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PAKISTAN'S COUNTER TERRORISM STRATEGY: AN OVERVIEW AND ASSESSMENT OF MAJOR MILITARY OPERATIONS (2002-2020)

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ABSTRACT

In the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Pakistan joined the global war against terrorism. This decision instigated the homegrown terrorist outfits and resulted in a wave of violence across the country. This article examines the military offensives launched by the Pakistani security forces, in the tribal belt, and across the country, to dismantle extremist and terrorist groups, as a part of Pakistan's counterterrorism policy. By utilizing the official and unofficial sources, it seeks to link the military offensives and their efficacy in uprooting terrorism in Pakistan. This article offers an overview and assessment of the military operations and underlines the significant factors that have severely impeded an effective formulation and implementation of Pakistan's counterterrorism policy. Empirically, it finds that despite significant gains made with these offensives in recent years, Pakistan's war against extremism and terrorism is far from over. It argues that Pakistan direly needs an all-out and holistic counterterrorism strategy to win its fight against terrorism and extremism.

KEYWORDS: South Asia; Terrorism, Counterterrorism Strategy, Military Operations & Pakistan

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1. INTRODUCTION

This article examines the road map that the Pakistan Army pursued, in the aftermath of 9/11, to combat terrorism and extremism in Pakistan, particularly in the tribal belt. In 2002, the Pakistan Army deployed approximately 80,000 troops in the Federal Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA) for the first time in the history of the region, even when the British colonial empire refrained from doing so. Pakistan's Armed Forces launched several military operations in the region to reinforce the United States-led "War on Terror" and to curb the Al-Qaeda network and its associates, mainly the Afghan Taliban.

The decision of the Musharraf regime to participate in the war on terror, in the aftermaths of 9/11, instigated a severe weave of backlash from militant outlets in Pakistan. These outlets were a mixture of foreign jihadis and local militant tribes, and they started attacking the Pakistani government, NATO forces, and US-supported Kabul government. In mainland Pakistan and many other parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), the Pakistan Army, intelligence agencies and police in collaboration with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) launched crackdowns on Taliban and the Al-Qaeda in Pakistan. Thousands of Pakistani and foreign personnel were detained on the suspicions of their linkages with the terrorist groups.

The objective of this paper is to analyze and assess Pakistan's counterterrorism strategies, in this case, the major military operations that Pakistan armed forces launched in FATA and across Pakistan to root out the nuisance of terrorist elements across the country. It investigates the developments and transformations in the military offensives

and how far these operations have been proved to be successful in eliminating terrorism and extremism in Pakistan. It further examines the underlying factors responsible for (in) effectiveness of Pakistan's counterterrorism strategies. It offers an overview of military offensives and intermittent peace talks and agreements between military and militants.

2. OVERVIEW OF MAJOR MILITARY OPERATIONS (2002–2020)

Since the joining of the Musharraf regime to the United States' fight against terrorism in Afghanistan, Pakistan's armed forces have launched several major and minor military offensives in the former FATA region. Al Jazeera released a video that revealed the presence of Bin Laden and his Al-Qaeda accomplices were shown in the South Waziristan Agency (SWA) (Abbasi, Khatwani, & Hussain, 2018, p. 3). Resultantly, Pakistan's security forces invaded a militant camp in SWA and gunned down eight militants. This incursion was regarded as the first military action against terrorists in the tribal region of Pakistan.

The terrorists retaliated and attempted to assassinate the then President Musharraf in December 2003. Following the suicide attack, Musharraf admitted that there might be around 600 foreign terrorists in the tribal regions of Pakistan. In response to Musharraf's statement, the United States Secretary of State warned that Pakistan's security forces should crack down on terrorist hideout in the tribal areas or the United States armed forces would attack for them (Abbasi et al., 2018, p. 3). Furthermore, for Pakistan's assistance in dismantling the terrorist outfits in tribal areas, the United States extended military, strategic, and financial support to Pakistan and allocated \$2 billion annually for Pakistan (Christine Fair & Jones, 2009). Although Pakistan's counterterrorism strategy includes military and non-military approaches, however, the following section offers a comprehensive overview of major military offensive and peace agreements between the military and militants.

2.1 Operation Al-Mizan (The Justice) (2002)

Although, the U.S. and NATO forces required Pakistan's support when they launched an offensive "Operation Enduring Freedom" to fight terrorists in Afghanistan and prevent them from entering Pakistan's tribal areas. Resultantly, many militants sought sanctuary in Pakistan's tribal regions and started attacking Pakistani security forces and killed 12 military personnel (Ahmed, 2014, p. 7). However, the Pakistan military conducted a massive military offensive, "Operation Al-Mizan" (The Justice), in June 2002. It was the first major offensive by the Pakistan military to fight militants and terrorists in South Waziristan Agency, Pakistan. This offensive led to the deployment of approximately 80,000 soldiers in SWA (Jones & Fair, 2010, p. 46). The primary target of this operation was to take down the terrorists in the region, mainly those foreign militants who were attacking and threatening the security of the state of Pakistan (Jones & Fair, 2010, p. 46). While the Pakistan Army failed to crack down on foreign fighters in the region. Consequently, in December 2003, the Pakistan Army decided to grant amnesty for foreigners in the region. However, the security situation deteriorated after the terrorists launched an attack on a camp of the Pakistan Army in SWA (International Crisis Group, 2006, p. 14).

2.2 Operation Kalosha (2004)

Pakistan Army, as it could not clear the area from foreign terrorists during Operation Al-Mizan, launched another offensive "Operation Kalosha" in March 2004; the nature of this operation aimed to "search-and-destroy" the foreign militants in the tribal agency. This operation gained partial success as the Pakistani security forces managed to take down many local and foreign militants and also destroyed a command and control center operated by Al-Qaeda in Wana (Tinkel, 2015, pp. 31–36). Pakistani security forces could not manage to eliminate a significant number of foreign terrorists.

Contrary to the claims made, as this offensive backfired on March 22, 2004, when an ambush by the terrorists on a military convoy resulted in the killing of eight Pakistani troops and the terrorists took several military official hostages.

Resultantly, Operation Kalosha was halted, and General Musharraf extended peace agreement with the miscreants.

2.3 Operation Silence (2007)

With the growing illegal activities of the administration and students of Lal Masjid (Red Mosque), that include the kidnapping of police officers, abduction of alleged prostitutes, and the establishment of so-called illegal Qazi courts in May 2007. Pakistan military conducted another military operation, "Operation Silence" against the Red Mosque's students and administration and the students of Jamia Hafsa (Islamabad) on July 3, 2007. This offensive aimed to reinstate the writ of the state and to liberate the personnel that the Red Mosque administration and students kept hostages.

Although the security forces succeed in restoring the writ of the state and rescuing the hostages, all this came with a massive cost, as it infuriated the Pakistani Taliban, who shared the Maulana Abdul Aziz's school of thought and consequently, it ignited the retaliation from the Taliban.

2.4 Operation Rah-e-Haq (2007-2008)

Later in December 2007, a local Taliban group in the Mehsud-dominated area of FATA established an umbrella organization of several fractions of Taliban militant outfits, "Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)." This compelled Pakistani security forces, along with the support of local law enforcement agencies, to launch a series of major and minor offensives in the region, called "Operation Rah-e-Haq (The True Path)" in 2007 and 2008. In November 2007, its first phase was conducted in Swat Valley, and around 25000 paramilitary troops, along with the assistance from police, launched the "cordon-and-search" operations with the target of clearing the region of militants. However, these militants fled to the adjoining urban areas.

The terrorists started attacking the Pakistani soldiers, and were forced to withdraw from the area and made an agreement with other terrorist groups to implement their version of the so-called Shariah Law in the 'Malakand Division.' Later in February 2009, the Pakistan Army agreed to ink a controversial agreement with the miscreants, known as the "Nizam-e-Adl Agreement" with Tehrik-e-Nafaz-e-Muhammadi (TNSM). However, the agreement was short-lived, which forced the security forces to launch the second phase of the operation in July 2008. The Pakistani security forces continued to fight the terrorists in the northern Swat Valley, and this operation was extended to the southern areas of Swat Valley. During the third phase of this offensive in January 2009, the security forces announced curfews with the orders of "shoot-on-sight" for miscreants in different areas of Swat.

2.5 Operation Zalzala (Earthquake) (2008)

In January 2008, the Pakistani armed force conducted a major military offensive, "Operation Zalzala (The Earthquake)" in the SWA. This offensive was a principal element of a massive three-phase security operation called "Operation Tri-Star." This major offensive was the result of the Pakistan Army's reaction to terrorist activities of Baitullah Mehsud forces when they sieged and captured the Sararogha Fort, and martyred several Pakistani soldiers (BBC, 2008). In May 2008, Pakistan Army succeeded in the clearing of militants, though temporarily, the major part of the Mehsud-dominated area.

2.6 Operation Sirat-e-Mustaqeem (Right Path) (2008)

In June 2008, Pakistan's armed forces launched another offensive in the Khyber Agency. It was conducted after the limited success of Operation Zalzala in SWA. At the launching of this offensive, the said agency was the epicenter of the Pakistani Taliban's terrorist activities. It was also a center of the ongoing sectarian conflict between militia-wings two major Sunni

sub-sects; Barelvīs and Deobandīs, Ansar-ul-Islam, and Lashkar-e-Islami respectively. While this operation could not succeed in dislocating militants in the area, but later in July 2008, the Pakistan Army struck a deal with both sectarian circles. Nevertheless, once again, this was another short-lived deal, and it collapsed within a year (Adnan, 2012, pp. 2–5).

2.7 Operation Sher-Dil (Lion Heart) (2008)

The Pakistan Army conducted another offensive, “Operation Sher-Dil (the Lion-Heart)” in Bajaur in September 2008. This operation aimed to take down the terrorist groups, led by Faqir Muhammad and Qari Zia-ur-Rahman, both of whom had ties with the Al-Qaeda and took control of the line of communications and to restore the writ of the state in the area. In December 2008, the Pakistani security forces eliminated more than 1,000 militants in the area; on the other hand, the militants also killed 63 Pakistani troops during the clashes. While the Pakistani security forces could not attain its primary target of clearing the area of terrorists, nonetheless, it remained successful in clearing several villages controlled by the militants in Bajaur (Jones & Fair, 2010, p. 65).

3. A SHIFT IN THE DIRECTION OF MILITARY OPERATIONS

In Swat Valley, during the implementation of TNSM’s self-imposed government’s Shariah Law through the establishment of Qazi courts in the valley. TNSM imposed several inhumane and barbaric punishments in the name of their version of the so-called Shariah Law. This not only led to the disenchantment of the locals of the valley. It also changed the perspective and attitude of people across the country towards the Pakistani Taliban militants.

3.1 Operation Rah-e-Rast (Just Path) (2009)

In May 2009, the Pakistan army decided to deal heavy-handedly with the extremists and terrorists. Therefore, it launched a series of major military offensives, among those is the “Operation Rah-e-Rast (The Just Path),” which was mainly launched in Swat Valley and deployed 52,000 soldiers. This offensive aimed at clearing the area of the militants. Three substantial factors caused the shift in Pakistani security forces’ mindset to fight the terrorists with heavy-handedness.

First and foremost was the summoning of the All Parties Conference (APC) on May 18, 2009, by then governing party, Pakistan People’s Party (PPP). All political parties of Pakistan unanimously passed the resolution in support of launching an offensive in Swat Valley. Secondly, the advancement of Sufi Muhammad-led militia into Swat and also in the adjacent regions, and threatening of the Sufi-led TNSM’s fight against the constitution of Pakistan and the democratic political system and labeling both as the systems of infidels, which TNSM regarded as not being compatible with (their version of) Islam. Lastly, the refusal of TNSM’s surrendering their weapons, and also they continued to carry out assaults on the Pakistan army in the TNSM-controlled area.

By June 2009, with the support of airstrikes and ground troopers, the Pakistan military succeeded in eliminating the terrorists from Swat Valley, thus, successfully restored the writ of the state in Mingora. After the defeat, the TTP commander of Swat, Fazlullah, fled to Afghanistan (International Crisis Group, 2013, p. 2).

3.2 Operation Rah-e-Nijat (Path of Salvation) (2009)

The Pakistan military launched another operation, “Operation Rah-e-Nijat (The Path of Salvation).” Pakistan Army deployed two divisions of the army and with the support of airstrikes and combat helicopters to obliterate the sanctuaries of the Hakimullah-led Pakistani Taliban (Jones & Fair, 2010, p. 67). The primary targets of this operation were to destroy the militants and to secure the lines of communication in SWA.

During Operation Rah-e-Nijat, Pakistan Army suffered numerous fatalities while combating TTP operatives in South Waziristan Agency. Nevertheless, by June 2013, ultimately, Pakistani security forces held the control of areas previously occupied by the Hakimullah-led militia, and it compelled the militants to escape to North Waziristan Agency (NWA).

3.3 Operation Koh-e-Sufaid (White Mountain) (2011)

In July 2011, after successfully clearing Swat Valley and relative victory in SWA, Pakistan Army launched another military operation, "Operation Koh-e-Sufaid" in Kurram. The main target was to regain TTP-controlled "Thall-Parachinar Road." The terrorists lay siege in the Kurram Agency and brutally murdered the Shia population of Kurram Agency.

Pakistan Army, along with the help of heavy artillery and airstrike, deployed around 4,000 soldiers in this operation. The Pakistan Army claimed victory in recapturing a command center and a sanctuary from TTP control. Moreover, by June 2013, the Pakistan Army also regain control of the Khyber Agency of FATA. In April 2013, Pakistani security forces launched an all-out offensive against TTP militants and eliminated the terrorists from Tirah Valley, a significant refuge of the local Taliban terrorists (Farooq, 2014).

3.4 Operation Zarb-e-Azb (Strike of the Sword) (2014)

The Pakistan Army conducted, on June 15, 2014, a long-awaited comprehensive offensive "Operation Zarb-e-Azb" to eliminate local and foreign terrorist organizations – TTP, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and the East Turkestan Islamic Movement in NWA. The objective of this offensive, as then Army General Raheel Sharif said: to eradicate the militants in tribal regions; put an end to militancy and terrorism from Pakistan; to imitate the reconstruction of violence-ridden areas (The Nation, 2014) and the rehabilitation of the temporarily displaced persons. For this offensive, the Pakistan Air Force conducted several airstrikes on terrorist hideouts, and the deployment of 30,000 soldiers immediately followed this. Moreover, Pakistan's military extensively employed the drone strikes along with the support of aerial surveillance of NWA (Sherazi, 2014).

The aims of this offensive were clearing the NWA and adjacent areas of the militants, regaining the control, and restoring the "writ of the state" in FATA and KPK province. The Pakistani military pledged to continue its fight against militants and terrorists till the end. ISPR issued a statement in this regard as, "Using North Waziristan as a base, these terrorists has [sic] waged the war against the state of Pakistan and had been disrupting our national life in its entire dimension, stunting our economic growth and causing enormous loss of life and property" (Sherazi, 2014).

In a tragic event, on December 16, 2014, a splinter group of TTP led by Mullah Fazlullah attacked the "Army Public School (APS), Peshawar." This horrific incident claimed the lives of 142 innocent students and teachers and injured dozens more, and also seven TTP terrorists were gunned down (Zahid, 2015, pp. 5–6). This brutal massacre is regarded as "Pakistan's 9/11," and this horrible incident became a game-changer for Pakistan's counterterrorism strategies as it brought the whole nation on one page to deal with the militancy with heavy-handedness (Zahid, 2015).

The primary aim of this new counterterrorism policy was the "comprehensive operation against foreign and local terrorists who are hiding in sanctuaries in North Waziristan" (Azeem & Noaman, 2014). Consequently, in January 2015, the civilian and military leadership formulated a "National Action Plan" – a 20-point counterterrorism agenda – to combat terrorism and extremism across Pakistan. This strategy further enhanced the ongoing Operation Zarb-e-Azb and improved Islamabad's effort to implement an effective counterterrorism policy.

Pakistan army claimed to achieve phenomenal victory, in April 2016, in dismantling the terrorists and clearing of their hideouts in the tribal area of Pakistan, particularly in North Waziristan and restoring the writ of the state in said region. Pakistani armed forces claimed to clear 4,304 km area in FATA (Yousaf, 2016) and also killed 3,500 militants, arrested over 1,100 terrorists, and hanged 450 militants. They also demolished 992 sanctuaries in the tribal area, while 490 soldiers and other military officers lost their lives during Operation Zarb-e-Azb (Express Tribune, 2016).

3.5 Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad (Elimination of Strife) (2017)

After the security forces' claim of achieving success in Operation Zarb-e-Azb, many incidents of resurgent terrorist activities across the country raised grave concerns regarding the sustainability of gains made in the said military offensive. Consequently, On February 22, 2017, Pakistan military launched, at the start of the first tenure of incumbent Army Chief General Bajwa, another offensive codenamed as "Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad." It was a first nationwide counterterrorism offensive. All branches of Pakistan's armed forces: intelligence agencies, local law enforcement outfits, and paramilitary organizations participated in this operation. Their participation was to enforce four elements of this offensive: Border security control, the continuance of ongoing nationwide operations, countrywide explosive control and disarmament, and operations in Punjab province.

The primary objectives of this operation were to consolidate the achievements gained through the previous military offensives and to eliminate the residual terrorist elements – terrorist sleeper cells – across the country and to ensure border security. This is still an ongoing operation, but it has been lauded as a success story as the government claims to have achieved significant gains during this operation in dismantling the terrorist group cells and significant improvement in the decline of terrorist incidents across Pakistan.

By February 2020, according to the statistics of Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad, Pakistan's security forces conducted over 149,000 intelligence-based operations, and resultantly, the law enforcement agencies have prevented around 400 terrorist attacks across the country. Furthermore, there were over 900 terrorists killed, more than 1300 arrested, around 2000 surrendered, and more than 7,300 suspects were arrested by the security forces (PIPS, 2020). Regarding the border control, to this point, 55 percent of Afghanistan-Pakistan border has been fenced, and 343 border forts have been constructed, and further 161 border forts are under construction, to halt the cross-border movement of terrorists (Dawn, 2020). The incumbent government perceives this counterterrorism operation as a "successful model" for war against terrorism.

4. ASSESSMENT OF PAKISTAN'S MAJOR MILITARY OPERATIONS: EFFECTIVENESS AND LIMITATIONS

Pakistan Army claimed victory, of dismantling terrorists from tribal areas, after the clearance phase of "Operation Zarb-e-Azb," and the government perceives its ongoing counterterrorism operation Radd-ul-Fasaad as a "successful model" to combat extremism and terrorism across Pakistan. Pakistan's counterterrorism operations have made tangible gains in the reduction of terrorist and extremist violence across the country. It is evident in the statistics regarding the terrorism-related incidents, fatalities, and drone attacks by CIA command; all these factors have seen a sharp decline both in number and intensity over the past few years. The number of drone attacks has significantly plummeted from 90 drone attacks in its peak in 2010 to a mere one drone attack in 2018, and there were no drone strikes carried out by the U.S. in Pakistan in 2019 and 2020 (See,).

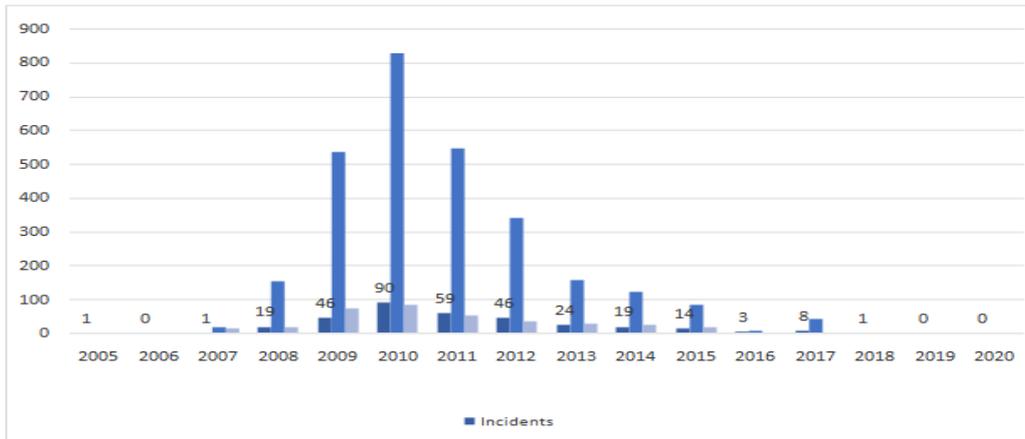


Figure 1: Number of Drone Strikes in Pakistan 2005-2020

Source: (South Asia Terrorism Portal, 2016; Statista, 2020) Note: Data until February 29, 2020

Likewise, the number of terrorism-related fatalities of civilians, armed forces, and terrorists/militants have also plunged over the years. As civilian fatalities peaked in 2012, with 3007 civilians lost their lives, and last year this number declined to killing of 332 civilians. Similarly, fewer armed forces personnel and terrorists were killed between 991 and 8389 in 2009 to 193 and 154 in 2019, respectively. (See,).

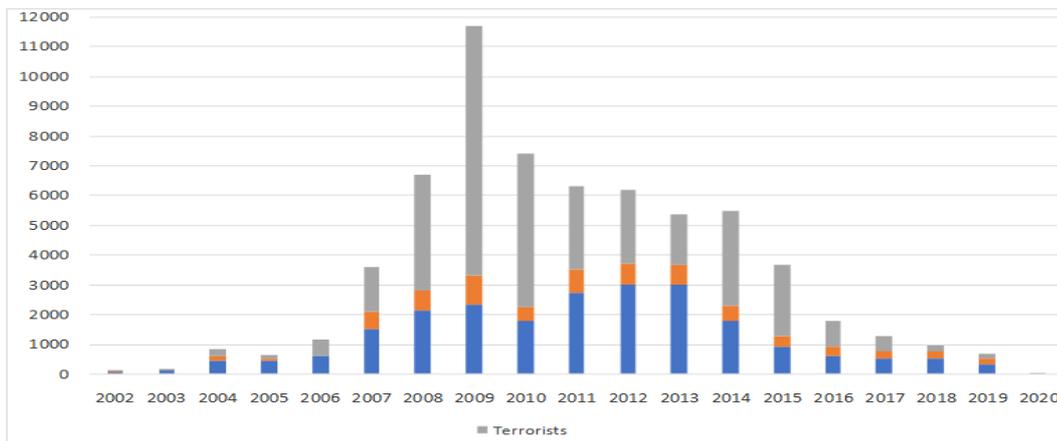


Figure 2: The Terrorism-related Fatalities in Pakistan 2000-2020

SOURCE: (Express Tribune, 2019; PIPS, 2020; South Asia Terrorism Portal, 2018) Note: Data until January 31, 2020

Because of the success of both operations, Zarb-e-Azb and Radd-ul-Fasaad, life in Pakistan is returning to normalcy, international sports, and sports events are making a comeback in the country, foreign tourism is growing gradually. Pakistan is currently holding its fifth edition of Pakistan Super League (PSL), a mega Cricket event in different cities across Pakistan. Similarly, there were speculations that the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) would blacklist Pakistan, however, acknowledging Pakistan's effort to comply with requirements regarding countering money-laundering and the counterterrorism financing regimes. In February 2020, the FATF retained Pakistan on its "grey list" till June 2020 to meet its requirements. Additionally, the international community has acknowledged progress in Pakistan's counterterrorism policy as the United Nations has declared the capital city, Islamabad, after evaluating Pakistan's security issues, as a family station for U.N. personnel. The United States and the United Kingdom have eased travel advisories for their citizens. British Airways, the United Kingdom flag carrier airline, has started its flights to Pakistan. (Dawn, 2020).

On the other hand, the counterterrorism strategies of Pakistan have been proved to be ineffective in dismantling

the militant and terrorist outfits as the performance of the Pakistani security forces has been consistently poor. Moreover, three distinct but overlapping factors have seriously mired the effectiveness of the counterterrorism strategies of Pakistan: Pakistan's strategic interests in the region, skewed civil-military relationship, lack of national consensus over the ownership of "War on Terror." Firstly, the pre-9/11 national security doctrine of Pakistan has always primarily centered on its national strategic interests in the South Asian region, particularly towards Afghanistan and India. When it comes to Pakistan's attitude towards India, since the inception of Pakistan, it has always prioritized the Kashmir issue as its top on the list of its traditional security doctrine. When Pakistan realized that it could not win the Kashmir through conflict or talks, it opted for an asymmetrical strategy – through low-intensity conflict – to engage India and utilized its home-based Islamist and Jihadi outfits to fight its proxies in Indian-controlled Kashmir.

Although, the fact that Pakistan has dealt heavy-handedly with the homegrown extremism and terrorism "through arrests, targeted assassinations, and aggravated intergroup massacre" is real (Tellis, 2008, p. 9). Nonetheless, the top leaders of these sectarian and extremist Jihadi groups, whom Pakistan considers as its strategic asset to continue its proxies in Indian-held Kashmir, usually escape the severe actions of the Pakistani government. Conversely, Pakistan's policy towards Afghanistan has always focused on the installation of a pro-Islamabad government in Kabul that favors strategic interests of Pakistan in Afghanistan, for instance, in the 1990s, Islamabad supported the Taliban regime in Kabul.

Secondly, the counterterrorism strategy of Pakistan has also been weakened because of the continuous frayed relationship between civilian governments and the military. It is worth noting that both institutions have always struggled to achieve supremacy and acquire power in the politics of Pakistan. Though, Pakistan's military mostly, if not always, emerges as a winner in this game for power. The military has continued to influence Pakistan's national, security, and foreign policy, as being the most powerful institution in the country. Therefore, this discord between civil-military relations has significantly affected the effective formulation and implementation of a result-oriented counterterrorism strategy of Pakistan. The Pakistani civilian governments and the military have conflicting viewpoints concerning the formulation of an effective strategy to combat terrorism. This is because the military focuses that the security and foreign policy of Pakistan should be India-centric, patronizes the homegrown Jihadi groups as its strategic asset to fight Islamabad's proxies in Indian-administered Kashmir. It also supports militant outfits, e.g., Haqqani Network, that is helping Pakistan to achieve its strategic objective in Afghanistan and the region.

The civilian leadership usually opine that the nuisance of growing terrorism and militancy should be dealt through, preferably non-violent means and through administrative methods, for instance, through peace talks, peace agreements, fast and stern anti-terrorism laws, and courts. Also, there are contradictory views between the military and civilian forces on the issue of peace deals and negotiations with the terrorists and militants. On the one hand, the military is not in favor of "unconditional" peace talks with the terrorists and militants because of their continued attacks on the people of Pakistan, civilian and military institutions. On the other hand, civilian leadership discards any "preconditions" at the beginning of the peace negotiations with the militant.

Lastly, since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and resultantly United States' war against terrorism in Afghanistan, the governments in Pakistan, both military or elected civilian, could not succeed in building a national consensus over the ownership of "War on Terror." The mainstream political parties of Pakistan; incumbent Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaaf, Jamat-e-Islami, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, and Jamiat-e-Ulema-Islam-Fazl have publicly rejected that War on Terror is not Pakistan's war to fight. They say it is the United States' war. The military, on the other hand, represents that the "War on

Terror” is Pakistan’s fight against terrorism and tries to pursue the national consensus and support for this cause. The reluctance of civil-military to be on the same page regarding the ownership of the United States’ backed war on terror and want of national consensus over the issue have severely damaged the effective formulation and implementation of the effective counterterrorism policy of Pakistan. Therefore, the ineffectiveness and inefficient counterterrorism strategies of Pakistan has not only grave security implications for Pakistan but also for regional and global security as well.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Pakistan’s military operations have made tangible gains in the reduction of terrorist and extremist violence across the country in recent years. Life in Pakistan is returning to normalcy, tourism, and international sports is also making a comeback in Pakistan. Furthermore, the international community has acknowledged progress in Pakistan’s counterterrorism policy (Dawn, 2020). However, in the long run, the military offensives have been proved to be ineffective in comprehensively dismantling the militant and terrorist outfits as the performance of the Pakistani security forces has been weak and inconsistent, particularly before the last two military offensives.

The effectiveness of the counterterrorism policy of Pakistan has been mired by three contributing factors: Pakistan’s Indo-centric strategic interests in the region, twisted civil-military relationship, and lack of national consensus over the ownership of “War on Terror.” The pre-9/11 national security doctrine of Pakistan has always primarily centered on its national strategic interests in the South Asian region, particularly towards Afghanistan and India. The frayed relationship between civilian governments and the military, and this has significantly affected the effective formulation and implementation of a result-oriented counterterrorism strategy of Pakistan. Over the years, Pakistan could not succeed in building a national consensus over the ownership of “War on Terror.” Even though the Pakistan military has launched several all-out military operations in FATA and across the country, nevertheless, the militancy is still growing in Pakistan. Therefore, the ineffectiveness counterterrorism strategy of Pakistan has not only grave security implications for Pakistan but also for regional and global security as well.

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