Impact of War on Terror in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Beyond

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Abstract

Terrorism, in all its shape and manifestation, is intolerable and condemned, not only in local and international laws, but also in all religions. The world is still continuously infested with the virus of terrorism. In this article, an effort has been made to examine terrorism from different aspects and dimensions including the historical perspective of different terrorist organizations. Prior to 1979, a bipolar world witnessed a cold war for a long period of time, which finally resulted in a war against USSR troops in Afghanistan by the United States and its allies, including Pakistan. The United States and its allies, chiefly Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, orchestrated throngs of the so-called of *Mujahideen* and *Jihadees*. Politico-Islam was exploited to its maximum, which recruited these *Mujahideen* and *Jihadees* from scores of Muslim countries and launched them into the territory of Afghanistan with the help of Pakistan to fight against the Soviet troops. As a result, the Soviet Union was dismembered, reshaping the globe into a unipolar world led by the United States. Post 9/11 Pakistan had to face the brunt of terrorism by the same very *Mujahideen* and the people of their mindset, which resulted into devastation of its demography, economy, and human capital, and terrorism became an uncontrollable phenomenon in the entire region and beyond.

Introduction

The War on Terror, also called the Global War, and counter measures against this largely spread war on Terrorism, were initially launched by the United States government, post September 11 attacks at the iconic Twin Towers the Pentagon in the United States.

War against terrorism is believed to be the right measure to address the issue, but in fact the menace of terrorism is a common enemy, which needs to be addressed collectively instead of only by the United States and its allies. This article sheds light mainly on Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria, Palestine, USA and some other countries.

Background

The current form of terrorism evolved due to a brewing regional and trans-regional situation in which sovereign states, such as Iraq, were attacked by the Unites States and its allies,iwithout the consent of the Security Council members, as no resolution was passed to this affect. This action by the United States propped up the negative use of politico-Islam, wherein an innocent and mostly illiterate Muslim population was lured with the slogan of Jihad, which directed its actions against wrongly perceived enemies of Islam.

It won't be out of place to lament these Jihadeesas radicals, who also shape themselves up as fighters, which comes under the ambit of terrorism. The cycle of terrorism by the Jihadeesand the counter terrorism operations against them, directly impacted countries like Pakistan, where the lives of over 70,000 people were lost post Afghan invasion in 2001.ii The intensity in the aggression of the Talibans and Jihadees attracted NATO forces in Afghanistan led by the United States, thus the unending cycle of terrorism and counter terrorism began.

Terrorism in Pakistan

Associated Islamist Groups Involved in Violent Terrorism
Al Qaeda/Pakistan Taliban (Qari Zafar/ BaituallahMahsud Group)
Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan/ Lashkar-e-Jahangvi
Harkat-ul-Jehad-e-Islami (HuJI)/Harkat-ul-Mujahedeen Al-Aalmi (HuMA)
Sipah-e-Muhammad Pakistan
Tahreek Lashkar-e-IslamiMuhammadi
Jundullahiii
Pakistan supported the Taliban in Afghanistan, who activated themselves within an organizational structure. In

the meantime, several other small and large terrorist organizations emerged in Pakistan with the active and passive assent of the Afghan-Taliban. In fact, it is the natural fallout of Pakistan's involvement against USSR from 1979 onwards wherein, Mujahideen were recruited from Pakistan and multiple Muslim nations and were deployed in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, after winning over the war, the United States along with its allies withdrew from the region abruptly, leaving all these Mujahideen turned Taliban and other factions of so-called terrorists to deploy themselves under respective ideologies which was initially shaped as tool of Afghan war against the Red Army.iv

So much so, that Hillary Clinton in her official statement before Congress Defense Subcommittee (August 2011), stated, "So we then left Pakistan ... We said okay fine you deal with the Stingers that we left all over your country... you deal with the mines that are along the border and... by the way we don't want to have anything to do with you... in fact we're sanctioning you... So we stopped dealing with the Pakistani military and with ISI and we now are making up for a lot of lost time. In line with the current facts, there are forty-eight religious and extremist teams of various sizes currently operational in Pakistan.vAll of these groups follow their own sets of rules.

Basic Causes of Terrorism

It is always observed that extremists come from places where survival is difficult and the basic needs of people are not fulfilled. The role of modernization and globalization is not negligible in this context as flawed governance in many countries of the world mainly for economic and political reasons. Majority of the population is unable to cater to and fulfill their basic rights. Lack of constitutional protection in addition to associated laws like freedom of faith, freedom of speech, and independent strong judiciary in its true sense is not prevailing, all of which contribute to the potential for religious extremism.vi

Like Islam, Judaism is an Abrahamic religion which is considered to be peaceful. Since its beginning it has not suggested extremism as a practice, yet according to the Bible,vii it has a record of battles full of massacres, to support violence and aggression in the name of religion. In modern times terrorists have targeted areas that are of distinctive religious significance to the Jews in Israel. Apparently, in this context, the Israelis resort to deadly state violence against Palestinians, as a pretext to counter-terrorism. Some powerful, rich and entrenched Islamic associations encourage school of thoughts that are intrinsically biased. Saudi Arabia funnels a lot of money into a range of extremist groups to support Wahhabi Islam.viiiWhat may genuinely be required is an original restoration of Islam. This apparently is more of a tool used to gain strength and the aim to avoid any threats to the monarchy, which at times, is quite vulnerable.

Politico-Islam

Politico-Islam is a kind of extremism that is a major threat to certain sects in societies. It creates a definite kind of inequality encouraging the oppressed groups to grow to be powerfully violent, causing them to indulge into numerous rogue activities. They act as political entities or they are supported by political entities. This type of extremism is based specially on religious, ethnic, race, lingual or cultural differences.

A society that is suffering from extremism has to suffer both economically and socially. Economic losses have the tendency of drowning societies during the time of economic recession. They cause organizations to shut down, giving rise to unemployment, leading to scarcity of resources. The trajectory of poverty begins to escalate and therefore the society faces the implications in terms of its economic depression if not ,failure.

Pakistan, Islam, and regional dynamics

Islam is characterized as a divine philosophy primarily based on religious structures whereby social, political, monetary and cultural entities are self-sufficient and self-reliant. The dynamics of the connection between Islam and politics determines the same idea of welfare oriented life where basic needs are catered for. Politics in Islam can also be outlined as a practice with ethical beliefs and political spirit. Nowadays the nature of politics in Islamic nations has been re-shaped in distinction with Western democracies. Touqir Hussain, a former diplomat of Pakistan, who has additionally served as an ambassador for Japan, Brazil and Spain, writes in his article that the year 1979 is found to be unique within the history of the Muslim world. He keeps writing that Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan acted as epicenters and tributaries. The same year Iranian revolution occurred that reshaped the dynamics of the center-East affecting the Persian Gulf. In Pakistan, General Zia-ul-Haq in his dictatorial regime manipulated, through the utilization of force, the democratically elected Prime minister, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto by lodging a military coup and detached using Islamization as a tool beside other things.ix

If we have a glance at the losses in the financial sector of Pakistan as a result of terrorism and also the continuous war in Afghanistan, it suggests that terrorism has affected Pakistan's economy adversely. This effect includes poverty, destruction of infrastructure, reduction in foreign direct investment, tourism, capital flow, opportunity losses and a lot more. It has been cited that acts of terrorism have caused Pakistan a loss of 1.6% of its Gross Domestic Product. It additionally highlights that the increase in terrorist activities by 1% causes the

0.39% loss of GDP in Pakistan.[x] Pakistan's participation in the War on Terrorism has brought devastating impact on the society as it has affected the very fibre of our peaceful society into a violent characteristic. The influence of War on Terror on Pakistan's economy in quantifiable terms is 120 billion dollars but analysts feel it is way beyond this loss if opportunity costs are factored in. The developmental sector of the country and its governance has suffered a great deal which is still in the cogmire, and would take Pakistan several years in its recovery if it adopts a corrective measure at this stage or be ready for the doomsday.

Modalities and Basis of Terrorism

Terrorist organizational structure and hierarchy portrays precisely like a common commercial enterprise. Terrorist organizations, like business organizations, have their strategic goals and to attain those goals they opt for leaders to form alternatives and reach their strategies. However, actually its commitments are totally different from a standard organization. It has levels of commitments that embody passive and/or active support for leaders to run operations smoothly.

The militancy against Pakistan, behind the veil of Islam, had an enormous effect on the demography, monetary, social, cultural, mental and overall behavior of the Pakistani population. FATA, the most deprived place in Pakistan, has faced the worst-ever financial conditions, illiteracy and unemployment rates over the decades.

The final war that culminated in 1989 was fought in Afghanistan by mustering fighters from several Muslim countries of the world – all funded by USA in conjunction with its allies, particularly Saudi Arabia.[xi]

According to Islam, politics and religion are crucial and Islam explains the governing mechanism to run a country as a good state. The Islamic law further unifies religion with politics. It is thus unfortunate that extremist groups that emerged due to the Afghan warfare use the name of Islam to achieve their secret political motives. They're trying to urge peoples' sympathies with the name of Islam but their entire effort turns into confrontation, resistance and rebellious activities that don't have anything to do with Islam. It's important to note that their activities are primarily based upon extremism for political agendas that begin with the name of Islam, but end on politics.

Currently, the world is going through an unfavorable and harsh kind of extremism which could be a combination of religious, ethnic and political extremisms. Actually all three are interconnected and their root cause is biasness towards minorities and race discrimination. Although 97% of Pakistan's population is Muslim, however the whole Muslim population does not belong to the same sect. Therefore, religious, sectarian and ethnic variations are prone to give birth to extremism which frequently turns into political actions.

It looks like the world's prejudiced media abhors Islam, declares and propagates and shows whatever mainly is against Islam and hides problems that are not in its favor. It is only the media that began Islamophobia and had the Muslim communities feel discouraged. As a result, segments of Muslims became enraged; resultantly resorted to violence and perpetually putting in efforts to stop what is going on around. Most of all, the rules and regulations created by the Western countries and the United Nations for 'freedom of speech' have been misused to their advantage.

So it would be totally unjustified if we start expecting only a few nations to put in efforts to line up peace and harmony. Internationally, peace is perhaps restored once rules and regulations help control and end political, sectarian, ethnic and economic wars and peace messages are sent from neighboring borders. The important question here is how will peace be maintained during a situation where countries are given a tough time by other countries who are against them and they offer arms to each other's enemies on the basis of racial, sectarian and religious differences?

Disruption of World Peace Due to Extremism

Initially extremism was being ignored mostly for global and political reasons. People thought that it was a normal thing that could be controlled with little efforts, but unfortunately it became a fatal disease and turned violent and barbaric, due to which in a short span of time, societies and countries got affected and millions of innocent people lost their precious lives.

A matter of concern here is how and why religious extremism has spread everywhere in the world and has become a serious issue nowadays. This could be very nicely described by the words of Reza Aslan that "no religion is peaceful or violent; it is the people who attach their versions of the meaning to religion". It is a distorted notion that some of the most terrifying terrorist groups are using the name of Islam and calling the barbaric acts of killing innocent people in the name of *Jihad*. What they're doing is not the actual *Jihad* because it does not even meet the basic criteria of *Jihad*. No prophets from Adam (peace be upon him) till Muhammad (peace and mercy be always upon Him) have encouraged hurting or killing anyone brutally. Islam is a religion of peace, which never forced its practice on anyone. Islam is the simplest religion that tells us the righteous path and protects the rights of minorities and gives them freedom to practice their faiths as enunciated in their respective codes and sacred books of religion.

Impact of Education

From the beginning there has been a trend to hide facts that prevail behind the scenes and that is why people who have a thought-process and a tendency to identify loopholes are forced indirectly to stop working and to differentiate between right and wrong.

In a cohesive and progressive society, it is essential to give the highest priority to education which is the first thing to transform different societies in the world. We must work on the education of our communities to make them aware of what is wrong and what is right. It is precisely for this reason that the United Nations, in its sustainable development goals, has kept its goal number four "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all".[xii]

Post 1979, the fallout of war against USSR has changed the complexion of the Pakistani society in terms of security, intolerance and terrorism. If succeeding governments had only followed article 38 (d) of the Constitution of Pakistan, the menace of terrorism in the country would not have attained its current shape and magnitude.[xiii]

As the time is passing, the link between the political clashes and the spreading trend of terrorism has been observed to become stronger. The one who is honest and wants to serve the country is stopped by the influences that have greed for power, status and money, and that gives birth to political instability and frustration.

They are trying to show a vague picture of the world portraying the existence of only two religions: Islam and anti-Islam. This ultimately leads people to fight and kill each other. This is the sole reason why Islam has been posed and lamented as an extremist religion and Muslims as extremists.

Conclusion

Concluding the whole article, the perception of war between Islam and anti-Islam has brought terrorist organizations up with an approach, for instance, Al-Qaida and its members who have roots in Afghanistan and in Pakistan as well.

USA, who considers Afghanistan a victim, has inflicted losses in Afghanistan as a result of military activities. It had to retrieve its forces as it made Americans frustrated over the losses with hardly any gain.

According to a figure, around 60,844 people died between 2013 and 2016 in Pakistan because of this war on terror. Such terrorist attacks resulted in 3906 deaths in the year 2008. People of Afghanistan also suffered massive losses in terms of life and property during this time of war.[xiv]

Looking and analyzing terrorism globally, many initiatives have been taken to eradicate it. Like in 2004, a round table conference was held which took place in Moscow and was attended by countries from all over the world to outline strategies and remedies to reinstate world peace in the context of terrorism. Most global initiatives are directed towards militarized counter measure against terrorism devoid of any emphasis or impact of education on countering the menace of terrorism and its root cause.

What I suggest here is unity to deal with the war on terror to save humanity. It is true that differences cause nothing but only conflicts, which result into war. War has never been a good solution to the problem but mostly generates an infinitely malicious circle of the problem itself. We as the world need to unite on one-outline to entirely restore world peace and save our next generations from war and its collateral damage. This is a time when we need to think of a peaceful solution rather than going for war and/or so-called *Jihad.*

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