

Operation Zarb-e-Azb: A Successful Initiative to Curtail Terrorism

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Abstract

The influx of terrorist outfits in North Waziristan Agency took place after the military offensives Rah-e-Nijat in South Waziristan Agency and Rah-e-Rast in Swat Valley in 2009 conducted by the armed forces of Pakistan. The new establishment decided to put negotiation on table in 2013 with terrorist outfits and invited them to peace dialogues on January 29, 2014. All through the peace talks, the continued terror activities led to the initiation of a comprehensive operation by the armed forces of Pakistan, targeting all the terrorist outfits. On Army's insistence, the PML-N government after the audacious attack on Jinnah International airport by the Uzbek fighters allowed the army to go for a military offensive in NWA. Two weeks after the operation started, airstrikes were launched and then ground battle receiving army gunships and air force fighter bombers was started. For air force surveillance and intelligence gathering, drones were also used in critical areas. After one year, Operation Zarb-e-Azb is heading towards its last juncture achieving success and eliminating terrorism. However, a possible threat that looms is the reemergence of the Terrorist outfits that slipped the Khost province of Afghanistan that was left unmanned for two weeks despite requests to the Afghan establishment by Pakistan but the Pakistan armed forces are vigilant and determined to root out terrorism from their mother land. Meanwhile, the government must pay heed to de-radicalization and reintegration of Pakistani youth by creating employment opportunities for them and reforming the role of madrassas.

Key words: Pakistan, Afghanistan, Terrorist outfits, peace negotiations, military offensive.

Introduction

The semi-autonomous FATA comprises of seven districts; Bajour, Orakzai, Khyber, Mohmand, North Waziristan, South Waziristan and Kurram (Iram, September 5, 2014). North Waziristan Agency is recognized as rough and jagged terrain is considered the most inflamed area of Pakistan and nucleus of insurgency by non-state actors resulting in bad security structure. Previously, the key military offensives carried out in six other districts were Operation al-Mizan, Operation Zalzal, Operation Sher-e-Dil, Operation Rah-e-Rast, Operation Rah-e-Haq and

Operation Rah-e-Nijat. The first army operation against Al-Qaida and other terrorist outfits was waged in 2002. During 2002-2014, North Waziristan's existence was hit because of the 'safe haven' for militants and the persistent hamper to the other military operations. Militants found sanctuary in NWA to reform and recover their lost impetus and the terrorist designs had their origin in NWA. That is why the Operation Zarb-e-Azb in NWA has managed to bring peace in the urban areas of Pakistan. However, in spite of some successes, the previous operations were not totally successful due to the entrenched Islamist militants in NWA. Operation Rah-e-Nijat, the last major offensive launched in FATA by the armed forces of Pakistan against the Islamist militants targeted the TTP-controlled areas in South Waziristan in 2009. In 2011 the then Army Chief, General Ashfaq Pervaiz Kiyani was insisted by the international community to conduct an operation in NWA too against the militants seeking refuge there. Former President Zardari, in his reign also tried to make a political consensus to conduct an operation, at that time General Kiyani was also fully prepared and America also pressurized to start an operation in NWA (Aapis ki baat, 14 June 2015). Lieutenant General Asif Yasin Malik stated, "We will undertake operations in North Waziristan when we want to... We will undertake such an operation when it is in our national interest militarily" (Dawn, June 1, 2011). It will be prolonged if expanded to NWA.

Zarb-e-Azb means the 'strike of the sword of the Holy Prophet (PBUH)' used in Badr and Uhud and it is not yet finished. The long awaited Operation Zarb-e-Azb, launched on 15th June 2014 by the state of Pakistan was full scale military operation on North Waziristan Agency and one of the Federally Administered Areas (FATA) close to Pakistan and Afghanistan's frontier. The terrorist outfits used NWA as a base to fight a war against Pakistan that disrupted the national life; impeding her economic development and caused huge humanitarian and other losses.

The involvement of about 30,000 Pakistani soldiers in the indiscriminate and comprehensive operation was initiated in the wake of brazen attack on Jinnah International Airport Karachi to eliminate all terrorists; local and foreign, hiding in safe haven in NWA by the Pakistan Army. The aims of this operation are to wipe out the militants from the area and to retake control of FATA and adjacent areas. This operation does not only mean the success of this operation, the terrorism will be completely removed from Pakistani soil and fight will be continued till the end of last terrorist. The ISPR stated, "Using North Waziristan as a base, these terrorists has 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 (Dawn, June 16, 2014). The Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) itself proposed the peace talks with the government and demanded from leadership of Pakistan to declare ceasefire, also primed to Pakistani government. The civilian leadership of Pakistan initially considered the peace negotiations as the prime option to tackle the hazard of terrorism. During the

dialogue process, the TTP continued carrying out terror campaigns in the whole country. The Prime Minister said in a speech at the National Assembly on 16 June.

“On the one hand we were pursuing dialogue, and on the other we were being targeted. We were pursuing talks, but from Islamabad courts to Karachi airport we were being targeted. Our places of worship were targeted, our schools were targeted. Despite the sacrifices of our soldiers, we gave peace talks first priority but our efforts were rendered in vain. The now-ongoing operation would conclude only with the total defeat of the insurgents. We will change the fate of this country and under no circumstances will the country be allowed to serve as a safe haven for terrorists. Whatever the cost, this nation will never be handed over to terrorists” (Haider, June 17, 2015).

The response he had earlier got from the Taliban to his peace initiative was clearly not acceptable. This sentiment was echoed by Defense Minister Khawaja Asif declared that the operation will continue “until the last terrorist has been eliminated” (Burki, June 20, 2014). As the tempo of terrorists acts augmented, the civilian and military leadership of Pakistan opted for the military operation. The attack on Army Public School Peshawar on December 16, 2014 was remained noxious and a turning point in Pakistan’s terrorism policy as well. 132 schoolchildren, 9 staff members and 7 attackers of TTP were massacred in APS and 121 others including 118 students severely injured. This attack was termed “Pakistan’s 9/11,” claiming lives of 142 people, 132 of whom were school children. (Zahid, July 10, 2015). Following this brutal attack, a national consensus was made to deal with the terrorist network with iron hand along with started implementing reprimands. The stated aims involve a “comprehensive operation against foreign and local terrorists who are hiding in sanctuaries in North Waziristan” (Azeem & Ali, August 2014). Rana Sanaullah, the Law Minister of Punjab stated, “Approximately 174 TTP hideouts/strongholds in South-West Pakistan will be targeted-it was not clarified whether this would be a part of a holistic military operation, or a covert operation; nor was the timeline of this ‘targeting made certain” (Spearhead Research, January 2014).

According to Jamal:

“Pakistan’s armed forces’ impending major assault on the TTP should, therefore, be built on the policy of deliberate, accurate, ferocious and no holds-barred attacks on the rebel leadership. In the tribal belts this is best accomplished by a combination of air power and raids by the special services group and, in the urban areas, through the use of police and paramilitary forces. Fast, accurate and actionable intelligence is essential if this

strategy is to bear fruit. Suitable laws should be promulgated where zero tolerance is shown towards individuals or groups harboring or aiding militant leaders in any manner, and their prosecution should be conducted swiftly but fairly. If this strategy is implemented successfully, the TTP movement is likely to either collapse or their leaders will beg for peace on terms acceptable to the state” (Spearhead Research, January 2014).

The joint military offensive was launched after the peace process between Taliban and the Pakistan government failed due to the capturing of 23 Pakistani Frontier Corps soldiers by the Taliban in February 2014. The other incident that triggered the military was that in one particular strike, Lieutenant General Sanaullah Niazi, a three-star General involved in previous military operations against the TTP, had been assassinated by the group in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province along the Afghan border ([News International](#), September 16, 2013). After launching the military operation, the three most important long-term tasks before the civilian government to address the issue of militancy and terrorism are:

1. To develop a counter-narrative to the ideology propagated by the militants and then popularize the counter-narrative among the populace;
2. To secure the Pak-Afghan border against any infiltration or unauthorized movement, and
3. To mainstream FATA in consultation with the local tribes (Pildat, 2014 August 04).

The Operation Zarb-e-Azb is moving ahead with its objectives achieving well. It has been moved close to Pak-Afghan border. According to an ISPR statement, 2763 terrorists killed, 837 hideouts destroyed so far (The Express Tribune, June 13, 2015).

“Militant strongholds, communications infra structure and sanctuaries were cleared on a large scale in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), including North Waziristan and Khyber agencies. Thousands of suspected terrorists with their supporters had been detained while ‘218 hardcore terrorists’ were killed in around 9,000 intelligence-based-operations (IBOs). Maj Gen Bajwa added that 347 military personnel had also lost their lives during the operation. Authorities have since vowed to intensify operations, using air strikes, artillery and mortars to take back territory both in the border regions and other parts of the country”. (Dawn, 2015 June 13).

“Zarb-e-Azb is, as of this moment, accomplishing what it set out to do: making Pakistan a safer place... until it (FATA) is developed and rehabilitated, the north of our country will remain an open wound” (Khan, June 12, 2015). Tremendous efforts have been made in NWA; a nucleus of globe’s worst terrorists is being flushed out. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, after the six months of operation stated, “Peace has been restored as a result of this operation and it’ll contribute towards ensuring peace in the entire region,” (Manan, December 10, 2014). Battling the menace of terrorist acts by the non-state actors, the law enforcement agencies launched a major military offensive; Zarb-e-Azb, which now has completed its one year and had been successful in breaking the backbone terrorist network.

In the Corps Commander Conference on August 11, 2014, chaired by COAS, General Raheel Sharif, the progress of the ongoing operation was discussed in detail and the determination and will of the armed forces to eliminate terrorism from the country was appraised. COAS paid them a rich tribute. All corps commander resolved that the “terrorists should not be allowed to regroup and return to these areas; neither will they be allowed any space across the country” (Khan, August 16, 2014). Their resolution for a peaceful Pakistan was matchless and the casualties of security forces personnel were less.

Moving up to Shawal Valley: the Last Push

After the victorious year, the last phase is ready. As the Prime Minister of Pakistan Nawaz Sharif said to extend the operation in to Shawal Valley, the mountainous north-western region of NWA in a meeting with Chief of the Army Staff, General Raheel Sharif is a major development. Imtiaz Gul, executive director at Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS) stated, “The longevity of the ‘final push’ would largely depend on the constitutional status of the region” (The Express Tribune June 29, 2015). The deeply forested gorge, a main smuggling route between Pakistan and Afghanistan dotted with Taliban bases is launched for attacks by Pakistani forces. “Pakistan Army’s operation in Shawal valley will force Afghanistan to take action against TTP’s strongholds in their country and address RAW’s sanctuaries there as well” (Manan, May 25, 2015). In the previous few weeks air strikes plus two drone attacks have been done in the Shawal Valley to soften the tough targets and last major stronghold of Taliban, now it is decided to advance a ground operation into the valley. In the second week of May the armed forces were prepared for a military offence in Shawal valley. It is a difficult fighting terrain because the TTP fighters are holed up in the area. A senior military official said “We are turning hard targets into soft through aerial bombing because forces expect a resistance in Shawal” (The Express Tribune, June 29, 2015). COAS said, “Operation Zarb-e-Azab moves to last few pockets close to Pak-Afghan border.” (Syed, June 14, 2015). Military spokesman DG ISPR Asim Bajwa said, the whole nation has to remain vigilant towards the end game. The movements of the militants towards the valley were confirmed by locals, though

some tribals informed militants' slipping across the porous mountainous frontier into Afghanistan. "Up to two dozen militants are leaving the area every day and around 200 militants recently moved into part of Afghan territory," told elder Ajab Khan (The Express Tribune, June 29, 2015).

IDPs: a Massive Challenge to Pakistan

Before the operation started, Pakistan army vacated the area from locals in order to save the civilians from damage. 929,859 persons (from 80,302 families) were registered by the authorities (The Express Tribune 14 July, 2014). They were provided with monetary support and food packages etc (The Express Tribune. 6 July 2014). Fata Disaster Management Authority (FDMA) registered the IDPs from NWA in different areas of KPK. The civilians were moved to Bannu, Laki Marwat, Karak, Dera Ismail Khan and Khoat in KP province. Gen Sharif assured the army would play its role in rebuilding and restoring normalcy in North Waziristan (Dawn, July 8, 2014)

On 10 July, the statement came from the Foreign Office that the repatriation and rehabilitation of IDPs are the internal matters of Pakistan and she will not seek external support. Many donation points were also set by the Pakistan army. Pakistani Foreign Office spokesperson Tasnim Aslam said. "We have very clear instructions from the Prime Minister (to not seek external assistance); Pakistan has neither made nor intends to make a request for international assistance. It has been made very clear that all expenditure related to temporarily displaced Pakistanis will be met from our own resources". (The Express Tribune July 10, 2014). However, it was reportedly said that US allotted 31 million dollars for IDPs rehabilitation (The Express Tribune July 6, 2014) and \$9.3 million for health, hygiene, water and sanitation for IDPs and livestock. (Dawn, July 22, 2014). It was also reported that the UAE administration assigned \$20.5 million for IDPs as humanitarian aid. (The Express Tribune July 6, 2014). In February 2014, the Pakistani Finance Minister Ishaq Dar told a visiting US Senator Jack Reed that the expenditure of the operation to date had crossed 40 billion Rs. (US\$390 million) and could overlap 130 billion Rs. (US\$1.3 billion). (The Express Tribune, February 19th, 2015).

As the COAS decided on August 14, 2014 to conclude the operation to its logical end in few more weeks "We will try to complete the military Operation Zarb-e-Azb very soon. (Khan, August 16, 2014)" there is a gigantic task confronting the Federal Government and FATA administration to resettle the more than a million IDPs. Moreover, the military forces will not be able seize the area for a long that there is no re-emergence of militants in this area. The coming weeks therefore would be challenging for the Government, which needs lot of planning, financial assistance and above all a sincerity and determination.

1. "To take care of the large number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)
2. To organize IDPs safe return and rehabilitation after the operation establishes the writ of the State

3. and to develop a civil set-up to effectively govern the area after the military has done its part” (Pildat, 2014 August 04).

On December 8, 2014, the repatriation of the IDPs was allowed by the armed forces. COAS said, the repatriation of IDPs was his main concern. Officially, it was directed to civilian leadership of Pakistan to prepare the repatriation of IDPs to their abodes in areas that are cleared from terrorist threat (Yousaf, December 8, 2014). Resettlement of IDPs is a difficult step by the state but the plan is ready, said the COAS in a statement. The repatriation of displaced tribal people and reconstruction of their areas after Swat operation in 2009 has been completed in the near past. Thousands of inhabitants were enforced to leave North Waziristan due to full-fledge offensive operation to regain the territory from the terrorists. Rtd. Lieutenant General Talat Masood, stated reincorporating them was the key to victory. “These military gains will only be a part of the exercise. Complete success of the operation depends on the rehabilitation of the displaced people and development in the tribal region” (The Express Tribune, June 29, 2015).

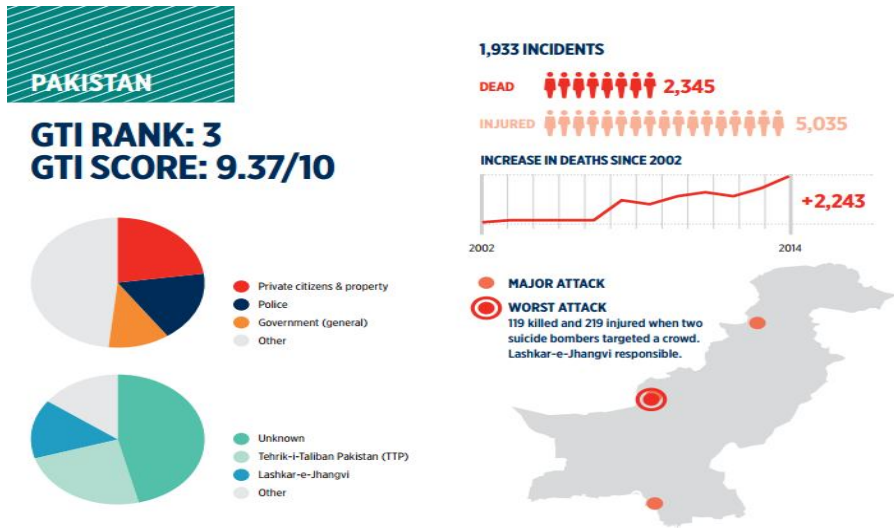
On 31 March 2015, the return of the IDPs to their homes started. 62 families on the very first day of repatriation left Bannu and went back to Spinwam and Shahmeri in NWA. The first phase completed on 24 April and approximately 1,200 families were sent back to their homes. Six months food ration and non-food stuff with 25000 Rs. help and 10,000 transport expenses were given to every family. Anti-polio vaccines and anti-measles vaccines were given to children under the age of 5-10 for affective diseases control (Salam & Bittni, Apr 01, 2015). On 4 May 2015, 230 more families were sent back to their homes. An official dealing with IDPs repatriation said “The civil administration can send entire displaced population back to their homes within a month if the area is de-notified as conflict zone”(Dawn, 5-4-2015). According to the official sources the end date for the send back of IDPs is December 2016 (Dawn, May 04, 2015).

Pakistan Hit by the scourge of terrorism

The Global Terrorism Index (GTI) 2014, compiled by the international research group the Institute for Economics and Peace, presents some significant insights into the outcome of terror campaigns on the global community. Pakistan positions third in the list of states that have suffered from terrorism, following Iraq and Afghanistan. The report states that in 2013 alone, there were total 1,933 terrorist activities in Pakistan with 2,345 fatalities while 5,035 people were injured. In 2000 to 2013, 776 attacks are claimed by Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) of which 12 per cent is carried out by suicide bombers. The report affirms that Taliban fighters are estimated among 36,000 to 60,000. In 2013 alone, more than 100 attacks were carried out on educational institution with 150 fatalities. The year witnessed 60 per cent of casualties were from bomb explosions and 49 per cent attacks were carried out by TTP of all claimed attacks.

The report articulates that Iraq was hardest hit by terrorism, with 2,492 attacks killing more than 6,300 people. It was followed by Afghanistan and Pakistan, with

Nigeria and Syria in fourth and fifth place respectively. With 10,000 worldwide attacks in 2013, the report claims that Pakistan alone saw 37 percent rise in deaths and 28 percent rise in injuries since 2012. The report also asserts that 80 per cent of the total deaths caused by terrorist activities resulting from incidents in Pakistan, Iraq, Afghanistan, Nigeria and Syria (Dawn, Nov 18, 2014. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1145300/pakistan-ranks-third-on-global-terrorism-index>).



Source: (Dawn, Nov 18, 2014 <http://www.dawn.com/news/114530>).

Success of Operation Zarb-e-Azb

As the Defense Ministry of Pakistan declared, Operation Zarb-e-Azb is going on ground level as well as with the help of Pakistan air force and air strikes in North Waziristan has destroyed the hideouts and command and control system. Four drone attacks, during one year have also been used in critical areas, Dattakhel and Shawal, which was difficult to overtake by the Pakistan army.

The targeted operation Zarb-e-Azb has four objectives:

- i. Degrading the terrorist network in number; their integrity, their organizational command, infrastructure, restoration, social network physically and intellectually, the umbrella of TTP, their master mind, logistic, intelligence, and financial support system are destroyed;
- ii. Their assets to protect them from drones and their apparatus are degraded. Factories, caves, dunes explosives, training sites, hideouts are destroyed and their arms are detained by the army;
- iii. Territory, which was under their controlled is recaptured or regain by the Pakistan Army;

- iv. US, Pak cooperation in this operation is good coordinated approach. Pakistan with the help of US drone strikes in hardest targets is heading towards its final stage of the present military offensive (Aapis ki baat, June 16, 2014).

The initiation of the Operation Zarb-i-Azb, a military operation in NWA in June; whole scenario has changed. Militant attacks have started to decline even before the operation was launched, in particular when the government was trying a negotiated arrangement with the TTP. However, the operation itself has had a striking impact in bringing down assaults and devastating militant infrastructure in NWA. Nonetheless, there has been one development this year that has changed the scenario a great deal. However, concrete figures are not yet on hand, some counter-terrorism experts approximated that attacks have come down by around 30pc this year compared to 2013(<http://www.dawn.com/news/114530>).

With the support of whole nation, the armed forces of Pakistan are immensely sacrificing for the country; fighting vigilantly knowing the geographical difficulties and complexities of NWA, recapturing the territory from the terrorists. COAS said, "It's a matter of great privilege and honor to be commanding such an accomplished and battle hardened Army, We will not stop unless we achieve our end objective of a terror free Pakistan" (The Nation, July 3, 2015). The armed forces immune the terrorists from Miranshah, Mirali and Tirah valley. The militant attacks are down by and large. COAS said to focus to locating the financing of terror groups, garroting all the sources, capturing the sponsors and accomplices. Armed forces felt the need that the safe haven of militants in Afghanistan must be cleared from TTP. Political stability is needed when the country is going through a dire situation.

Outstanding level of success and consistency during the operation are made by the armed forces. The Chinese President, during his visit to Pakistan demonstrated about Operation Zab-e-Azb as a 'game changer for peace and stability in the region. Three factors that contributed in the successful continued operation are: 1) careful planning along the motivation of troops fighting; 2) national unity: full mandate and support were given to the armed forces to destroy the terrorist networks and restore peace in NWA; 3) full support of civilian leadership and political parties after the negotiations failed.

According to an Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) statement, some 837 safe havens of terrorists have been destroyed and 253 tons of explosives are in hold in the operation. The Director General of ISPR, Major General Asim Bajwa on Twitter also mentioned 347 Pakistan's Security Forces personnel accepted martyrdom, which also yielded 18,087 weapons, including heavy machine guns, light machine guns, sniper rifles, rocket launchers and AK-47s have also been recovered from the hideouts of terrorists. Thousands of militants with their accomplices are detained in metropolitan areas in 9,000 intelligence-based operations (IBOs) and 218 terrorists are killed (The Express Tribune, June 14, 2015). He further validated that in FATA, NWA and Khyber agencies, considerable accomplishment have been made. "Strongholds of terrorists, their communication infrastructure and sanctuaries had largely been cleared" adding

that, the whole nation is united to abolish the terrorism from the country and praising the media for their optimistic attitude in menacing the terrorism. The Security forces would continue operations till the desired results (The Express Tribune, June 14th, 2015).

“Fatalities in FATA: 2006-2015*"

Years	Civilians	SFs	Militants	Total
2006	109	144	337	590
2007	424	243	1014	1681
2008	1116	242	1709	3067
2009	636	350	4252	5238
2010	540	262	4519	5321
2011	488	233	2313	3034
2012	549	306	2046	2901
2013	319	198	1199	1716
2014	159	194	2510	2863
2015	35	20	356	411
Total	4375	2192	20255	26822"

Source: SATP, *Data till March 15, 2015

<http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/Waziristan/index.html>

According to statistical data, As a consequence, overall security situation has been improved and terrorist attacks in Pakistan dropped to a six year low since 2008. For an outstanding peace, “The army troops will remain stationed in the region for some time even after the completion of the mission,” the official said (Yousaf, December 8, 2014). According to data retrieved from the South Asia Terrorism Portal, the fatalities of civilians from terrorist violence are declining in number, the year the military offensive was initiated. It has been dropped to 40 percent in 2014 and 65 percent in 2015. The lowest number of civilian deaths is observed, that was horrifically high, since 2007. The casualties from suicide attacks are now less than a tenth from 2013.

The Pakistan Army occupation against the terrorist activities were concentrated in FATA and KP province until 2013 (through the paramilitary Frontier Corps, which has now become one of the best and most battle-hardened COIN forces in the region if not the world). After the PML-N government rose to power, a low-intensity country-terror offensive was waged in Karachi led by paramilitary Rangers and with the help of intelligence and counter-intelligence activities to dislocate militant outfits, sleeper’s cells and finance system of terrorists from the metropolitan in order to restore peace, tranquility, security and law and order in the country’s economic centre (Tacstrat Analysis, July 16, 2015).

The military offensive may lead to the army’s establishing its presence in the area and some writ of the state being enforced. The top leadership of the militant outfits is, however not eliminated. Pakistan Army still ensures its presence in

South Waziristan, and for the success of present operation, Army units can be positioned all alongside the frontiers and troubled areas as well.

Delays in operation

Imran Khan, Maulana Fazl ur Rehman and Jamat-e-Islami were not ready for the initiation of operation in NWA and favoured for a negotiated settlement. As PM Nawaz Sharif tried to make a political consensus with political parties on one hand and on the other hand, the peace negotiations with TTP outfits delayed the operation. Due to the delays in operation, the terrorists went down in Afghanistan. After the confrontation with Taliban, no resistance was shown by Tehran-e-Inset Pakistan that strongly opposed the targeted operation earlier. After the talks failed between TTP and the government of Pakistan, before the initiation of military offensive, the high value targets infiltrate. An additional danger arose from the present Operation was that the high value targets of the operation escaped and camouflage in adjacent Afghanistan and Afghanistan could become a “new North Waziristan”. ‘Afghan Government confirmed that Mullah Fazl Ullah crossed the border’ (Aapis ki Baat, July 20, 2014). According to one local news report, “at least 400 families affiliated with militant groups, including members of al-Qaeda and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan fled to Afghanistan in December and now live in the homes of locals in lawless parts of the country” (The Express Tribune, January 30, 2014).

As the militants driven out by Zarb-e-Azb have taken refuge in Afghanistan, Pakistan is in dire need to get the Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and leadership on board. As the military operation after delays launched, the lack of Pak-Afghan cooperation resulting militant safe havens into Afghanistan, is likely to be one of the reasons that no major Islamist militant leader, such as Fazlullah, Adnan Rashid, Omar Khalid Khorasani and Hafiz Gul Bahadur, has so far been killed or captured during the operation (Zahid, July 10, 2015) but they are cut off from their network. The political establishment, as discussed earlier was divided. It is also discussed that majority was persistent with idea to solve this mess on round table conference, without realizing the intensity of problem and depth of the scenario.

The reasons of delays in operation were as follows:

1. appalling state of Pakistan’s economy
2. Hostile attitude of India and unstable Afghanistan
3. weak foreign policy
4. Lack of effectual counter terrorism policy and its implementation
5. Lack of political consensus
6. Possible blowback of the operation

The statement came from TTP outfits a day after the military operation began, “Any government installation can become a target for the Mujahedeen (holy warriors); we warn all foreign investors, airline companies and multilateral institutions to suspend all their affairs in Pakistan, and prepare to leave Pakistan”. According to insider accounts in newspaper Dawn, before the PM directed the

armed forces to go for operation, he was particularly concerned about the possible threat by the Taliban outfits to major urban cities in the aftermath of the military offensive. "He wanted to be assured that we can cope with the blowback and we had good intelligence on the ground to finish the job". General Raheel Sharif assured him saying, "The security of the city of Islamabad was made the responsibility of the military" (Burki, June 20, 2014).

Extra-Regional Support

General (Rtd.) Jahangir Karamat, ex-COAS, who now heads Spearhead Research, a Lahore-based think-tank, says, "There are clear indications that the operation has been preceded by an external man oeuvre". a) The continuation of drone attacks, b) The visit by the Chief of Army Staff to Afghanistan for a trilateral meeting (US, Afghanistan and Pakistan), c) The PM's overtures to India, d) the constant contact with China, Saudi Arabia, and Iran and e) A formal request to Afghanistan to seal her borders, all point to a well thought-out strategy based on the correct assumption that Pakistan needs external support and cooperation to complete a task that is in regional and extra-regional interest (Burki, June 20, 2014).

The US also acclaimed the recent shift of military offensive in Pakistan, as the State Department's Spokesperson Jen Psaki said that "this is an entirely Pakistan-led and Pakistan executed operation...we have long supported Pakistan's efforts to extend their sovereignty and stability throughout their country". United State not only emphasized Pakistan purge safe havens in NWA and CIA conducted 372 drone attacks since 2005. The drones destroyed the TTP leadership badly as Baitullah Mehsud and Hakimullah Mehsud and Wali ur Rehman massacred in the attacks (Iqbal, June 17, 2015).

Pakistan might well have taken advantage of the US troop surge if the military offensive could start in 2010 to hit the all terrorist outfits who seized shelters for themselves in NWA. An outsized US presence on the other side of the frontier could have stopped the militants to flee to Afghanistan. Many analysts believe that this kind of operation could be politically difficult and would have meant fighting America's war.

Simbal Khan said, "Now it is our war, very clear and legitimate war, not tied to America's push in Afghanistan," involving the military in an endless civil war that would be conducted not only in the mountains of the tribal belt but it could have extended to country's major urban centers, which now have a major presence of the Pashtun population (Burki 20, 2014).

During the present operation, the non-cooperation of Afghan government is evident; in spite of requests from Pakistan government and her assurance, the Kabul administration not honoring the commitment did not seal the complete Pak-Afghan Frontier and allowed fleeing terrorists to infiltrate Afghanistan. If they will be re-launched in contiguous regions of Pakistan to be used against Pakistan for the convenience of Afghan Government and its allies controlling the activities of NDS. Pakistan will surely evade reappearance of terrorists on her terrain.

Thousands of bomb blast and suicide attacks as well since 2004, all along the state by the TTP outfits killed more than 53,000 people. Pakistan cannot meet the expense to persist with the terrorist outfits on her territory nor can afford to bring in from her neighborhood. It should hence, like to ask her neighbors to halt harboring terrorist outfits in their soil (Khan, August 16, 2014).

With the support of the neighboring states Afghanistan, China, India, and Iran, Pakistan can defeat the terrorist outfits functioned in the country. Pakistan's all neighboring states have been targeted by the groups functioned in the refuges in Pakistan.

Sleeper Cells in Pakistan

The current and former intelligence and law enforcement officials said that actual victory against terror outfits can be possible after the amputation of their sleeper cells whose affiliates were provided with sanctuary, artillery, explosives, transportation and even intelligence to their members responsible for operating the attacks. The mastermind, a lot of people in fact, behind such attacks that live in the center like ordinary people but actually work for terrorist networks. Since its establishment, the officials said, the banned outfit, Three-I-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed responsibility for many attacks, It is sending its associates to Karachi with the sole purpose to merge with the locals and settle in their midst without arousing any doubt. "Active support of their likeminded sectarian and jihad groups, the TTP, during the time of Baitullah Mehsud, primarily used the sleeper cells to infiltrate private security firms in Karachi" (Ashfaq, June 12, 2014) to collect information, which it used to rob banks, cash vans and moneychangers, said the officials. At First, these people camouflage in a particular locality and secondly, they silently observe doing nothing erroneous apparently, but they actually are fully equipped with the entire information and have a complete plan to undertake their terrorist activity. They stay calm till they are ordered by their commanders and appear to be normal citizens what actually makes them a sleeper radical in a sleeper cell. The moment they receive a go ahead from their commanding authorities these sleeper cells get active and within 24 to 48 hours are liable to perform the designated terrorist activity. Karachi attack on airport was conducted through a sleeper cell.

Dr. Shahid Masood in his program Live with Dr. Shahid Masood (13 may 2015) reveals that sleeper cells are still working in Pakistan. The sleeper cells are agency agents and working as agents and provide information to the Raw or other agencies and they are living in Karachi since 1970 and there are more than 100 sleeper cells in Karachi. Shahid Masood reveals that, "Their sleeper cells would become active whenever the army launched a full-scale operation against their bases in Waziristan, the officials said, adding that the only way to counter them was an effective and coordinated intelligence collection mechanism and the use of the latest technology". The officials warned that as long as the mastermind and the

sleeper cells existed, the threat is alive but the army is vigilant to fight it off towards the end.

Dialogue with Afghan Taliban

The first round of the talks between the representatives of Afghan government and the Afghan Taliban held in Murree, brokered by Pakistan. The both parties shared their views about the current situation in Afghanistan and how progress could be made and agreed that they will meet again on the mutually convenient date after Ramazan. The representatives from United States and China also attended the talks as observers.

Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, Aizaz Ahmed Chaudhry in an interview said, Pakistan is playing the role of a facilitator in this peace process between Afghan establishment and the Taliban. The talk held in a very cordial and genial ambience. The Afghan establishment presented their agendas based on the view that atrocities in Afghanistan must end and peace prevail. Peace in Afghanistan would help bring peace in the whole region. “The Haqqanis are no longer the elephant in the room; a two-pronged squeeze is no longer a dream in the distance; and Kabul is seen as part of the solution instead of the problem. And the world is noticing: air strikes combined with a massive ground offensive in Waziristan tend to spell seriousness, and are a rare occurrence besides — instances where pure airpower made zero difference to well-embedded militias abound”(Khan , June 12, 2015).

The second round of peace talks scheduled in Pakistan has been postponed due to the death of the top leader of Afghan Taliban, Mullah Omar. The Taliban confirmed the reports of Omar’s death and appointed Mullah Akhtar Mansoor as their new supreme leader. “In view of the reports regarding the death of Mullah Omar and the resulting uncertainty, and at the request of the Afghan Taliban leadership, the second round of the Afghan peace talks is being postponed”,(Khan & Yousaf, July 30, 2015)but they are agreed to meet again soon. Durable peace in Afghanistan can be restored through confidence building measures (CBMs) between the establishment and the Taliban outfits.

Conclusion

Prime Minister of Pakistan Nawaz Sharif, COAS General Raheel Shareef and all political forces of the country took a unanimous verdict to fight off the menace of terrorism on 15 June 2014. Operation Zarb-e-Azb, and The APS reprisal broke the backbone of terrorists while their sleeper cells are yet to be targeted. As figures largely come from ISPR of Pakistan Army, after one year, weighing up the accomplishments of Operation Zarb-e-Azb, comparatively there is peace and tranquility in cities which were formerly under a severe militant menace, predominantly FATA. Immediately after the December 16 incident, in a special five days operation the security forces killed as many as 178 terrorists in air strikes. In spite of the fact that the Operation in North Waziristan Agency and

Khyber Agency is failed to obliterate the organizational setup and leadership of the terrorists, the territory has been regained from the terrorists. Civilian loss is not seen in the operation. In spite of huge losses to the terrorist network that TTP has suffered, it is likely to rise again from the bordering Afghanistan. As in the previous military operation the militants escaped in to NWA, in this operation they slipped in to Afghanistan and there is an imminent possibility that they will come and attack Pakistan's western border and go back. Some the TTP associates have mingled in the nexus with the IDPs Bannu. One more apprehension looms is the mixing up of Taliban outfits with the IS. While the TTP network had been damaged, the security threats persist largely due of the surfacing of the ISIS factor, Al Qaeda's presence in the Indian Sub-continent and the sleeper cells in urban areas. The law-enforcement agencies successfully consolidate their gains against terrorism during the present military offensive and keep the pressure on the militant groups.

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South Asian Studies 30 (2)

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