

Terrorism In Pakistan: Its Causes, Impacts And Remedies

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At present the gravest problem that Pakistan is facing is terrorism. It has become a headache for federation and a nightmare for public. Though, it is a global issue but Pakistan has to bear the brunt of it. Pakistan's involvement in the War on Terror has further fuelled the fire. We are facing war like situation against the terrorists. This daunting situation is caused due to several factors. These factors include social injustice, economic disparity, political instability, religious intolerance and also external hands or international conspiracies. A handful of people who have their vicious interests to fulfil have not only taken countless innocent lives but also distorted the real image of Islam before the world through their heinous acts. Terrorist acts like suicide bombings have become a norm of the day. On account of these attacks Pakistan is suffering from inefaceable loss ranging from civilian to economic. People have become numerical figures, blown up in numbers every now and then. Terrorists have not spared any place. Bazars, mosques, educational institutes, offices, hotels, no place is safe anymore.

Though terrorism has no accepted definition, yet it can be defined as the use of violence and intimidation in the pursuit of political aim or the calculated use of violence or threat of violence against civilians in order to attain goals that are political or religious or ideological in nature, this is done through intimidation or coercion or inciting fear. According to FBI's definition, Terrorism is the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objective.

The religion of Islam (Submission), advocates freedom, peace and mutual agreement and admonishes aggression. The following verses make it very clear.

“And do not aggress; GOD dislikes the aggressors”. (Quran 5:87)

“You shall resort to pardon, advocate tolerance, and disregard the ignorant”. (Quran: 7:199)

The relations of Muslims (Submitters) with others are based primarily on peace, mutual respect and trust. The theme in the Quran is peace, unless there is oppression or injustice that cannot be resolved by all the peaceful means available. The true religion of Islam forbids the killing of innocent people, irrespective of the cause, religious, political or social beliefs.

“...You shall not kill * GOD has made life sacred * except in the course of justice. These are His commandments to you that you may understand.” (Quran 6:151)

“You shall not kill any person * for GOD has made life sacred — except in the course of justice.” (Quran17:33)

In Islam, an amazingly powerful emphasis is laid on developing love for mankind and on the vital importance of showing mercy and sympathy towards every creature of Allah Almighty, including human beings and animals. For indeed, love and true sympathy is the very antidote of terrorism.

Injustice is one of the foremost factors that breed terrorism. When the grievances of the people are not redressed they resort to violent actions. So this is the case with Pakistan where timely justice has always been a far cry. Hence, the delayed justice is working as incentive for victims and dragging them to the swamp of terrorist organisations.

Illiteracy is the root causes of extremism and terrorism. More than one in five men aged 15 to 24 unable to read or write, and only one in 20 is in tertiary education. such a high illiteracy rate has made Pakistan vulnerable to terrorism. furthermore, technical and vocational education, and adult literacy, are especially important but unfortunately have been neglected the most in Baluchistan, Khyber Pukhtunkhwa and the Tribal Areas. Illiteracy and lack of skills provide fertile ground for those who wish to recruit young men and women to their cause, especially when significant monetary payments are attached.

Regarding poverty, it is also an incubating cause of terrorism. And it is said that “a hungry man is an angry man.” Notably, majority of people in Pakistan are living below poverty line. While especially for the youngsters, unemployment has made the matter worse. In these adverse circumstances, some people go to the level of extremism and even commit suicide. These are the people whose services are hired by the terrorist groups and they become easy prey to terrorism.

Food insecurity is also linked with militancy and violence. When people remain unable to afford food and cannot meet their basic needs civil strife grows. A report by the Islamabad-based Sustainable Development Policy Institute The highest levels of food insecurity, for instance, exist in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, according to the report, where 67.7 per cent of the people are insecure. The next highest level is in Baluchistan, with food insecurity at 61.2 per cent, and then in Khyber-Pukhtunkhwa, 56.2 per cent. In Pakistan some extremist forces are exploiting the feelings of lower and lower middle class food insecure people. They are motivating their unemployed youth to commit heinous crimes such as suicide attacks against innocent people.

Another reason of terrorism is dissatisfaction. When a person is dissatisfied with the rulers and thinks that his rights are being humiliated or exiled, his living of life has not been compensated, he is deprived of rightful inheritance to office, wrongly imprisoned and property confiscated then he joins some religious parties. It does not matter which organisation it would be. None of the organisations has any importance for him.

Adopting an organisation would only save him from the critical situation he is in and leaves him to play in the hands of his so-called leaders who destroy his public sense of security.

Today's Pakistan is facing democratic turmoil. A path chartered by the military regime of Ayub Khan, Yahya Khan then of Zia-ul-Haq was altered by yet another military regime that of Musharraf. All these regimes produced political instability, poor governance, institutional paralysis, by passing the rule of law, socio-economic downfall and so on. These fragile conditions along with deteriorating law and order situation have provided a fertile ground for terrorism to grow.

Furthermore, lack of proper government set-up and lack of coordination and information sharing between various institutions of government is also a cause of behind the escalating terrorist activities. Not to talk of providing security to common people, our law enforcing agencies (LEAs) have completely failed to protect high officials of the country. In the absence of law and proper trial the terrorists are entrenching their roots firmly. Failure of the (LAEs) to bring the terrorist to book has emboldened terror mongers to strike at a target of their choice at will. Schools, hospitals, markets and places of worship have become their favourite targets.

The soviet Afghanistan war was the most critical event responsible for spreading militancy and intolerance in Pakistan. A fundamental change that altered the very character of Pakistani society occurred after establishment of the soviet backed communist regime in Afghanistan. The aftermath of the soviet withdrawal exposed the damage, transformation of violence and Weaponisation into Pakistani society. It ultimately plagued Pakistan with a new trend commonly referred as "Kalashnikov Culture" and "Talbanisation".

Religion became the dominant force during the Zia regime when the Islamization of laws and education became a state policy. And the Islamic legislation was promulgated and a number of Islamic enactments were made, including the Hudood and blasphemy laws. One may also mention the vital role of the jihadis in their fight against the Soviet military occupation with the American support, as well as the generous patronage extended by the government to the religious parties and groups. It may be added that various religious groups benefited from the support they received from abroad, in particular from Saudi Arabia and Iran.

Religious Madrassah is not something new for the Islam or our country. But after Russian attack on Afghanistan it took a new dimension. They were being used as recruitment centres for jihadis. Thousands of Mujahedeen were trained and sent to Afghanistan for so-called jihad. After the fall of Russia, a sizeable number of the jihadis who returned to Pakistan got involved in terrorist activities.

Religious intolerance is another factor which is adding fuel to the fire of terrorism. youth, educated through religious Madrassahs, are indoctrinated with extreme ideas. They become intolerant towards other religions and even other sects of their own religion. They impose their own extreme ideas and vent their fanaticism thorough violent actions. Intolerance makes society jungle. It is proving destructive phenomenon for social harmony, political stability, and economic growth.

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Religious extremism that took its roots in Pakistan after the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 is proving venomous for Pakistan. The increased danger of sectarian motivated acts of violence, have gained in power and influence over the recent past. External as well as internal influences have impacted the sectarian issues and have served to further intensify the magnitude and seriousness of the problem. Sectarian violence, therefore, was an extremely rare and unheard of phenomenon in Pakistan with sectarian disputes being very localized and confined rather than being frequent and widespread.

This religious extremism took a new shape of terrorism after 9/11. After the incident of 9/11 suicide bombing in Pakistan has become a norm of the day. The American invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, as well as the military operation in Pakistan, along with the American drone attacks, have served to fuel religious radicalism leading to violent reaction. The breakdown of state structures in Afghanistan created a void which was quickly filled by groups and individuals who took it upon themselves to continue the lost battle. Some of them also intruded into Pakistani tribal areas, thus inviting the US displeasure. Flushing out these foreign fighters by Pakistani security forces made Pakistan a battle ground, as foreign militants and some of their local hosts, joined hands to counter the security forces.

The drone strikes have increased anti-Americanism in Pakistan society and the region. The terrorists have used the collateral damage to maximize the environment and society to their benefit. Families of people killed in collateral damage become ideal

nursery for suicide bombers In Pakistan society drone attacks are popularly believed to have caused even more civilian casualties than is actually the case. The persistence of these attacks on Pakistani territory is continuously creating public outrages and alienating people from government and Army. The drone is a tactical weapon and has certainly given good results tactically to support coalition forces operation on their sides of the border but strategically history has many unanswered questions.

On account of anti-campaign and drone attacks scores of people have become homeless and even some have lost all their possessions Coupled with this, governments indifference towards these internally displaced people has further deteriorating the situation and encouraging people to join anti-state actors. Negligence on the part of government has alienated the people and has placed Pakistan in an undesirable situation domestically.

Furthermore, indiscriminate and brutal persecution of innocent citizen of Kashmir and Palestine by Indian and Israeli forces respectively is further boosting the monster of terrorism. the people of Kashmir and Palestine have been denied their basic rights for decades. Hence their feelings of antagonism springing out in the form violent acts and also their supporters are conducting these types of acts here in Pakistan in order the draw the attention of the world towards the injustices being done to them.

Pakistan has done its level best to rid terrorism and terrorists from its soil. In first step, many terrorist organisations were banned by the Musharraf government. After those successful military operations namely Rah-e-Nijat and Rah-e-Rast have been conducted. Pakistan army has fought bravely against terrorist and has destroyed their safe dens. It has broken the backbone of the terrorists and has forced them to flee. These operations still keep ongoing in some tribal areas. In this context, it is worth-mentioning that public support to military operations is very essential, and without people's backing no army can win this 'different war' against terrorism.

For Pakistan the consequences of being the epicentre of the war on terror have been disastrous physically, psychologically and economically. Nobody understands terrorism better than us (Pakistanis). We have been victims of various manifestations of it since the Soviet Afghan war. Since 9/11, the wave of suicide bombing has so far killed scores of innocent Pakistani civilians and muffled the already slow pace of our economic growth. The financial cost of the ongoing global war on terror in the last two years alone has been \$35 billion. This has badly affected in particular, the socio-economic development of Pakistan. Lest we forget, we even lost our prominent political leader Benazir Bhutto to an act of terror.

Since September 11, 2001, 21,672 Pakistani civilians have lost their lives or have been seriously injured in an ongoing fight against terrorism. The Pakistan Army has lost 2,795 soldiers in the war and 8,671 have been injured. There have been 3,486 bomb blasts in the country, including 283 major suicide attacks. More than 3.5 million have been displaced. The damage to the Pakistani economy is estimated at \$68 billion over the last ten years. Over 200,000 Pakistani troops were deployed at the frontline and 90,000 soldiers are fighting against militants on the Afghan border.

The ongoing insurgency has accelerated the already dismal economic situation and has affected almost each and every economic aspects of the country, particularly in FATA and Khyber Pukhtunkhwa. All the main resources of revenue in affected areas have been hurt, including agriculture, the tourism industry, manufacturing and small-scale industry.

Due to insurgency, the loss to agriculture alone amounts to Rs.35 billion. The breakdown in law and order situation has damaged the fruit based economy of the northern areas. It has rendered billions of rupees losses to the landowners, labourers, dealers and farmers who earn their livelihood from these orchards. Also, the Economic survey of Pakistan report shows that the share of agriculture in the gross domestic product (GDP) has been constantly falling. It accounted for 25.99 per cent of GDP in 1999-2000; however, gradually its share shrank to 21.3 per cent in 2007-2008. The figures show that terrorism has not only decreased the productive capacity of agricultural activity in these regions but also in the entire country.

The manufacturing sector has been hard hit by frequent incidents of terrorism and has created an uncertain environment resulting into low level of economic growth. The manufacturing sector is witnessing the lowest-ever share of 18.2 per cent in the GDP over the last five years. In addition, the small and medium-size enterprises which are key area of manufacturing in Pakistan have been affected across the country because of power shortages and recurrent terrorist attacks.

According to a Harvard study (December 2000), higher levels of terrorism risk are associated with lower levels of net FDI. In case of Pakistan, terrorism has affected the allocation of firms investing money in the country. As a result, FDI, which had witnessed a steep rise over the previous several years, was adversely affected by the terrorist acts in the country, especially in FATA and other areas of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa.

According to the World Economic Forum, Pakistan ranked 113 out of 130 countries in 2009 as a tourist destination. The low ranking is attributed to incidents of terrorism and the lack of a tourism regulatory framework in Pakistan. On account of persistent terrorist attacks many hotels in the northwest areas have been closed. According to

government's own estimates, the hotel industry in Swat valley has suffered a loss of Rs. 60 billion. Many workers have lost their jobs and transport has also face a severe blow.

Due to war on terror, local people of war-ridden areas are migrating to other areas of Pakistan. Country has seen the largest migration since independence in 1947. These people have left their homes, businesses, possessions and property back home. This large influx of people and their rehabilitation is an economic burden for Pakistan. Unemployment is still prevalent and now the question of providing employment to these migrants has also become a serious concern. This portion of population is contributing nothing worthwhile to the national income yet they have to be benefitted from it. This unproductive lot of people is a growing economic problem of Pakistan

Social impacts have also been caused by this war. In a society where terror exists cannot be healthy. Social disorganization has occurred due to terrorism. Social relations, economic transactions, free moments, getting education, offering prayers etc. have suffered. Pakistan's participation in the anti-terrorism campaign has led to massive unemployment, homelessness, poverty and other social problems and ills. In addition, frequent incidents of terrorism and displacement of the local population have severely affected the social fabric.

On the political front Pakistan is badly impacted in fighting the war against terrorism. It has taken many valuable steps to defeat terrorists. In spite of all the sacrifices the country is making it is branded to be a country insincere or half-hearted in fighting the menace. Every time the country is told to "do more". It is further alleged for infiltration of the militants inside US-NATO dominated Afghanistan. The failure of the Western troops in the neighbourhood is blamed on Pakistan. This situation has eroded the trust between the governments and caused international image problem for the country.

Similarly the terror has brought in its wake psychological problems. Fear in the hearts of the people is created. Trauma, depressions and confusion have been increased. The people feel insecure and unsafe whenever in their daily life activities, as time and again they watch the terror events taking place in different cities. Those have especially been suffered who have closely witnessed the suicidal bombings.

The religion is also impacted by the war against terrorism. The religion of Islam is perceived to be the one tolerating extremism and terrorism abroad. In the western world people equate violence, abuse against women and minority rights, and several acts of terrorism like suicidal bombing and coercion with Islam and Muslims. Whenever any such inhuman act takes place they tie it with Islam and its followers. When in the UK terror acts were committed the authority blamed it on Pakistani citizens for instance. And why these days Pakistanis are discriminately interrogated and have to be screened before they inter the US is due to the fact that they are Pakistanis and Muslims.

Thorough analysis of the causes of terrorism and its inextinguishable impacts indicate that in Pakistan this phenomenon has not come to fore overnight. It has taken decades to flourish and involves many factors. Since terrorism is a multifaceted, the solution has to be multi-pronged. In view of the root causes described in above paragraphs, the possible remedies could include:

- To begin with, a national commission needs to be set up, which identifies the fault lines and the root causes of the rise of extremism in Pakistan taking into consideration the post-Nine-Eleven developments.
- It should also take up the question of reforming the madrassas. The heads of all the major religious groups should be contacted and engaged to explore short-term and long-term solutions.
- Our universities and research institutes should take up the intellectual task of re-interpreting the Islamic injunctions in the light of modern knowledge and 21st century challenges (with emphasis on social justice).
- The government must improve its performance. Bad governance and corruption have lowered its credibility and clout,
- Parliament must debate Pakistan's present relationship with the US, with particular reference to the American war in Afghanistan and operations in Pakistan.
- Our government should make efforts to develop sector. Without any doubt, these efforts will play a crucial role not only in providing employment to the millions of people but will also eliminate poverty in the country.
- Pakistan's government should particularly emphasise the need of technical education by promoting it. In this respect, more institutes should be opened in order to promote technical education.
- It is mentionable that there are two types of terrorists, extremists and moderates. In order to cope with terrorism, our government should neutralise the moderate terrorists through reconciliation by offering them general pardon and asking them to renounce terrorism. Even extremist insurgents can be offered mediation. Nevertheless, those militants who reject the offer could be fought through military operations.
- Nonetheless, for their on global and regional interests, US-led western allies must not only increase the military and economic aid of Pakistan but also provide direct market access to Pak products on zero rate duty to help stabilise the country's bleak economy in the wake of the war against terror.

- As Pakistan has been successfully coping with the menace of terrorism, US-led some western countries including India should also give up their propaganda campaign against Islamabad and blame game against its intelligence agency ISI.
- US should help in resolving the Kashmir dispute to deal with the problem of militancy in the region.
- In order to fight terrorism, Pakistan's media should play a key role. It must point out the criminal activities of the militants like hostage-taking, killing of the innocent people? torching the government buildings including girl schools and car-snatching. It should also indicate that Islam is a religion of peace and does not allow suicide attacks.
- As Pakistan is already facing various crises of grave nature in wake of terrorism, so our politicians must stop manipulating the same for their own self-interests. By setting aside their differences and by showing power of tolerance, both our rulers and opposition parties need to act upon a policy of national reconciliation to cope with the problem of terrorism and to stand before external pressure.
- Finally, our politicians, general masses and security forces must show a strong sense of unity to fight terrorism,

To conclude, Pakistan is a peace loving nation and playing its important role in combating terror. Recognition of efforts to fight menace of terrorism and sacrifices rendered thereof are testimony to the commitment and resolve to bring peace in the region. Unfortunately sometimes its commitment is doubted by some of its allies. Mistrust can lead to diversion of efforts, which will not be beneficial to common objective of peace in the region. Pakistan is a responsible nation; fully capable of defending its territorial integrity. Pakistan has singularly committed large forces to combat menace of terrorism more than any other country. No foreign troops are either present or deployed on Pakistan soil.

All citizens of Pakistan must propagate moderate vibrant culture of Pakistan to promote good will of world community and shun misconstrued beliefs. Attacks on security forces personnel are executed at the sponsorship of hostile intelligence agencies. Such anti state elements must be singled out and brought to lime light to defeat evil agendas of our enemies. Pakistan has sacrificed the most in the ongoing war on terror; criticizing Pakistan's efforts at national/international forum will be counter-productive to the overall objectives of war on terror.