

# Terrorism in Pakistan: Causes, Impacts and Way forwards

Outline:

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Thesis Statement:

Terrorism is a persistent evil, caused by socio-economic, political, religious and some external factors like Afghan war of 1979, Iranian revolution, and war on Terror. This menace has brought a huge civilian and economic loss and has disturbed social, political, psychological and religious aspects of the society. Although, Pakistan has taken certain steps like ban on terrorist organizations, Operation Rah-E-Nijat, Operation Rah-e-Rast and Operation Zarb-e-Azab, there is still a need of several remedies to be applied.

Keep practicing on different themes/topics to bring further maturity in your writing  
Improve sentence structure and avoid minor language mistakes

remedial measures

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~~Avoid sweeping statements~~

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## Essay

At present the gravest problem 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 due to its involvement in War on Terror. Terrorism, has the calculated the use of violence to create a general climate of fear in population, is an organized warfare to achieve their goals. This heinous crime has globally destroyed the peace and prosperity of countries. Events like Twin Towers 2001, Mumbai attacks, and Army Public School attack 2014 jolted states security and made the public suffer. According to South Asia Terrorism Portal Pakistan has suffered 17,275 terrorist attacks, killing 70,000 people. Terrorism is a persistent evil caused by socio-economic, political, religious, and some external factors like Afghan war of 1979, Iranian revolution and War on Terror. This menace has brought a

Do not add references in introductory paragraph

huge civilian and economic loss and has disturbed social, political, psychological, and religious aspects of life <sup>✓</sup> society. Although Pakistan has taken certain steps like Operation Rah-e-Nijast, Operation Rah-e-Rast, and Operation Zarb-e-Azam, <sup>✓</sup> still a need of several remedial measures to be applied.

Terrorism is 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, religious, political, or ideological in nature. <sup>✓</sup> This is done through intimidation, coercion or inciting fear. <sup>✓</sup> According to FBI's definition, <sup>✓</sup> 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 objectives. <sup>✓</sup> Hence, there is no agreed definition of terrorism internationally, as one man's terrorist is another's freedom fighter. <sup>✓</sup>

Terrorism is rearing its ugly head again in Pakistan. Despite a crackdown previously by security agencies and army, the terrorists who flee to Afghan soil and safe heavens are once again started pursuing their anti-state agenda in Pakistan. According to South Asia Terrorism Portal, Pakistan witnessed 753 terrorist incidents and 575 civilian casualties. While, overall number reaches to 2100 including security personals, and terrorists. In fact, the much-celebrated victory of the Taliban government in its western border neighbour, Afghanistan, proved more lethal for Pakistan, evident from recent cross border firing incident. In May 2024, at least 12 terrorists and one Army soldier were killed, when terrorists from Afghanistan attempted to infiltrate inside Pakistan and attacked checkpoints in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). Similarly, in the same month terrorists did missile attacks in Pakistan from Afghanistan. Furthermore, after the US withdrawal, the Afghan front's situation has worsened, and the terrorists are manoeuvring along the border more freely;

as a result, the country has started facing another blow of terrorism. The country has been bogging on many fronts, including environmental, security, and socio-political issues. Every problem has its solution; the state can nip it in the bud by mobilizing its resources prudently, as it did after the APS school attack in 2016. But, keeping in mind that the previous mistakes would not be repeated.

The genesis of the problem lies in socio-economic faultlines which gives birth to injustice, which widens the capabilities of terrorist networks. When the grievances of the people are not addressed they resort to violent actions. Shirin Ebadi quotes, "Terrorism is based on two major pillars: One is injustice, and the other is a certainty of attitude: the notion that their version of the story is the correct one." So this is the case with Pakistan where timely justice has always been a far cry. Hence, a delayed justice is working as an incentive for victims and dragging

them to the swamp of terrorist organization.

Illiteracy is also one of the root causes of terrorism. The current illiteracy rate in Pakistan is 62% and 77% children aged ten are unable to comprehend basic English text. Such a high illiteracy rate has made Pakistan vulnerable to terrorism. Alan Bryau says, "Violence is the language of the illiterate." Furthermore, technical and vocational education and adult literacy are especially important but unfortunately have been neglected the most in Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the tribal areas. Therefore, mostly terrorists get shelter in these areas. Illiteracy and the 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, "A hungry man is an angry man." Notably, 40.5 percent



of people are living below the poverty line in Pakistan", According to World Bank. While especially for the youngsters, unemployment has made the matter worse. IMF reports that unemployment rate in Pakistan in 2024 is 8.5 percent. As a result, the demoralized youth without any purpose has become prey to terrorist-ideals. Ellen Wilkinson quotes, "Unemployment is bigger than a political party. It is a national danger and a national scandal." Further, if the state would not accommodate youth and streamline their potential as they might become a weapon of terrorism, such as suicide bomber. In short, unemployed youth is the most desired target of terrorists.

Moreover, Pakistan is facing improper government setup and lack of coordination and information sharing between various institutions of government, which cause escalating terrorist activities. As Pakistan has experienced multiple military coups (1958, 1977, and 1999), which disrupted

democratic processes and weakened civilian institutions. The lack of continuity in governance also hinders long-term counter-terrorism policies. Similarly, weak judiciary struggles to prosecute and convict terrorists. According to a report by the International Crisis Group (ICG), the conviction rate for terrorism in Pakistan is less than 10 percent. Further, mismanagement of allocated resources and corruption strengthen the terrorist activities.

In addition, law enforcement agencies are completely failed to protect people against terrorism. In the absence of law and proper trial the terrorists are entrenching their roots firmly. Moreover, the guards of the public themselves are also not free from the creation of these terrorists. It is evident from GHQ attack of 2009 in Rawalpindi. This attack killed nine soldiers. In the same year Sri Lankan cricket team was also attacked by 12 gunmen. Failure of the law enforcing agencies (LEAs) to bring the terrorists

to book ~~the~~ <sup>has</sup> emboldened terror mongers to strike the target of their choice at will. Schools, hospitals, markets, and places of worship have become their favourite targets.

Next to it is the issue of relocating internally displaced people and Afghan refugees. Retrospectively, many people vacated their homes to facilitate law enforcement agencies.

In this regard, Pakistan's Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) report unveils that people displaced from 2008 to 2023 are 5.1 million.

These people are mainly targeted by terrorism and disasters. Ostensibly, the government has set on the fence to seek the issue, and people who came as frontline soldiers to sacrifice their hard earned money, in particular homes, are struck by thunder that government is unable to alleviate their miseries.

Certainly the issue calls for an early solution. Otherwise, like terrorists, these people may follow the path of insurgents. Similarly the issue of Afghan refugees a looming sword of threat on public's

necks, has always stabbed in their back. In a joint report + the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Government of Pakistan verified that 1.3 million Afghan refugees live in Pakistan. These refugees migrated to Pakistan after Soviet Afghan war and Global War on Terror by U.S. These migrants brought Khilafat culture, with them and also introduced opium and drugs. Moreover, Tahreek-e-Taliban Pakistan is also a product of these Afghan refugees. Morally, giving them a piece of land to reside on humanitarian grounds was idealistic, without thinking of future liability. However, these refugees are not a positive drill for Pakistan's socio-political infrastructure when she herself is experiencing surging wave of terrorism.

In addition, the rising rift between national-provincial and provincial-provincial is a great concern. The burgeoning issue has waged a war of mis mudslinging on one another. For instance, the Kalabagh dam issue, a much

advocate project to meet water and energy viability, is a result of the split. The national provincial dissent on a number of losses and inadequate compensation has divided the house so that separation voices are not heard from different sections and parts of the country. However, Pakistan has not forgotten the secession of East Pakistan, indeed, a house divided against itself cannot stand. Therefore, a country must develop a consensus by putting aside its trivial issues to eliminate terrorism from its soil. Otherwise, the terror spreading monsters will take benefit of it, as they have taken already. For Example, Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) has killed dozens of people after checking their domiciles of Punjab. A bus was targeted and only people from Punjab were shot. Similarly, workers from Punjab in Quetta were shot when they were sleeping. Therefore, it is must to remove all rifts and unite against these extremists.

Religious extremism and Madrassa culture has also made the situation worse. Tracing back to history, religion was a dominant factor in Zia's period. His cruel 'Hudood Law' and 'radical Islamic legislation' encouraged militancy and jihadi groups. Further, Pakistan also promoted jihad culture with the help of US to eliminate Soviet forces from Afghanistan. And, religious parties were given patronage with the help of Iran and Saudi Arabia. Religious Madrassas were neither new to muslim society, but after Russian attack on Afghanistan changed the dimension of madrassas and clerics. Thousands of Mujahideen were trained there. They then became intolerant to other religions, democratic form of government and freedom of women in any sector. Therefore, they started to impose their will through power, so they can make their own form of laws. These religious extremists not only fight with/against non muslims, but also against other

sect. The recent Parachinar bloodshed is evidence of this, that how sectarian differences and different religious ideologies create terror.

External factors also exacerbated the situation of terrorism in Pakistan. Russia's war in Afghanistan lead to religious extremism and sectarian madressas in Pakistan. And, the poor people felt victim of these as these madressas were provide accommodation and food free with the help of foreign funding. These innocent and young children were then brainwashed to fight against communist Soviet soldiers to get Paradise. Moreover, these families were also provided compensation. According to the News International; in 1947 there were only 189 madressas in Pakistan, but in 2008 the number reached over 40,000. Moreover, the Iranian revolution led by Ayatollah Khomeini had also a profound impact on Pakistan. It started a sectarian conflict (Shi'a-Sunni conflict) in Pakistan. Further

Iran supported Shia groups in Balochistan like Sipah-e-Muhammad Pakistan and Saudi Arabia promoted Sunni groups as Lashkar-e-Jhangvi. Pakistan became a battle ground for proxies. ✓ Smialry. During War on Terror after 9/11 many Taliban and Al-Qaeda operatives fled across the porous border into Pakistan, and regrouped and made alliances with Pakistan's militants to attack NATO forces. ✓ According to South Asia Terrorism Portal, "Terrorist incidents in Pakistan rose from 128 to 3021 <sup>between</sup> ~~from~~ 2003 and 2009". ✓ Moreover, these terrorists are largely responsible attacks on religious places of non-Muslim. ✓ Thus, these external factors should be eliminated completely, so they cannot disrupt life in Pakistan. ✓

Terrorism has a monstrous impacts on civilian lives. Mostly, the target of terrorists is to kill innocent people. ✓ Between 2000 and 2020, over 70,000 Pakistanis, including civilians, security personnel and militants



lost their lives to terrorism. Civilians have often been targeted in market places, religious sites and public gatherings. While groups like TTP, LeT, JeT and IS's claim responsibility. The 2011 Peshawar APS attack alone killed 149 people, mostly children. As former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon stated, "Terrorism has no justification and only leaves innocent victims." Pakistan's resilience is reflected in counter-terrorism efforts, but the scars on its civilian population endure.

In a same way, terrorism has also brought significant economic loss, hindering the country's development and damaging infrastructure. Mostly, the roads of Khyberpakhtunkhwa are the evidence of terrorist attacks, which have holes due to blasts. According to World Bank, Terrorism cost Pakistan 18 billion dollars, or about 4-6% of GDP, between 2001 and 2017. Key factors like tourism, FDI and infrastructure have been severely damaged. In 2012, tourism

Industry severely lost 1.5 billion dollars due to security concerns. Former Finance Minister Ishaq Dar noted, "The economic cost of terrorism has been profound, affecting the livelihood of millions." Additionally, businesses have faced rising operational costs due to security measures, undermining Pakistan's economic growth prospects.

Social impacts have also been caused by terrorism. In a society where terror exists cannot be healthy. Social disorganization has occurred due to terrorism. Social relations, economic transactions, free moments, getting education and offering prayers, have suffered. Pakistan's participation in the anti-terrorism campaign has led to massive unemployment, homelessness, poverty and other social problems and ills. The people then become involved into other crimes. Marcus Aurelius said, "Poverty is the mother of crime." Therefore, terrorism causes further crimes.

On the political front Pakistan is badly impacted by terrorism. It has taken many steps to curb terror

Inspite of all the sacrifices, the government of Pakistan and its land is called as safe heaven for terrorists. Moreover, security forces' failure to eliminate terrorism has also increased anti-government stance among public. Further, every time the country is told to do more and then is left in between devil and the deep sea. This has also led to political fragmentation in the country.

Similarly, the terror has brought psychological issues among masses. Fears in the hearts of the people is created. Trauma, depression and confusion has been increased. The people feel insecure and unsafe. A survivor of bomb blast told the Geo News reporter, "Whenever I go outside for work, I don't know whether I will come back or not." Thus, terrorism has not only killed people but also paralysed the minds of living alive people.

The religion is impacted by terrorism. Islam is perceived as an extremist and terrorist religion.

abroad. People feel afraid of scarf and beard. Moreover, every act of violence is connected to Muslims, and it is evident from Bollywood movies. In addition, many countries have banned hijab due to <sup>the</sup> fear of terrorism. UK has recorded 4971 incidents of anti-Muslim hate in 2020. This is the result of Islamophobia and hate against Islam. Hence, Islam's <sup>image</sup> which is the religion of peace is badly affected due to these terrorist activities.

After the diagnosis, one calls for an effective treatment. The cancerous disease of terrorism has jeopardized the state's health, but for sure, it is a curable disease. To cure, the state needs to adopt some pragmatic measures in the right direction at right time. Some of the measures are following which can eradicate terrorism. First improvement in the education sector can root out the problem of terrorism. The government should mitigate the gap between private - public schools, madrasas and madressas and ensure

The admission of 26 million out of school children into educational institutes, before they fall prey of terrorist networks. For sure, it is a dreadful situation. Illiterate one can easily be exploited. Hence an outdated syllabus and effective policy to enroll the maximum number of kids in school should be state's priority. Thus an ambitious effort, teachers must pursue to teach tolerance, patience, and hate against violence to root out the problem permanently.

Second, there is a need to create a conducive business environment. A much needed effort to uplift local industry by introducing structural adjustment via a public-private partnership. Meanwhile, measures should be adopted to gain foreign enterprises' confidence so they can pour FDI.

By creating such environment millions can get jobs and poverty can be eradicated. If the measures are taken judiciously, it will help country to portray itself as an emerging economy. Moreover, more budget can also be allocated

for defence, reluctantly.

Third, the country needs to homogenize society and weave it into a single entity by rooting out all ethnic and sectarian conflicts. To do so, the country must ban hate material, register religious and local bodies, enact new laws and provide equal opportunities to all, ensuring their growth and popularity. Anti-terrorism in this regard was also a great achievement, but the vague interpretation of it further fueled the fire of sectarian conflicts. So, a commitment by state, provinces, local bodies, and religious schools to adopt tolerance and accept dissent can help eradicate the monster of terrorism, as myopic mindset often promotes violence.

On the same footing, a consensus should be built among all stakeholders. They should hire media teams to make people aware of this menace. Media can promote anti-terrorism campaign and highlight the dangers of it. Finally, the state needs to implement rule of law and other anti-terrorism laws, so culprits should be punished.

within due time. Even the speedy trials and separate courts for terrorists help root out terrorism. The Anti-terrorism court was a great development. However, the lack of security to judge derailed the process, so the state needs to enforce its writ to far flung areas and provide security to the functionaries, which help punish criminals in time, resulting in deterrence. Conclusively, deterrence can help people fear the writ of the state and a strong state writ. After that, terrorists find no place to hide and no mercy. As a result, peace will be ensured.

In a critical diagnosis, the issue of terrorism has overshadowed all other concerns Pakistan faces today. The devil has engulfed the country's peace and prosperity, leaving it in a swamp of destruction. However, the state has the potential to close the devil in the bottle as it did during previous military operations like: <sup>Rah</sup> Zarb-e-Nijat, Rah-e-Rast, and Zarb-e-Azad. Terrorism has created innumerable losses and fright that people still fear taking a breath in the fresh air. Indeed, things take time to settle.

but 45<sup>of terror</sup> years is already a very long time. Now, it is time to learn from past mistakes and monitor the cross border flow of people on both the eastern and western borders. If the state needs to immune itself from terrorism, the state and global leaders <sup>must</sup> take a hard stance against <sup>the</sup> countries providing a safe haven to terrorists. Otherwise, the elusive dream of the world to achieve perpetual peace and peaceful co-existence with diverse nations can never be achieved.

To encapsulate the whole debate, terrorism has wreaked havoc in every sphere of life. The right to freely move, live and have a family is under constant threat because of terrorism. Pakistan has paid the price and still paying for it. Many factors have promoted terrorism in Pakistan, such as injustice, illiteracy, poverty, unemployment, improper governance, absence of law and failure of LEAs, refugees issue, madrassa culture and religious extremism. Foreign factors are equally involved. Due to ongoing terrorism, the country's economy annually



the loss of 6 billion dollars in export. In addition, the figures painting the gloomy pictures of the state outlooks are appearing in every sphere, such as social, political, psychological and religious spheres of life. Sagacious and prudent analysis highlights that Pakistan alone cannot handle this global menace single-handedly. A much-contested and collective effort is needed at regional and global levels to get rid of the devil now and for times to come.

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