

Resurgence of terrorism in Pakistan: A threat for inter-provincial harmony

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Terrorism has been a persistent challenge for Pakistan since its inception. The resurgence of terrorism in Pakistan poses a significant threat to inter-provincial harmony. This exacerbates the seeds of discord among the provinces, fuels provincialism and sectarianism, undermines national unity, creates an environment of mistrust, exploits economic opportunities and increases interferences of foreign elements. Many governments in Pakistan have tried their best to address this prevailing issue. But the complex and multifaceted nature of terrorism in Pakistan demands a comprehensive understanding of its root causes, drivers, and consequences. Meticulously devised and whole heartedly implemented

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of the counter-terrorism strategies is the need of the hour.

Terrorism can be defined by United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC), it is an act intended to cause death or seriously bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants with the purpose of intimidating a population or compelling a government or an international organization to do or abstain from doing any act.

After having defined terrorism, now it is time to have a look at the manifestations of the fact that resurgence of terrorism in Pakistan is a potential threat for

inter-provincial harmony. To start with, the resurgence of terrorism in Pakistan poses a threat to inter-provincial harmony. Terrorist attacks in one province can create tensions with other provinces, as seen in Bannu by Baloch Liberation Army in 2024, straining relations between Balochistan and other provinces. This creates an environment of mistrust, making it challenging to achieve national unity.

Similarly, terrorist groups often exploit provincial and sectarian differences, fueling provincialism and sectarianism. The 2014 Peshawar School massacre, which targeted KPK, is a prime example of this, as it fueled anti-Taliban sentiments in other

provinces. This not only creates division among provinces but also undermines national unity.

Likewise, the resurgence of terrorism has led to a decline in national unity, with provinces blaming each other for terrorist attacks. The 2020 Karachi mosque attack, which led to tensions between Sindh and Punjab, is a recent example of this. This blame game creates an environment of mistrust, making it difficult to achieve inter-provincial harmony.

Additionally, terrorists also exploit economic disparities between provinces, fueling grievances and creating an environment conducive to

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extremism. The 2012 Quetta blasts, which targeted Balochistan's Shia minority, is an example of this, as it fueled economic grievances. This exploitation of economic disparities further strains relations among provinces.

Last but not the least, the resurgence of terrorism in Pakistan destroys its international image and attracts foreign elements for interference in the country. This creates anarchy, chaos, and psychological unrest and fear among the people. Resultantly, this led to the economic, social, political and psychological disturbance of the people, thus compromising Pakistan's growth.

After having a glance at the manifestations, now it is time to look at the factors responsible for the resurgence of terrorism in Pakistan. To start with, the porous borders such as Pakistan-Afghanistan 2,430 km border, has enabled terrorists to regroup and launch attacks from safe havens in Afghanistan.

Secondly, the lack of comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy, has allowed to exploit vulnerabilities. For example, according to South Asia Terrorism Portal, 2020, Pakistan's counter-terrorism strategy has been criticized for being reactive rather than proactive.

Thirdly, economic instability and poverty has exacerbated terrorist activities. Pakistan's poverty rate stands at 43.3% creating a fertile ground for extremist recruitment as per World Bank.

Fourthly, Pakistan has seen a rise in ideological extremism which has contributed to resurgence of terrorism. The TTP's actions and terrorist activities in Afghanistan and Pakistan are worth-mentioning.

Lastly, political instability has weakened governance and created an environment conducive to terrorism.

Pakistan has seen 3 Prime ministers in the last 5 years which is a clear depiction of

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political instability

After discussing factors responsible for terrorism, it is pertinent to give pragmatic recommendations for addressing the resurgence of terrorism in Pakistan. To start with, a robust counter terrorism framework is essential to combating terrorism.

This includes strengthening anti-terrorism laws, ensuring effective prosecution, and implementing sentences. A well-defined framework will help to deter terrorist activities and ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice.

Similarly, De-radicalization programs are vital to preventing re-recruitment of former terrorists. Rehabilitation centers can help to de-radicalize individuals and provide them with alternative livelihoods. This approach addresses the root causes of terrorism and helps to prevent the spread of extremist ideologies.

Likewise, Enhancing border security is critical to preventing the influx of terrorists and materials. This includes strengthening border control measures, surveillance, fencing, and cooperation with neighboring countries. Securing borders and territories will help to prevent terrorist attacks and reduce the risk of extremism.

likewise, addressing economic and social grievances is essential to reducing extremist recruitment. Investing in education, job creation, and poverty reduction can help to address these grievances. By providing alternatives and opportunities, individuals are less likely to be swayed by extremist ideologies.

Similarly, promoting moderate narratives is crucial to countering online extremism. Encouraging moderate Islamic scholars, engaging with religious leaders, and countering online extremism can help to reduce the spread of extremist ideologies. By promoting moderate narratives, individuals are less likely to be radicalized.

Lastly, fostering cooperation and coordination among provinces, law enforcement agencies, and international partners is vital to combating terrorism. Sharing intelligence, best practices, and resources can help to enhance counter-terrorism efforts. By working together, Pakistan can effectively combat terrorism and ensure a more peaceful future.

In conclusion, the resurgence of terrorism in Pakistan poses a significant threat to inter-provincial harmony, national stability, and regional security. Addressing this complex issue requires a comprehensive approach that incorporates effective counter-terrorism strategies, addresses economic

and social grievances, promotes moderate narratives, and fosters cooperation among provinces and international partners. By implementing pragmatic solutions and adopting a nuanced understanding of terrorism, Pakistan can reduce the risk of extremist recruitment, prevent terrorist attacks, and promote a more peaceful and stable future. Ultimately, combating terrorism in Pakistan demands a collective effort from the government, civil society, and international community to ensure a secure and prosperous future for its citizens.