

## Zarb-e-Azb and the State of Security in Pakistan

### Abstract

The state of internal security in Pakistan emerged as a challenge to the state-writ due to the societal fragmentation and rise in extremism and terrorism. Incidents of terrorism linked to TTP developed as the major internal security threat in Pakistan. The failure of PML - (N)'s government in bringing the TTP to the dialogue table coupled with a terrifying rise in number of terror attacks on security personal and soft targets led to the hard stance culminating in a comprehensive joint military operation 'Zarb-e-Azb' in North Waziristan (FATA) against TTP's hideouts and their foreign supporters. The paper will focus on the internal security dynamics of Pakistan in post 9/11 scenario and the circumstances that led to the massive, large scale military chase in the history of Pakistan [Zarb-e-Azb] to curtail terrorism and to root out extremism.

### Keywords

Internal Security, Operation Zarb-e-Azb, Pakistan, extremism, FATA, terror

### Introduction

Security is a dependent concept, it is complex and seamless in nature, it needs to be defined under specific circumstances and precise condition or it is meaningless unless it is defined under relational mode with a major concept [as power and peace]. As per Kraus & Williams, "security is a derivative concept; it is meaningless in itself. To have any meaning, security necessarily presupposes something to be secured; as a realm of study it cannot be self-referential" (1997: ix). Realist considers security as the sub-derivative of power or some of the theorists consider it parallel to power, while liberalists believe that security is the essential element for retaining peace (Javaid & Kamal, 2015: 116-117).

In the contemporary scenario 'security' appeared, as one of the most important concept through which, the national traditional security concerns can be addressed. The concept of security can be related to wide dimension as military, political, economic, social, humanitarian and human rights and ecological aspects (Khalid & Kamal, 2015: 15). However, traditional or non-traditional security concerns are considered as one of the major interrelated apprehensions in the contemporary nation-states, whereas within the state structure, internal and external security threats are perceived as a predominant menace and nuisance. According to Buzan & Rizvi, "security is a relational phenomenon. It involves not

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only the capabilities, desires and fears of individual states, but also the capabilities, desires and fears of the other state with which they interact” (1986: 5).

‘Pakistan’ is a newcomer in the world affairs and since partition; she is encountering unconditional internal and external security threats. Since independence, she is facing the threat of reabsorption from a gigantic neighbour that by default qualifies all the foundations of a regional power in South Asia. The external security threat [India] has been mounting on Pakistan’s foreign policy [under the question for survival] that pushed the newly born state in to military alliances with US, involvement in Afghan war in Cold war era, and weaponization and nuclear-armed race in the region. Despite Pakistan’s nuclearization in 1998, [which provides conventional deterrence against India] her internal and external security fear and anxieties have been enhanced with time. Nonetheless, Pakistan’s external security threats laid serious implications on her internal security matters; Pakistan anti-Soviet alliances with United States and Saudi Arabia have promoted the culture of terrorism, religious extremism, Islamization and violence under Zia’s regime. The decade of 1980s considered as the seeding phase of global terrorization and extremists’ ideological narrative of Jihad under the cover of United States to encounter the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan and promote her [US] interests in Central Asian Republics. According to Malik, “Pakistan has undergone a drastic transformation [due to Afghan war], which has affected the entire socio-political, economic and cultural fabric of the society” (2014: IPCS).

The decade of 1990s is decade of regional terrorization that included Jihad and extremism as part of the opted policy, and inclusion of madrassa culture in Pakistan. Consciously or unconsciously India and Pakistan enmity promoted terror in the region, whether, Kashmir conflict is the reason or their ideological reservations are the bases for adverse relations. South Asia suffered antagonistic and unfavorable consequences due to both cousin states.

The decade of 2000 is the years of global terrorism under Al-Qaida leadership. Pakistan’s U-turn policy and anti-Taliban stance pushed the state in another frontage of internal security turmoil that fueled the aspirations of the in-home nurtured extremist and supported religious groups. Pakistan’s status of non-NATO ally and as a front line state in war on terror brought massive internal security hazards. The United States’ interest-oriented policy has used Pakistan’s strategic position according to her defined objectives in the region. While Pakistan’s political turmoil and immaturity also paved the way for foreign hands to interfere in the internal matters of the state without considering its perilous implications on the internal security mapping of the state.

According to the Adam Hanieh [a political economist] that “there is a single imperialist war on the people of the region at large, a war that stretches from Libya and Egypt in North Africa, to Somalia in East Africa, to Syria and Iraq in West Asia, to Afghanistan and Pakistan in South Asia. It is worth noting that most of these countries have Muslim majorities” (Azeem, Syed & Ali, Noaman, 2014: Tanqeed).

The fallouts of global terror [during the Cold war era] led to religious-extremist and terrorists’ ideological factions in Pakistan, which later, mushroomed by supportive sub-groups that further disturbed the internal security structure of

Pakistan. The paper will analyze the importance of security in the internal structure of Pakistan and how the traditional and non-traditional external security threats penetrated into the social fabric of Pakistan. The paper will also look on the failure of the civil-government in negotiating with TTP, curtailing terrorism and enhanced security concerns, and why it needed a comprehensive armed operation 'Zarb-e-Azb' by the military institution against Threek-e-Taliban of Pakistan (TTP). The paper further will also explore the following reasons behind the operation Zarb-e-Azb, first, to secure the people and bring peace, to control the law and order situation in the Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA), to curtail terrorism and extremism, to stop foreigners from internal penetration, and lastly, secure our porous borders from external hands and stop their influence in the unrest in Baluchistan.

### **Pakistan's Domestic Security Concerns post 9/11**

Pakistan's internal security emerged as one of the main concerns in post 9/11. Pakistan's aspiration for client regime in Afghanistan forced her to support Talibanization and their control in Kabul, to gain strategic depth viz-a-viz India, to suppress the Pushtunistan issue and built harmonious relations on the western border and to approach the resourceful Central Asian Republics and lastly to gain success in Kashmir resolution. Pakistan was the first state to recognize Taliban as a legitimate government and also asked Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to give them recognition. The incident of 9/11 and her role in War on Terror under Musharraf regime forced Pakistan to take U-turn in her policy towards Taliban in Afghanistan and gave the opportunity to India to play her soft role in the Afghanistan. However, Pakistan is the most affected living victim of the post 9/11 US intervention in Afghanistan. She was forced to play its role as front line state in War on Terror or non-NATO ally of United States that led to serious repercussions on Pakistan's internal security structure. "Traditionally, the threat to Pakistan's security has been external. However, today it can be arguably asserted that the major threat to national security in Pakistan emanates more from internal sources rather than external" (Javaid, n.d.: 1).

War on Terror aftermaths allowed the extremists' gorilla war trainees to hide and settle in the Federally Administrated Tribal Areas of Pakistan, forming a hub of extremists' ideologies and terror acts. Musharraf's policy and alliance with the United States against the nurtured and self-made non-state actors in Afghanistan paved the way for another front in Pakistan named as Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). In this scenario of Talibanization, Pakistan has been buried under multiple internal security dimensions, in which terrorism appeared as the main area of concern for the civil establishment, which attacks security personals and soft targets in Pakistan (Pakistan's Internal Problems (all aspects), 2013:3).

"Talibanization promoted the culture of terrorism in Pakistan that includes ambushes on armed forces by Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), target killing of religious, political and civil society figures, scholars and doctors, bowing up schools, offices of NGO's, bridges and pillions, suicide attacks in mosques and other important places. So far more than 35000 Pakistani have lost their

lives in different incidents of terrorism including the loss of 5000-armed men” (Afzal & Iqbal & Inayat, 2012: 197).

### **Terrorism a Major Shift in Pakistan’s Internal Security Dynamics**

Pakistan’s external security hazards shaped her internal security dynamics, since 1990 India is trying to declare Pakistan as a terrorist state, India many times asserted that Pakistan is the global nursery of terrorism, but Pakistan has been victimized under United States’ interest-oriented policies in the region and her [Pakistan] quest to survive against the predatory neighbour. However, terrorism emerged as the major peril in the internal security of Pakistan, which is considered as a major shift in her security dynamics. It pushed a nuclear power into security turmoil as the number of internal terror attacks enhanced day-by-day challenging the writ of the state. As per Niaz Murtaza [Political Economist], “regionally, China has become the world’s manufacturing hub; India its software hub; Maldives and Sri Lanka its tourism hub but Pakistan is the terrorism hub” (2013: DAWN).

Terrorism is indefinable [or there is no agreed definition of terrorism] but it can be defined in a relational mode with security, thus, terrorism is challenging the state of security in Pakistan. According to an old adage ‘one man’s terrorist is another’s freedom fighter, which extremely related to the jihad perception and how a jihadist is a freedom fighter for the religious clans and a terrorist for the western world. Terrorism in Pakistan carries socio-religious and political dimensions as, it involves political aims and anti-constitutional or anti-Pakistan motives, it is violent in nature or threatens violence, and it is designed to generate fear in a targeted audience that extends beyond the immediate victims of the violence. Terrorism involves non-state actors or actors as either the perpetrators, the acts of terrorized violence is designed to create power [imposition of TTP Sharia] in situations in which power previously had been lacking, creating security challenge for the state (Lutz, 2004). Pakistan’s internal security dynamics are passing through sever threats and major attacks on the soft targets as ‘we wept on, when children were murdered under their desks’ (Rahim, 2015: The Express Tribune) in Army Public School (APS), and sectarian attacks on the minorities as in Gulshan-e-Iqbal Park in Lahore in 2016 that increased Pakistan’s vulnerability and pushed a nuclear state to fall down under the burden of her internal security hazardous. However, Pakistan got caught in an intense wave of terrorism in the aftermath of 9/11 that provided more opportunities to different types of crime and radicalization and sectarianism emanating from rural to urban areas in Pakistan.

### **Civil-Government Response to Internal Security and Terrorism**

The civil governments has been inefficient in sustaining peace and security amongst the masses, her polices are only reflected through her official papers rather on the ground realities. Where as the paper measures, which has been taken by the Pakistan government in order to curtail terrorism and sustain security, are as follows, “she supported all the UN resolutions in order to curb terrorism; it also signed ten UN anti-terrorist convections (Khalid, Kamal, 2015: 18). The government of Pakistan also opted for different strategies to curtail and control terrorism, as follows:

1. “Cooperation with the international coalition to curb terrorism
2. Immigration control measures to keep a check on the movement of potential extremists
3. Action against fanatical and extremist organization and groups
4. Detention of Jihadi leaders
5. Banning Jihadi organization
6. Reformation and regulation of madrassas encompassing:
  - a) NOC (No Objection Certificate) for the opening of madrassas
  - b) The registration of madrassas
  - c) A review of their syllabi
  - d) A curb on the number of foreign students attending them
7. Regulation of Mosques:
  - a) NOC required for opening a mosque
  - b) Political activities in mosque made unlawful
  - c) The use of loudspeakers restricted to the *Azan* (the call to prayers)” (Khan, 2013: 44).

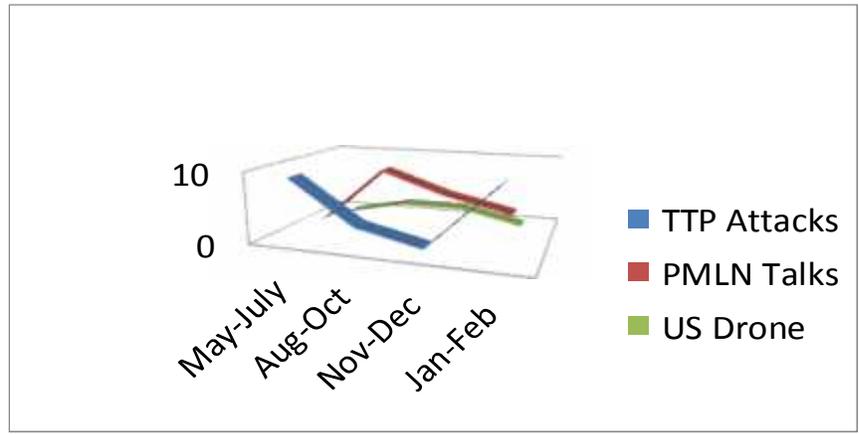
However, Pakistan also focused on military and non-military options to combat terrorism, the establishment has promulgated several amendments in the existing legal framework dealing with anti-terrorism measures. Pakistan announced the Anti-terrorism Act (ATA) in 1997, later, ATA was amended several times and given further powers to strengthen the anti-terrorism measures and respective authorities [which can use power], but the legal anti-terrorism framework was not materialized to prevent the terror attacks by TTP, neither it was followed by the civil-governments. In 2013 National Counter-Terrorism Authority (NACTA) was created (Ahmed, 2014: 11-12), and in the same year in October President Mamnoon Hussain [during the period of PML (N) government] promulgated Pakistan Protection Ordinance (PPO) to enhance the internal security structure of Pakistan and curtail the growing terrorism and to further enhance the power of the respective authorities.

“PPO was highly criticized by the national and international community, I. A. Rehman stated that the legislation (PPO) is not needed. Many of its objectives can be secured through the Anti-Terrorism Act. Dr. Azhar Nadeem stated in his article on the counter terrorism front, the government came up with the Pakistan Protection Ordinance 2013, with a view to giving teeth to the law enforcement agencies (2013)” (Kamal, 2016: 200).

On the other side, TTP’s growing attacks country wide were undermining the governmental authority; it targeted the security forces/personals, sectarian rivals, political leaders, foreigners and foreign interests, public and private infrastructure. The demands for which these attacks were being carried out so as to

pressurize government and security forces were release of some 4000 Taliban prisoners in Pakistani custody, an end to drone attacks, support to anti-US policies, withdrawal of troops and a pledge to keep them in the barracks, imposition of TTP version Sharia, lastly, TTP will continue to run its fiefdoms in the Tribal areas (Taliban's clear goals, 2013: DAWN). In 2013's elections TTP was against all the political parties taking part in the elections, but in favor of PML-N. "The experts have revealed that the demands of the Taliban are far from the domain Pakistan can negotiate in. Taliban and many factions of terrorist groups don't accept the constitution, democracy, cordial ties with India and the US" (Talking to Taliban, 2013: DAWN). According to John F. Kennedy, "we cannot negotiate with people who say what's mine is mine and what's yours is negotiable". Since May 2013, PML-N government under Nawaz Sharif's premiership in Pakistan was pursuing for negotiations [with unidentified counterterrorism measures and security policy]. As per the PML-N government, before Operation 'Zarb-e-Azb', she has exhausted all the possible options for negotiation, between her and TTP to control the terror attacks and state of insecurity in Pakistan's internal sphere (Mahmood, 2013: DAWN). Taliban's demands and her broad winged structure, was unconstitutional and threatening the internal security structure of Pakistani, according to the Article 256 of the constitution, which categorically states that raising of private armies and militias in the state territory is illegal. Secondly, reliance on talks with the Taliban for breakthrough means their legitimate recognition, as bona fide representative of the tribal population, may not be factually correct. Lastly, Pakistan was not considering the diversity of militant groups in her strategies. However, despite all of the efforts made Taliban did not respond in a positive and cooperating manner. In November 2012, Pakistan also released Taliban fighters, so far 33 fighters have been released in three batches including the last (11 Taliban) in post 2013 elections. But their conventional attacks on the soft targets enhanced with the peace negotiations failure, and proven that negotiation is not a mean to curb terrorism; it legitimizes non-state actors which lead to more violence. Details are shown in the following figure, which is concluded by the author, about number of enhanced TTP attacks after the negotiations failure,

**Number of Terror Attacks by TTP [during PML - (N) negotiations]  
Before Zarb-e-Azb Operation**



### **Operation ‘Zarb-e-Azb’ Need for Security**

The internal security couldn't more be accurate, since the 1980s Afghan war, post-Taliban regime, and post 9/11 [War on Terror]. The fallout of United States' intervention in Afghanistan and demise of Taliban has forced the extremist elements to have safe sanctuaries in the Federal Administrated Tribal areas of Pakistan [post Taliban regime], and formation of TTP within Pakistan's boundary line. TTP's anti-Pakistan stance proves external factors involvement to undermine the internal security of Pakistan. Since 2002, Pakistan armed forces has undertaken related operations against terrorism in North Waziristan Agency in FATA, which possesses extremely inhospitable environment for armed operations. Although, the Pak armed forces carried many previous military operations as al-Mizan, Operation Zalzala, Operation Sher Dil, Operation Rah-e-Rast, Operation Rah-e-Haq and Operation Rah-e-Nijat in different areas of Pakistan, to eradicate the internal security hazard, but none of them proved to be successful with long term security impact (Khattak, 2015: CSS).

Operation Zarb-e-Azb [meaning the strike of the sword the Holy Prophet (PBUH) used in Badr and Uhud] or [the sharp strike] is a comprehensive military operation [it involved over 30,000 soldiers] in North Waziristan which is one of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas that form Pakistan's northwestern border with Afghanistan. The operation was the result of peace negotiations' failure between the PML (N) government and TTP. The Pakistan Army initiated the operation [Zarb-e-Azb] on June 15, 2014, as response, when TTP attacked the Jinnah International Airport Karachi on June 8, 2014, "15 militants can initiate exceptional successful attack on Karachi Airport and can engage 2,500 security persons for 7 hours" (Haroon, 2014: News Desk). There were many other incidents, which also contributed in Pak forces' hard stance against TTP, they targeted military installations in FATA, the assassination of Lieutenant General Sanaullah Niazi, the beheading of 23 Frontier Corps soldiers and playing football with the heads in February 2014. The operation [Zarb-e-Azb] carried out under four major objectives 1) targeting the militant groups in North Waziristan Agency (FATA), 2) targeting all foreign terrorist hiding and operating from FATA, 3) saving the civilian population from the terror of TTP and rehabilitating the resultant IDPs, 4) lastly, sustaining peace and internal security in the state (Pakistan North Waziristan Agency, 2014: ACAPS).



in their mutual understanding on the military strike in North Waziristan Agency (FATA), which eventually contributed in upsurge of terrorism and also allowed the main culprits to escape [in Afghanistan's safe hideouts]. Secondly, lack of coordination between the Pakistani authorities and Afghanistan's government regarding the sneaking militants into the relatively safe areas in Afghanistan. According to Farhan,

“An additional risk arising from Operation Zarb-e-Azb is that adjacent Afghan provinces could now become a “new North Waziristan” as Islamist militants pushed out by Zarb-e-Azb have taken refuge there, underlining the problems caused by Pakistan's failure to get the Afghan government of President Ashraf Ghani on board before launching the operation” (2015: The Jamestown Foundation).

According to Khattak, around one year after of operation Zarb-e-Azb in North Waziristan Agency in April 2015, the Army has cleared 80% of the area, including five major cities in North Waziristan Agency, including Miran Shah, Mir Ali, Datta Khel, Boya and Degan. The Pak-armed forces also killed around 2,763 militants, destroying 837 hideouts, conducted 9,000 intelligence-based operations, and 226 Pakistani brave officers and soldiers have embraced martyrdom. During this intense operation the Pak Army destroyed extensive quantity of arms and ammunition, and captured around 18,087 weapons and 253 tons of explosives [the given figures of Operation Zarb-e-Azb are only provided by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR)]. The details of the captured weapons are as follows,

“Small and heavy weapons with tons of ammunition, currency, military equipment, hardware, communication equipment and other logistics facilities. 27 IED (*Improvised Explosive Device*) factories, tunnels holding Rocket manufacturing facility, one ammunition factory, sophisticated instruments for preparing IEDs, mass production centre of suicide jackets, mines and state of the art IEDs, and booby trapped weapons (Khattak, 2015: Currant Affairs).

The operation Zarb-e-Azb has resulted in decrease the number of attacks, and it also sustained public and governments' support, due to need of the hour and the engrossed leadership of Chief of the Army Staff General Raheel Sharif. According to Rahim, “this was our war, the fight for the soul of this country — something the previous military dispensation never recognized. General Sharif did” (Rahim, 2015: The Express Tribune). But besides that Pakistan also witnessed deadly attacks by the TTP affiliated sub groups, as the Wagah boarder, Lahore attack, on November 2, 2014, claimed by Jamaat ul-Ahrar, the brutal attack on Army Public School in Peshawar on December 16, 2014, claimed by another TTP faction led by Mullah Fazlullah, the violent attack on Bacha Khan university in Peshawar and the sectarian attack on the Christine minorities as in Gulshan-e-Iqbal Park in Lahore in 2016. Moreover, the problem of IDPs, which resulted in the wake operation Zarb-e-Azb, emerged as another challenge for the government. The issue of IDPs is not a new problem that is faced by the people of North Waziristan, since 2007 people are displaced due to the growing militancy

and army's involvement in the region, as the issue of internally displaced persons and their rehabilitation process enhanced in the aftermath of operation Zarb-i-Azb.

In such situation it is government's responsibility to manage the IDPs and their rehabilitation, but North Waziristan's IDPs were not satisfied by the government provided facilities, while Pak forces role has been more appreciating in managing and rehabilitating the Zarb-e-Azb's IDPs.

The operation led to a positive impact on Pakistan's foreign policy; first, it improved the in home security hazardous, secondly it enriched Pakistan's image among the neighboring countries, thirdly, it reinforced Pakistan's anti-terrorism stance, fourthly, it strengthened Pakistan-China relations and facilitated China's security concerns over Pakistan-China Economic Corridor (CPEC), "the Operation Zarb-e-Azb is playing a pivotal role in bolstering the strategic ties between Pakistan and China (Aymen, 2015: IPRI). Lastly, the operation is also significant in existing scenario of Afghanistan; Pakistan is the most important bridging state between the current government in Kabul and Taliban to bring peace and stability in Afghanistan. According to Lt Gen John "Mick" Nicholson, "Pakistan military operations in the tribal area are 'critical to defeating the insurgency' in Afghanistan and combined with its support for the reconciliation process would help reduce violence in Afghanistan".

## **Conclusion**

The state of security in Pakistan has been waiting for a comprehensive military operation in North Waziristan FATA, to curtail terrorism, to destroy TTPs hideouts and to stop the foreign intervention through Afghanistan's porous borders. "Yet, the zero tolerance policy towards the TTP and its local or foreign affiliates is what was long needed" (2014: IPCS). Pakistan is a direct victim of terrorism, due to United States' interest-oriented policies and Pakistan's own wrong opted policies in the region that laid serious implications on her internal security dynamics. "9/11 was only one terrorist incident on the U.S. territory but inside Pakistan number of such incidents have been observed, which deteriorated the law and order of country. No part of the country is safe due to bombing and suicide attacks" (Afzal & Iqbal & Inayat, 2012: 196).

Since 2002 many military operations has been conducted in FATA to control the growing militancy and terrorism, but unfortunately were not that successful as to be expected. Whereas operation Zarb-e-Azb [a comprehensive military strike] was the need to maintain the state of security in Pakistan, and has been carried out in a very well joint efforts by the Pakistan army. But many questions rise, will this military operation enough to curtail terrorism and flush out militancy from Pakistan. The operation is about to complete two years and still the terror attacks couldn't be avoided, neither the security hazardous are in complete control, which indicates the matter of severity and gravity. Besides Zarb-e-Azb operation, we need a larger nationwide effort to support 'all clear out' policy. What we need is to eliminate the militant strongholds and nurseries from our societal structure; we also require controlling the flow of money and funds within the state and from the external sources; and we religiously need to follow zero

tolerance approach against TTP [especially after the brutal attack of APS and on the Christian minorities in Lahore].

On the other side Pakistan is in much need for political stability and civil-military mutual understanding that has been felt absent during the nation wide security turmoil and menace of terrorism. Civil-military mutual support to anti-terror acts and sustained law and order situation in the state can endure the state writ and prevent the state of insecurities in Pakistan. Finally, the rehabilitation and resettlement of the Internally Displaced Persons [during operation Zarb-e-Azb] should be on one of the main agenda in the priority list of the government, which again is a source of insecurity for the state. The operation is also carrying positive dividends for both Pakistan and Afghanistan and their mutual security interests in the region, and it will also contribute as a major supportive factor in enhancing our economic ties with China under the ongoing China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project. Thus, Pakistan's nation is united under the leadership of her armed forces and believes in operation Zarb-e-Azb and its future success, which definitely will contribute and enhance the state of security in Pakistan.

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