

Q:- New wave of terrorism exposes Pakistan's policy failures to combat the menace. Evaluate.

1) Introduction:-

Pakistan has faced recurring waves of terrorism, often exacerbated by internal policy missteps, governance failures, and geopolitical tensions. Despite decades of military operations, peace talks, and counterterrorism initiatives, the country continues to face a rising tide of violence, with militant groups and sectarian outfits exploiting systemic vulnerabilities. The new wave of terrorism not only highlights the consequences of inconsistent policies, such as selective approach toward militant groups, but also underscores the impact of ~~good~~^{poor} governance, inadequate reforms and geopolitical miscalculations. The persistent threat reveals a critical need for sustainable strategy to address root causes of extremism and dismantle infrastructure of terror.

2) Key Failures of Pakistan's Policy to combat new wave of terrorism:-

The resurgence of terrorism in recent years exposes several weaknesses in Pakistan's strategy to combat this risk. Below are the key areas of failure:-

i) Failures in Negotiating with Militants:-

Pakistan has attempted peace negotiations with militant groups without a coherent long-term strategy. These negotiations often provide militants time to regroup, rearm, and strengthen their networks.

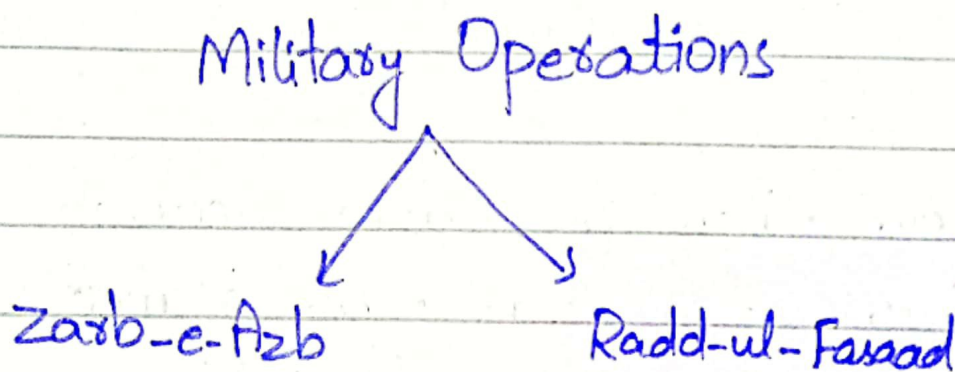
Example:-

In 2022, Pakistan initiated peace talks with TTP facilitated by the Afghan Taliban. However, the ceasefire collapsed, leading to a surge in terrorist attacks, including the attack on a police mosque in Peshawar in January 2023 that killed over 100 people.

ii) Over-reliance on Military Solutions:

Pakistan has often prioritized military operations over addressing the root causes of terrorism, such as ideological extremism, poverty and lack of education. The short-term gains of military operations are often undone due to a lack of complementary political and socio-economic measures.

Example:



These military offensives succeeded in dismantling militant infrastructure but failed to eliminate extremist ideologies. The TTP and other groups have resurged after these operations.

iii) Geopolitical Miscalculations:

Pakistan's reliance on external players,

like the U.S., China and Gulf states, has influenced its counterterrorism policies. Misjudging regional dynamics has undermined Pakistan's counterterrorism strategy.

Example:-

Pakistan's participation in U.S.-led wars alienated segments of its population and led to retaliation by groups like TTP.

iv) Policy of Strategic depth and Inconsistent Counterterrorism

Approach:-

Pakistan has long been accused of maintaining a dual policy toward terrorism — combating militant groups that target the state while allegedly tolerating or supporting groups used for strategic purposes in neighboring Afghanistan or India. This selective approach has created an environment where militant groups evolve and adapt, often turning against the state.

Example:-

While Pakistan has fought against the TTP, it allowed the Afghan Taliban to operate freely within its borders. After the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan in 2021, the TTP regrouped and launched renewed attacks on Pakistan, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.

v) Weak Governance and Security Gaps:-

Poor governance and corruption undermine counterterrorism efforts, particularly in border regions. Weak institutional capacity prevents effective enforcement of anti-terrorism laws and intelligence-sharing.

Example:-

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan suffer more from a lack of state presence and investment, making them fertile ground for extremist recruitment.

vi) Failure to address Radicalization:-

Successive governments have failed to regulate religious institutions and counter extremist narratives effectively.

Example:-

Unregulated madrasas continue to promote extremist ideologies, contributing to sectarian violence and recruitment by groups like Lashkar-e-Tahqiqi (LeT).

vii) Inadequate Urban Security:-

Urban areas remain vulnerable due to poor coordination between law enforcement and intelligence agencies.

Example:-

The 2023 Karachi Police Office attack by the TTP revealed significant security lapses in one of Pakistan's largest cities.

viii) Inadequate Intelligence and Coordination:-

Poor intelligence sharing between civilian and military institutions hampers counter-terrorism efforts.

Example:-

High-profile attacks, such as the Peshawar mosque bombing, often reveal gaps in intelligence gathering and response mechanisms.

3) Way Forward to combat the challenges of terrorism effectively:-

Developing a unified, long-term policy

Strengthening governance and development

Investing in education, deradicalization and madrasa reforms

Fostering regional cooperation

4) Conclusion:-

The resurgence of terrorism in Pakistan underscores critical failures in its policies to effectively combat the menace. Poor governance, mismanagement of regional dynamics, and neglect of socio-economic and ideological reforms have created a fertile ground for extremist resurgence. Without a decisive shift in policy and execution, Pakistan risks prolonged instability and escalating threats to its national security.