. Consequently, Pakistan's decision to align with NATO nations in combating terrorism in Afghanistan was seen as a significant shift in its foreign policy towards Afghanistan, marking a departure from its previous stance (Umbreen, 2011).

Preceding 9/11, Pakistan lacked a comprehensive anti-terrorism framework and displayed no inclination to establish one. However, in an unprecedented step, the Musharaf government pledged to address the escalating terrorism threats to the nation's security post-9/11. Research indicates that terrorism posed a significant risk to both the economic prosperity and overall peace conditions in Pakistan, prompting the government to take decisive action to counteract these burgeoning challenges. (M. T. Khan, 2013. In the 1990s, domestic violence in Pakistan led to military intervention against political and ethnic brutality. However, post-9/11 events blurred the line between domestic and foreign security, prompting a strategic shift. This study argues for a multi-dimensional anti-terrorism strategy, emphasizing a proactive, non-conventional approach to address Pakistan's evolving security concerns. It underscores the necessity for a nuanced and sustainable approach to tackle the intricate challenges posed by terrorism. (Katz, 2016).

Despite its pivotal role as a frontline participant in the American war on terror since September 2001, Pakistan has borne severe consequences. The conflict has wrought havoc on the nation, hindering economic growth, disrupting the social fabric, and endangering political stability. Pakistan's active engagement in the war has resulted in an upsurge in terrorist attacks across the country, leading to far-reaching political, economic, social, and psychological ramifications. Research indicates that Pakistani society, once regarded as one of the most tranquil globally, underwent substantial changes in its social fabric and political economy since the USSR invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. (Kayani, 2011). In the 1980s, global powers supported military organizations in Pakistan against Russia, fostering a jihadi culture. Significant aid flowed to the Pakistani government and militant groups, turning Pakistan into fertile ground for terrorism. After Russia's exit, terrorism spread in response to the changed political landscape. Post-9/11, Pakistan



joined the global fight against terrorism, effectively countering militants but exacerbating domestic terrorism, fostering hostility and fear among the public. (Amin & Naseer, 2013). The emergence of terrorism in Pakistan reflects a global affliction, transcending national boundaries and impacting societies worldwide. It has become a pressing socioeconomic and political issue, influencing not only Pakistan but the entire world. The phenomenon underscores the imperative role of social thinkers and analysts as catalysts for meaningful social change. In understanding and addressing the multifaceted dimensions of terrorism, these individuals play a pivotal role in shaping perspectives and formulating strategies to mitigate the far-reaching consequences of this complex global challenge. (M. Z. Khan, 2017) Social thinkers should prioritize mitigating the fear from terrorism's adverse effects on social well-being. Pakistan's government grappled with sectarianism, emphasizing social cohesion as a countermeasure. Sectarian tensions hinder efforts to eradicate both sectarianism and terrorism, requiring a holistic approach. The global spread of violent extremism underscores the profound impact, necessitating collaboration to address interconnected challenges. (Zaman, 1998). Terrorism represents a grave violation of human rights, particularly in terms of liberty, life, personal integrity, and security. Its impact extends beyond personal consequences to pose a threat to international peace, community, security, and socio-economic progress (Shah, 2020). Countering terrorism, extremism, and sectarianism requires a comprehensive approach integrating all society segments. Collective efforts and a holistic understanding, extending beyond national boundaries, are essential to address these complex challenges.

RELATED LITERATURE

The War on Terror has diverse impacts on Pakistan, leading to socioeconomic decline. Post-9/11, disruptions in peace and religious harmony fueled intrastate sectarianism. Scholarly research extensively examines the consequences, emphasizing Pakistan's alliance with the U.S. against terrorism. This literature forms a crucial background, providing insights into the intricate dynamics of Pakistan's role in the War on Terror.

Tariq Khan (2013) This study delves into the profound impacts of the War on Terror on Pakistan, asserting its frontline role since September 2001. The conflict has inflicted extensive damage on the nation, hindering economic growth, disrupting social structures, and imperiling political stability. Focused on a two-year span, the research highlights the intensification of the war, expanding into established areas, with the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) bearing the brunt. The author elucidates that terrorism manifests through harassment, suicide attacks, and unjustifiable killings, aiming to disrupt daily life, damage infrastructure, and undermine the economic and social well-being while tearing at the social fabric. Terrorist activities significantly impact economic growth by diminishing foreign investment, capital formation, local investments, and elevating risk perception. The author contends that historically, war-torn countries, whether in Europe, the USA, or elsewhere, have experienced economic downturns. Determining the precise economic losses attributable to the War on Terror



proves challenging, with Pakistan's Finance Ministry estimating a \$67 billion loss without specifying the methodology.

Moreover, Zahid Shahab Ahmad and Musharad Zahoor (2020), In their research papers, the authors argue that religious minorities in Pakistan have faced persecution since the country's independence. The 1980s' rise of Islamization exacerbated religious persecution, prejudices, and violence against minorities, resulting in widespread structural violence and violation of their civil rights. The 9/11 attacks reshaped global dynamics, particularly in Pakistan, where Anti-American/Western sentiments surged with the War on Terror. The study notes that extremist groups label local Christians as Western spies due to drone attacks, fostering distrust. Post-9/11, Muslim diasporas in the West face fear and Islamophobia, straining inter-group relations. Public discourse often portrays Muslims as incompatible with Western values, contributing to a global pattern of dehumanization, exemplified in political spheres, including the dehumanization of former President Barack Obama based on his race.

Nadia Mushtaq Abbasi (2013) The analysis emphasizes the lasting impacts of the War on Terror on Pakistan, highlighting the nation's struggle with insecurity and political violence since the 1980s. Despite twelve years of active involvement, there's no clear resolution in sight, with terrorism intensifying and posing dire consequences. Pakistan's proximity to Afghanistan, the war's epicenter, compelled its participation, but historical hesitations stem from the prolonged US and Western involvement, leaving behind an Islamic Jihad residue in the region after their withdrawal.

Hidayat Ullah argues that Pakistan, a significant net troop contributor to the United Nations, has played a pivotal role in global crisis resolution. Positioned strategically in South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East, and being a key partner to the US near Afghanistan, Pakistan actively contributed to the US-led global war on terrorist groups and the Taliban. This collaboration traces back to the Cold War, extending into the post-9/11 era when the incident triggered a determined US response. The primary objectives were targeting Osama bin Laden, addressing the Taliban's harboring of him in Afghanistan, and engaging in a broader international war against terrorism, distinct from a battle against Islam or the Afghan people.

Dr. Saima Ashraf Kayani (2011) contends in her research paper that while terrorism has existed in various forms for a considerable period, the incidents of 9/11 and the subsequent grand war on terror elevated it to a global phenomenon. A historical analysis reveals diverse periods, groups, methods, individuals, and motivations associated with terrorism. The war on terror aimed to eradicate global terrorism and hold the 9/11 hijackers accountable, targeting states sponsoring terrorism and terrorist organizations. Pakistan, chosen as a regional ally, faced exacerbated challenges due to its involvement in the war on terrorism. The article estimates that Pakistan suffered over eight thousand casualties, both civilian and security personnel, within eight years, resulting in significant economic and psychological damage to the nation.

Zafar Iqbal and Sumaira Lodhi (2014) argue that Pakistan has witnessed a substantial rise



in violent religious extremism in recent years. The current economic crisis is attributed to factors like unstable governance, ineffective policies, corruption, resource misallocation, and underutilization. The government's failure to effectively counter terrorism and extremism, especially during the war on terror, has exacerbated the economic collapse. Indicators of this struggle include low GDP growth, reduced interest from economists in public and private investment, heightened unemployment, decreased foreign direct investment (FDI), and unprecedented poverty levels. Target killings and suicide attacks represent extreme manifestations of extremist violence, significantly contributing to the economic downturn. This violence not only disrupts law and order but also impedes business and financial activities, jeopardizing the nation's overall stability.

Bruce Riedel (2014) The article argues that Pakistan is both a significant sponsor of terrorism and a major victim of it. Despite experiencing horrific terrorist attacks, such as the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, Pakistan is considered an active state sponsor of terrorism, driven by its national security goals. The Pakistani army is implicated in establishing connections with various Islamist terror organizations, including the Taliban and Osama Bin Laden, driven by its fear of India. The article contends that Pakistani support for the Taliban played a crucial role, with over sixty thousand Pakistani students estimated to have fought in Afghanistan in support of the Taliban against the U.S. The military's involvement included providing advice and covert operations, indicating Pakistan's comprehensive knowledge of the Taliban's military capabilities, command structure, and supply routes.

Zahid Shahab Ahmad and Khan Zeb (2016) explore the impact of the war on terror on youth in Pakistan, noting that pervasive terrorist activities have generated a sense of unease among the populace, evident in observed behaviors. The complex nature of terrorism, with varying perspectives on its definition, contributes to the challenge of categorization. The invisibility of terrorists in Pakistan exacerbates this unease, leading to emotions like anxiety and depression. Youth, having direct or indirect exposure to terrorism, bear the brunt of psychological issues. The study reveals that 91 percent of university students in Karachi experienced terrorism primarily through electronic media. Economic conditions, as highlighted in the research, leave many youths with no option but to join terrorist organizations, emphasizing the broader, indirect impact of terrorism on the nation.

The article by Zain ul Abideen et al. explores Pakistan's challenges since joining the war on terror in 2001, highlighting its impact on national integrity, social dynamics, and the overall fabric. The decision triggered a decline in security, leading to military operations against domestic threats. This war has significantly shaped Pakistan's political, social, and economic landscape, contributing to global divides in sentiments toward the U.S. As a staunch ally, Pakistan faces heightened security risks. The article probes into sectarianism, identifying religious extremism and violence as contributors to ongoing conflicts and social polarization, exacerbated by foreign involvement and support for diverse religious schools of thought.



Methodology

Our social sciences research employs qualitative methods, emphasizing the exploration of ideas and behaviors to comprehensively address theoretical questions. Through a descriptive approach, we analyze the war on terror's impacts on Pakistan's social fabric, drawing from diverse opinions. This study not only enhances immediate understanding but also lays groundwork for future inquiries in Political Science and International Relations. Utilizing a deductive approach, our investigation progresses from general to specific, delving into intricate dimensions of social, political, economic, religious, and psychological aspects affected by the conflict. Diverse scholarly sources contribute to a thorough exploration, ensuring a nuanced examination of the subject matter.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

In response to the US-led invasion of Afghanistan on September 11, 2001, Pakistan, under the leadership of General Pervez Musharaf, unequivocally supported the coalition, positioning itself as a frontline state in the war on terror. The regrettable decision to provide land and aviation facilities to the US and its allies for operations against alleged perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks had significant repercussions for Pakistan. Subsequently, the Taliban and Al Qaeda labeled Pakistan an enemy of Islam, initiating targeted attacks on the state and society in an attempt to compel it to cease support for the Western coalition (Siddiq, 2011). This transformed Pakistan into a battleground for a proxy war, with various sectarian groups and organizations exploiting the situation to advance their respective agendas. The proliferation of bomb blasts, suicide bombings, and other forms of violence has instilled profound fear and terror across both small and large cities in Pakistan, with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Baluchistan, and Karachi experiencing the most severe consequences. Exploiting the situation, adversaries of Pakistan sought to destabilize the nation by promoting separatist elements in different provinces. (H. Khan, 2013).

Pakistan has borne a substantial toll, both in human lives and financial resources, due to its involvement in the war on terror. Approximately seventy thousand Pakistanis have lost their lives, and the country has expended over a hundred million dollars in its defense. Regardless of the most persuasive argument, there is widespread acknowledgment that Pakistan's choices in aligning with the war on terror after the 9/11 attacks were excessive. The impact has been severe, with around 35,000 civilians and officers falling victim to militancy and brutality (Kayani, 2011). Some costs, such as religious division, the rise of militant gatherings, and the breakdown of traditional political and social administrative structures in tribal regions, are challenging to quantify. The consequences also include communal upheaval and the displacement of people within the country due to anti-Semitism. Terrorism-related activities have taken a toll on the already fragile economy, putting Pakistan in a precarious position with both internal and external challenges posing an existential threat to the nation. (Arshad, 2010).



Terrorism, characterized by indiscriminate and unjustified mass violence, particularly through tactics like suicide bombings, creates an environment of fear. This fear factor not only discourages foreign direct investment (FDI) but also triggers capital flight and reduces overall economic activities due to a pervasive sense of insecurity among both businesses and the public. Pakistan, having aligned itself with the war on terror in 2001, faced these consequences as the activities of terrorists instilled fear and uncertainty, negatively impacting the nation's economic landscape. (Ali, 2010).

Economic Ripples: Unpacking the Impact of the War on Terror

In the realm of the economic repercussions of terrorism on Pakistan, the initial casualty was the country's tourism sector. Prior to the onset of the war on terror, Pakistan had experienced a thriving tourism industry, with millions of visitors and the establishment of a dedicated tourism department elevating the nation to a sought-after destination. However, a comprehensive study reveals that Pakistan's active participation in the war on terror and its ensuing aftermath led to a near dissolution of the tourism sector in the first decade of the 21st century. While other events such as the earthquakes in 2005 and floods in 2010 also contributed, terrorism emerged as the predominant factor. Regrettably, the picturesque tourist havens in Pakistan, specifically the Northern Areas and Gilgit Baltistan, were compelled to shutter due to the infiltration of extremist elements. (Bano & Khan, 2020). Swat, located in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and often referred to as the Switzerland of Pakistan, was formerly a renowned tourist haven. Recognized for its natural splendor and rich historical heritage, Swat boasted over four hundred Buddhist sites, captivating waterfalls, expansive meadows, flowing streams, and various other attractions within its district (Rabbi, 2012). This region accommodated a network of more than forty thousand people engaged in diverse sectors such as adventure tourism, ecotourism, travel industries, and recreational trades. Swat held the distinction of being a multifaceted tourist destination, catering to a broad spectrum of portable industries and offering a rich tapestry of experiences for visitors. Nevertheless, the city of Swat experienced a substantial setback in its tourist industry due to militancy and subsequent military interventions. Formerly recognized as the lost paradise of Pakistan, Swat employed over five thousand people in large-scale businesses, including hotels and restaurants. Regrettably, the city witnessed nearly fifty hotel attacks orchestrated by terrorists, leading to their closure and a severe blow to the entire travel industry. The Taliban's actions in Swat significantly undermined the once-thriving tourism sector. However, commendable efforts by the PTI government have enabled Swat to reclaim its former prominence and influence in the tourist industry. Despite these positive developments, during the war on terror, the government of Pakistan incurred losses exceeding 100 billion dollars in counterinsurgency operations, exacerbating the challenges faced by the tourist industry. (Javaid, 2020).

Baluchistan, another region of significant geological and archaeological importance, faced adverse consequences due to resistance against the Pakistani army's military actions. Ziarat, a picturesque mountain resort in Baluchistan, renowned for its paleontological significance and historical



artifacts, attracted numerous explorers and researchers. This tourist attraction, known for its juniper forests and panoramic views, held additional significance as the former residence of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan. Unfortunately, on June 15th, Baloch Zealots detonated an explosive in a prominent habitation, causing substantial damage to the neighborhood and the tourist sector. This incident further exacerbated the challenges faced by the tourist industry in Baluchistan during the turbulent period of the war on terror. (Raza & Jawaid, 2013).

Furthermore, the detrimental impact on the tourism sector extended with the tragic loss of several international tourists. In the base camp of Nanga Parbat, ten foreign climbers and a local visitor fell victim to acts of terrorism. The victims included individuals of diverse nationalities, such as one American of Chinese ancestry, three Ukrainians, two Chinese, one Lithuanian, two Slovaks, and one Nepalese. These targeted attacks not only resulted in the loss of precious lives but also significantly tarnished Pakistan's travel industry reputation both domestically and internationally. The repercussions of these incidents reverberated, directly affecting the lives of many individuals dependent on the tourism sector. (R. E. A. Khan & Rasheed, 2016). These incidents and the subsequent losses induced fear among Pakistani vacationers, leading them to abandon their meticulously planned excursions, resulting in a significant setback for the country. Notably, Ihsan Ullah Ihsan, the Pakistani Taliban leader, acknowledged his group's involvement in the attacks through a videotape. According to him, the assault was a retaliatory measure for the actions of the American airforce, which had resulted in the death of their fighter, Wali Rehman Mehsud. Ihsan further explained that the attack was orchestrated by the newly unveiled Tehreek-i-Taliban wing named "Junoon-e-Hafsa," specifically created to target foreigners in Pakistan and make a statement against U.S. strikes worldwide on any member of the group. (Raza et al., n.d.).

Primarily, the terrorists aimed to inflict damage on the travel industry, tarnish Pakistan's image, and isolate it internationally. Studies indicate that once a negative perception of a country takes root among outsiders, rebuilding trust becomes a challenging, lengthy process (Qadri & Khan, 2019). Numerous instances of harm and execution of Chinese experts and individuals from other nationalities in Pakistan have perpetuated concerns within the travel industry. Despite ongoing debates within Pakistan's travel sector about the accuracy and impact of such incidents, these tragic occurrences have exacerbated existing apprehensions, dissuading potential visitors. Moreover, terrorism has significantly undermined Pakistan's economic foundations, impeding its economic growth during the prolonged war on terror. Since the events of 9/11, Pakistan's economy faced substantial challenges amid the fight against terrorism, especially as it aligned itself with the United States. (A. Khan et al., 2020).

In essence, the economy of Pakistan suffered severe setbacks due to the war on terror, resulting in a myriad of economic crises. Progress was impeded, external obligations reached critical levels, trade dwindled, unemployment surged, commodity prices soared, and military expenditures escalated significantly. The onslaught of terrorist attacks dealt a severe blow to the once-thriving travel industry. Moreover, military operations targeted the nation's infrastructure, exacerbating the economic strain. The influx of refugees from Afghanistan and other conflict-ridden regions



strained the country's economy, prompting extensive research by business analysts. The human toll of this war, with numerous security personnel and civilians losing their lives, further underscored the profound impact on both the nation's economy and its people. (Zakaria et al., 2019). The absence of developmental ventures during the war had profound implications for both the economic and social spheres, constituting an unprecedented crisis in Pakistan's history. Rebuilding financial growth, stabilizing payments, and attracting foreign investors became formidable challenges amid the ongoing conflict. Significant resources, both human and financial, were diverted to counter-terrorism efforts, with the government prioritizing security concerns. The spillover effects of conflicts in neighboring countries, particularly the influx of terrorists seeking safe havens, compelled Pakistan to undertake numerous military operations along its borders, including in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). This intricate scenario posed significant hurdles to economic recovery, development, and social well-being during the war on terror. (Nazir, 2010). The research analyst has pinpointed several crucial indicators linked to terrorism that exert a profound influence on the country's financial landscape. Firstly, terrorism-induced intimidation affects all facets of national financial activities, resulting in a decline in the production of goods and services, cessation of foreign investment, reduced revenue generation, and significant constraints on exports. The pervasive influence of terrorism has acted as a deterrent to economic growth, creating substantial challenges for financial stability and sustainable development. (Qadir & Alasuutari, 2013).

Secondly, historically, external liabilities and obligations had peaked. With diminished economic output, the country faced challenges in meeting its debt obligations. Pressure to fulfill past installments intensified from business development agencies, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. Thirdly, the influx of displaced individuals from neighboring Afghanistan and conflict-ridden regions like KP and FATA strained the country's resources significantly. The surge in unemployment led to the collapse of the travel sector. (Ahmad, 2010). The substantial cost of security operations conducted by the Pakistani armed forces in the northern regions against terrorists constituted the fourth impact of terrorism on the economy. This heightened external obligations while diminishing employment opportunities in these conflict zones. The unanticipated terrorist attacks represented the sixth effect, leading to the delay and increased costs of development projects due to untimely completion (Fair, 2012). In summary, terrorism proved to be a profound economic tragedy.

Political Ramifications of the War on Terror in Pakistan

The Musharaf government unilaterally committed Pakistan to the war on terror, bypassing political parties and leaders in the decision-making process. This lack of inclusive decision-making led to the absence of a unified national consensus. Musharaf's policies to align with the U.S. in the fight against terrorism created divisions among political parties and their leaders. The Quaid-I-Azam group of the Muslim League staunchly supported Musharaf's policies, contrasting with the Pakistan Muslim League (N) and Pakistan People Party, which emphasized the government's anti-



extremist efforts while cautiously endorsing its involvement in the war. This unilateral commitment and subsequent political divisions had profound implications for Pakistan's political landscape. (Durrani, 2022). The Muttahida Majlis Amal (MMA) adeptly capitalized on anti-American sentiments during the 2002 general elections, securing a majority of seats in the NWFP and Baluchistan, both neighboring Afghanistan. Religious political factions criticized Musharraf's Kashmir policy and the presence of the Pakistan army in the FATA. They perceived the government's crackdown on extremists as a betrayal of the Kashmiri independence cause, attributing it to pressure from India and the United States. The MMA's electoral success underscored the resonance of anti-American sentiments in shaping political dynamics in the aftermath of Pakistan's commitment to the war on terror (Mustafa et al., 2020). While there was a general consensus among political parties and the government to combat terrorism, Musharraf's approach to the US-led war on terror faced conditional approval. The United States used the crisis to bolster its influence in India-Pakistan diplomatic relations. Under pressure from the US and Western media, Musharraf took actions such as outlawing eight terrorist groups, arresting over two thousand individuals, and banning around six jihadist parties. In collaboration with the Bush administration, Pakistan and India initiated comprehensive discussions to address various concerns, especially the longstanding Kashmir dispute. The international media's attention to the Kashmir issue was viewed positively by Pakistan, marking a significant development in regional diplomatic relations.

(Javaid, 2014). Similarly, Pakistan's collaboration with the United States in the counterterrorism efforts had significant security ramifications for the country. Various operations were conducted in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) to combat Al-Qaeda networks, extremism, insurgencies, and militancy. These activities presented a substantial security challenge for the government, leading to a surge in suicide assaults and bombings across the nation, resulting in thousands of civilian casualties and extensive damage to public property. An observer noted that the anticipated outcomes, still unrealized, reflect a hedging of bets amid concerns that the United States might turn against Pakistan. (M. F. Khan & Khan, 2021). A stable political framework is essential for the effective functioning of any democratic nation. However, the stability of Pakistan's political system was significantly threatened following the 9/11 attacks, as Afghanistan became embroiled in a terrorism-induced conflict. Pakistan's involvement in the war on terror since 2001 posed a risk to its political stability, with activists working to undermine the social, economic, political, and religious foundations. The nation experienced numerous terrorist attacks at the national level, further highlighting the challenges to maintaining a stable political environment in the aftermath of 9/11. (Aziz & Shah, 2020). The aftermath of 9/11 witnessed a surge in political violence in Pakistan, with terrorists targeting leaders from various political parties. Prominent figures, including former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and former President General Pervez Musharraf, faced direct threats. Karachi emerged as a focal point for political assassinations, involving conflicts between Sunnis and the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM). Baluchistan experienced a high incidence of killings and political kidnappings across different regions, involving multiple factions. The escalation of political violence was starkly evident in 2013 when



nearly three hundred political leaders, activists, and workers fell victim to targeted assassinations within a single year. This wave of violence significantly challenged the stability of Pakistan's political landscape. (Khalid & Roy, 2016).

Perception Predicament: Pakistan's National Image Crisis Amidst the War on Terror

The current international standing of Pakistan is marred by the perception of being a frontline state and a sanctuary for militants. The image of Pakistan witnessed a distressing decline during the war on terror, impacting its economic potential as a tarnished reputation might not attract substantial investments given its current notoriety on the global stage. The presence of Al-Qaeda in Pakistan, according to Western perspectives, casts a shadow over the country's image. Despite Pakistan's significant role in combating terrorism, it finds itself in a predicament where its image contradicts its actual contributions. This study aims to delve into how Pakistan's role as a frontline state is perceived globally and how it affects its standing as an ally in the fight against terrorism. (Sultana & Khawaja Alqama, 2012). On the other hand, Pakistan had been chastised by Western Media and lawmakers for doing nothing to stop the war on terror. According to the Dawn newspaper, the then president of the United States of America Barack Obama can and should do more to combat fear-mongering attacks as he had stated in one of his official speeches. According to western media, the individual Pakistanis aided psychological oppressors, which is why they did not support the role of Pakistan as a frontrunner in the battle against the terror (Munawar & Mushtaq, 2016) As Pakistan solidified its role as a Western ally, internal strife and terror escalated within the country. The military's engagement in the fight against terrorism has come under scrutiny in the Western media, contributing to a narrative that places blame on Pakistan for the fragile situation in Afghanistan. Present-day Pakistan grapples with numerous challenges stemming from the repercussions of terrorism, presenting a complex scenario that warrants thorough examination and understanding. This study aims to explore the multifaceted impacts of Pakistan's alignment with the West on its internal dynamics, security apparatus, and the broader regional context.

Unraveling the Psyche: Exploring the Psychological Impacts of the War on Terrorism

Widespread terrorism in Pakistan has deeply scarred a generation, causing psychological trauma and frequent casualties. The global perception of the country has suffered, labeling it as one of the most perilous nations. The constant fear of extremist threats has overshadowed public engagements, leaving the populace traumatized and lives deeply impacted. People grapple with adversity, intensifying a pervasive sense of despair in both social and private spheres. (Nizami et al., 2018). Once vibrant communal spaces like markets, mosques, and parks in Pakistan have lost their popularity due to security concerns. Despite the constitutional mandate, the government faces challenges in fully protecting citizens' rights. Security issues have reshaped public life, prompting individuals to limit their engagements in these traditionally communal areas. The decline of these spaces mirrors the broader impact of the security situation on daily life and community interaction



in Pakistan. Furthermore, the media has played a crucial role in amplifying the negative perception of persecution in Pakistan and worldwide, contributing to widespread anxiety, fear, and distress. Emotions such as anger, discomfort, sadness, fatigue, and unhappiness have become prevalent among the Pakistani populace, impacting individuals in their workplaces and relationships (Abbas et al., 2020). Numerous terrorist attacks have eroded social responsibility and public cohesion, with images of bomb explosions and internally displaced people in various camps saturating television broadcasts and instilling fear. The scrutiny of families affected by these crimes has heightened irritation and discomfort among citizens, leading to a reluctance to use public transportation. Parents, concerned about the safety of their children in educational institutions targeted by terrorist attacks, experience persistent worry until their children safely return home. (Nizami et al., 2014). Furthermore, Pakistanis grapple with confusion and a sense of divisiveness, expressing dissatisfaction with their services and leaders. The pervasive uncertainty has led to a shift in traditional attitudes, fostering skepticism, haughtiness, and a loss of faith in the government and state institutions. This erosion of trust impedes civic engagement, undermining public property and the state. Unemployment, exacerbated by legal and administrative challenges such as the energy crisis, serves as a catalyst for widespread dissent, as evidenced by numerous protests in the public sphere (Kumar & Mandal, 2012). The economy and institutions of the country bear the brunt of terrorist attacks, with established firms closing and professionals relocating operations abroad due to the economic downturn, a primary driver of unemployment. Rising unemployment, in turn, contributes significantly to the increasing number of people living in poverty. Moreover, the absence of essential services fueled discontent among the populace, contributing to an upsurge in criminal activities and influencing the social fabric of society. Individuals were reluctant to fulfill their social and professional obligations due to the pervasive fear of terrorist attacks. The healthcare profession suffered under terrorism's oppressive grip, with many people deprived of access to medical facilities (Saigol, 2010). The public's fear escalated following suicide bombings at Dera Ismail Khan's hospital, rendering them apprehensive about seeking medical treatment in emergency rooms or other facilities. Other attacks, such as those on the Marriot Hotel in Islamabad, the Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore, and police training camps in Lahore and Islamabad, further demoralized the nation. Numerous police officers and security forces lost their lives in these terrorist attacks, reinforcing the citizens' sense of fear and tension. These situations have had a profound impact on the mental, social, and emotional well-being of the Pakistani people.

War on Terror's Societal Impact: Unraveling the Threads of Fear, Fragmentation, and Resilience in Pakistan

In 2009, Pakistan faced a surge in terrorist attacks, including a major assault on the General Headquarters of the Pakistan Army. The Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) saw the tragic deaths of 54 political leaders, with FATA experiencing 560 attacks resulting in 645 fatalities and 1078 injuries. KP faced 1135 attacks, leading to 1440 deaths. Nationally, there were 460 attacks causing 863 casualties. Beyond physical devastation, these attacks had far-reaching negative consequences on politics, the economy, psychology, and society.



The destruction of property and infrastructure, coupled with the resultant economic slowdown, left an indelible mark on Pakistan's trajectory. Notably, the economy remained three percent below the national average due to the exigencies of counter-terrorism activities. Moreover, extensive counter-insurgency campaigns further exacerbated the economic plight of FATA and KP during the subsequent period from 2010 to 2011, as discerned from the research conducted by Farooq (2014).

Educational Disruptions: Unraveling the Fallout of the War on Terror on Pakistan's Learning Landscape

Education stands as a cornerstone for progress in any global context, yet it has been disproportionately targeted by terrorist groups in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). In 2018 alone, militants targeted 119 schools, resulting in casualties among students and creating an environment of fear. Girls' schools, particularly in Swat, were a specific focus for destruction. The attacks extended beyond infrastructure, encompassing students, instructors, academics, and various education professionals, subjected to violence, kidnapping, forced enlistment, disappearances, illegal detention, torture, and sexual abuse (Khattak, 2018). The scope of destruction includes harm to educational structures, occupation of buildings for military purposes, and violent disruptions to the educational process. While immediate human and material costs are reported, the long-term consequences on the education system in affected areas remain underexplored. This includes adverse effects on teacher effectiveness, retention, and recruitment, as well as student attendance, attentiveness, and academic achievement a fact that merits heightened attention in understanding the broader impact of such attacks (F. Khan, 2019).

Sectarian Strife Within Borders: Unraveling the Threads of Intrastate Sectarianism and Social Cohesion

Global terrorism and extremism, transcending borders and religions, violate human rights, especially the right to life. The impact extends beyond individuals, threatening international peace, security, and socio-economic conditions. Combating this menace requires comprehensive efforts involving all segments of society. To enhance counterterrorism policies, addressing both structural (push) and psychological (pull) factors contributing to violent extremism is crucial. These factors collectively influence heightened sensitivity towards extremist behavior. (Social Cohesion to Counter Terrorism, Violent Extremism, n.d.). Push factors for violent extremism include socio-economic disparities, discrimination, poor governance, human rights issues, radicalization, and delayed conflict resolution. Pull factors involve individual backgrounds, grievances, victimization, foreign intervention, manipulation of beliefs, and differences in ideology, ethnicity, culture, and politics. Recognizing their interconnectedness is crucial, as none can be addressed in isolation. Policymakers need a comprehensive understanding of these root causes to formulate effective counterinsurgency measures. In Pakistan, ethnic diversity has unfortunately led to division instead of harmony. Pakistan is characterized by significant diversity in terms of ethnicity and religion.



Despite the constitutional principle of equality, there is a lack of adequate representation for all ethnic and religious identities, giving rise to conflicts and a perception of societal imbalance. Ethnicity has become a formidable challenge for Pakistan in the process of constructing a national identity from a mosaic of regional languages and religious affiliations (Siddiqi, 2012). The prevalence of ethnic tensions, coupled with the presence of various terrorist and militant groups, contributes to a turbulent and complex security landscape within the country. These challenges not only impact internal cohesion but also have implications for external relations, especially concerning powerful regional actors.

CONCLUSION

The research paper concludes that the negative impact of terrorism in Pakistan goes beyond direct harm to individuals, causing widespread unease due to frequent attacks in key cities. The absence of foreign investment has increased unemployment, hampering economic growth. A combination of factors, including terrorism, unemployment, poverty, and corruption, contributes to a sense of helplessness and stress. The cumulative effects, including a significant brain drain, are impacting Pakistan's development across various dimensions. With a substantial youth population, addressing their unique needs in the prevailing environment dominated by terrorism is urgently needed. The war on terror has fueled religious intolerance in Pakistan, leading to vigilante justice and weaponization against perceived oppressors, including the military. Controversial drone attacks and military operations have intensified discontent, with security forces diverted from public security to political and governmental duties. With potential national force withdrawal by 2025, there's an urgent need for a comprehensive strategy addressing terrorism's root causes. The war has inflicted substantial suffering, impacting economic growth, human lives, and infrastructure, tarnishing Pakistan's international image. Collaborative efforts involving political, military, and religious leaders are crucial, along with building trust with neighboring nations to effectively combat terrorism.



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