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Q.4 Rise in militancy in KP. Reasons and way out

Introduction

The appeasement policy of Pakistani government towards the militant group, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) is widely criticized as a failed policy in the fight against Terrorism in the country. This policy has contributed to an exponential surge in the terrorist attacks in Pakistan especially in the merged districts of KP, Balochistan and other regions of Pakistan. After the Afghan Taliban took over the control of Afghanistan in August 2021, the terrorist groups like TTP and Islamic State of Khorasan province became active and increased deadly attacks against security forces and law enforcement agencies. Despite Pakistani state offering a wide-range of concessions to these groups, including efforts to negotiate and liberating the TTP captives, insurgency has continued to escalate, causing widespread fear and instability in Pakistan. It raised some questions over the effectiveness of Pakistan's counter-terrorism policy.

History of the TTP and its Resurgency

The Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan is the offshoot of Taliban created in 1990's by Naseerullah Babar in The Chaman. They ruled Afghanistan during the late

90's and early 2000s. After the Al-Qaeda's 9/11 attacks on US soil, US and NATO took control over the whole Afghanistan and the Taliban leaders including Mullah Omar fled to Pakistan along with approximately 400,000 Taliban fighters. The TTP also known as Pakistan Taliban has been active in the country under various names and forms since 2003. TTP was officially established in December 2007 served as umbrella organization for as many as 27 militant groups who pledged their allegiance to militant Commander Emir Baitullah Mehsud.

Fundamental goal of TTP is to impose strict Shariah law in the so-called "apostate state" of Pakistan. TTP is responsible for numerous high-profile attacks in the country including the Dec 2014 massacre of 135 schoolchildren in Army Public School (APS) Peshawar. After this attack, Pakistan Army launched full scale military operations in tribal areas and conducted successful Intelligence Based Operations in cities through Zarb-e-Azb. Since 2001, Pakistan conducted more than 1000 army operations to address terrorism and violence.

Recent Revival of Militancy in Pakistan

After 20 years of US war in Afghanistan, Afghan Taliban took control of whole Afghanistan in August 2021. Since TTP has close ties with the Afghan Taliban this recent victory revived the TTP after their breeding grounds and training facilities were destroyed by Pakistan Armed forces in operations like Zarb-e-Azb and Rah-e-Nijat. TTP commanders were forced out of FATA and merged district into Afghanistan. According to UNSC recent findings TTP in Afghanistan is one of largest transnational terrorist group having around 3000-4000 active trained fighters.

Increased attacks of Terrorists in Pakistan

TTP and ISKP has increased their violent attacks on Ex-Tribal Belt and merged districts of Pakistan. According to South Asian Terrorist Portal 361 terror related activities occurred in Pakistan in 2021. Another Islamabad based Think Tank, Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies reported that terrorist attacks increased by 27 Percent in 2022 from the previous year. TTP declared that over 300 attacks were carried out claiming the lives of over 1000 security officials and collaborators. In 2023, TTP attacked the Police Line Mosque in Fata Peshawar killing at least 100 people along with dozens wounded in the blast. PIPS also stated that in the first 11 months of 2022, 150 attacks were carried out by TTP killing 150 people. So far in 2023, the trend has increased to a phenomenal 73% since August 2021. (Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies)

Most affected areas from these Terrorist attacks are Baru Division, Malakand Division, also in Islamabad and Karachi

Pattern of attacks

The patterns of these attacks is hide, hit and run. Suicide bombings in South and North Waziristan and use of improvised explosive devices. The targets of these attacks are police, paramilitary and military forces. The TTP and ISKP terrorist organizations are using the Afghan soil for carrying out these terrorist activities.

Factors behind the Resurgence of Terrorism

(4) Loopholes in Afghan Policy

The Afghan Taliban are supporting the various terrorist groups in Afghanistan. Despite the International pressure and the US blocking the \$7 billion

aid to Afghanistan because of the Afghan Policies of supporting terrorist groups who helped them in retaking Afghanistan. They are still not learning the lesson and the various implications this can have on the Afghan people.

Taliban's Return to Power boost to TTP

TTP was given a big boost after Afghan Taliban came to power. They believe that if a super power like US can be defeated then they can certainly defeat the Pakistan Army. 73% terrorist attacks increased since August 2021

Pak Appeasement Policy

The previous governments engaged in talks with TTP from a position of weakness. The first attempt to reach deal was made in 2021, which proved to be unsuccessful. Second attempt was made in 2022 which led to a ceasefire and talks began. Taliban demanded to ~~reverse~~ reverse status of FATA from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa merger to a previous status and imposition of strict Shariah laws in country but Pakistan declined those requests. TTP called off the ceasefire and continued attacks.

Border-Fencing and Durand Line

No Afghan government has accepted the Durand line as an International border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. During the 2015-2020 period Pakistan invited Afghan Govt. and the US to build a border fence between Afghanistan and Pakistan but both US and Afghan government declined. So Pakistan in 2018-2019 built a border fence on its side. 90% was completed but due to hilly mountainous regions the 10% fence couldn't be completed.

Because of the porosity of the borders, there is daily infiltration of terrorists through this border.

Weak Policing & Untrained Security Personnel
After the success of Operation Zarb-e-Azb a security vacuum was created after the security forces i.e. Army gave control of the regions affected by Terrorism to paramilitary forces and the local police. Police forces are not well trained, not equipped with proper weaponry and not given financial help to stop the terrorist activities. Their counter-insurgency capacity is limited to fight off militants.

e.g. An attack on Counter Terrorism Department was carried out in 2023 and a lot of prisoners were released.

Solutions to Stop Terrorism

i) New full fledge Military operation

A new military operation is the requirement of time to fight off the new wave of terrorism. Everyday the TTP is getting organized and using new improved methods to increase its influence not only in KP and Balochistan province but also targetting South Punjab and Sindh as well.

A consensus must be reached among all stakeholders including military and civil establishment, and law enforcement agencies to curb this ongoing terrorist wave. In national Action Plan, it was agreed that no militant or armed organization will be allowed to operate in the country.

(National Action Plan 2014), Revised in 2021.

Intelligence based operations

The anti-terrorism institution NACTA, should be strengthened to carry out intelligence based operations especially without the displacement of people which previously increased poverty. Gain confidence of people and make them aware of the threats they can face if they harbour the fugitives or terrorists in their homes.

Pressurize Afghan Government

An overhaul should be made in our foreign policy towards Afghanistan. Although there are ongoing talks and negotiations with Afghanistan over harbouring these Terrorist groups but Afghan government has not changed its policy towards TTP, ISKP and other Terrorist organisations operating in Afghanistan. Convince and pressurize Afghanistan to ensure writ of government and stop the TTP from conducting terrorist attacks in Pakistan.

dollars

Stop Smuggling and Financing of Terrorist organizations

As stated in our National Action Plan 2021 revised there is a need to choke financing for terrorist organizations. According to Exchange Companies association of Pakistan, \$5 million are smuggled daily across Pakistan and into Afghanistan.

(Business Recorder, Feb, 2023) This money ultimately leads to financing of violent activities. This dollar smuggling must be curbed by building a strong border mechanism so that such deadly attacks can be stopped.

Conclusion

Threat of Terrorism has done indescribable loss to both Pakistan and Afghanistan since the US started war on Terror in 2021. Pakistan lost 80,000 precious

lives and 35 trillion rupees financial loss (NACTA) and same in the case of Afghanistan. This has led to political, economic, social disparities among Pakistanis and due to the security issues a big chunk of our revenue is allocated for defence budget to fight off terrorism. It is a need to devise new strategies and plans to determine the root cause of terrorism and eliminate militancy at its core once and for all, so that Pakistan can focus on its social and economic development.