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Terrorism and War on Terror in South Asia: A Threat to National Sovereignty of Pakistan

Abstract:

South Asia has plausible economic growth, preponderant natural resources, energetic labour, fertile landmass and extended maritime space which provide vital access to its five nations with international trade network. Despite these excellent opportunities and potentials, terrorism has befallen as the major handicap to progress and stability in the region. The conflicts and terrorism practices are deeply ingrained in South Asia. South Asia is facing serious challenges such as corruption, poverty, unemployment, marginalization of some minorities and small provinces in socioeconomic aspects which incites the menaces of separatism, extremism and ethnic nationalism. Pakistan is the most dangerous place after Afghanistan on earth due to terrorism phenomena. Terrorism is a major factor which is posing threat to Pakistan's stability and livings of its denizens. Pakistan has tolerated bunch of problems due to war on terror and still devouring by its chronic impacts. The war on terror considerably affected the internal dynamic of Pakistan's demography and domestic security. The aim of this research is to investigate terrorism conundrum imperially and also evaluate its lethal impacts on Pakistan. Another objective of the study is to shed lights on war on terror as a challenge to Pakistan's sovereignty. This study critically assesses and evaluates the issue in the perspective of historical facts and current context regarding terrorism stigma. Chronological data was collected from different journals, books, newspapers and magazines.

Keywords: Security Issues, South Asia, sovereignty, Terrorism, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, War against Terrorism, 9/11 attacks

Introduction

Terrorism is basically a disease which demands immediate treatment rather than resistance and opposition. Terrorism is not an enemy, but psychological sickness and social misguidance whose victims ought to be brought in the mainstream society by considering their grievances and objectives (Muzafar, 2015). Terrorism is a universal phenomenon prevalent in every country. According to global terrorism index, there were only 31 countries in the world out of 158 that had not witnessed any single attack of terrorism during 2002-2011 (Haider et al., 2015). There are certain root causes of terrorism in South Asia which provide the ground for its proliferation. South Asia is most affected by terrorism in the world and each country has certain kinds of insurgency and terrorism with varying intensity. Albeit terrorism has not penetrated the whole South Asian region yet like Middle East and Africa, but some decisive parts of the region has thoroughly diffused in torment of terrorism. In South Asia, terrorist groups sprang up from religious fundamentalism, left wing extremism and crave for secessionism either resulting from ethnicity or marginalised poverty (Akhmat et al., 2014).

The civil war in Sri Lanka demanding separate homeland for Tamil minorities and insurgent movements in Balochistan province of Pakistan and in north-eastern parts of India represents the ethnic based terrorism. The

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Maoist insurgency in Nepal and the Maoist-Naxalites extremism in India to make a so-called red corridor across eastern, central and southern part of India exemplifies the left-wing extremism based on ideological difference and political violence. The examples of religious terrorism include Jihadist insurgencies in Afghanistan and Pakistan to establish a primitive and purist Islamic state and the Hindutva or saffron terrorism has been officially acknowledged. Hindutva terror was promoted extensively by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to acquire power which intensified the anti-Muslim bigotry in India (Bidwai, 2008).

It is interesting fact that the extremist outfits have now gained political supremacy in India (ruling party BJP, known for its affiliations with Hindu nationalists) and Nepal (Maoist/communist succeeded in forming government). Cross border terrorism, proxy wars or more precisely spy war are most common in South Asia. India and Pakistan both accuse each other for sponsoring major terror attacks and political unrest. India blames Pakistan for undermining communal and political stability in Jammu and Kashmir to underpin its claim over the Kashmir. The dialogue process between India and Pakistan has stalled due to Pathankot attack in 2016. India has warned Pakistan for such acts and stipulated ceasing of cross border terrorism as prerequisite for peaceful communication. Moreover, the example of spy war has seen when Pakistan arrested an Indian spy Kulbhushan Jadhav in March 2016. Jadhav acknowledged in front the court that he served for RAW and was conducting clandestine ventures to produce instability in Balochistan and Karachi (Butt, 2018).

Terrorism as an Issue in South Asia

The situation of terrorism in South Asia further intricates when each state supports the insurgent elements of its neighbouring nation. There are some examples of acquiescence or even incitements and encouragement by a state for radical violence in another state. This caused the hindrance in peace process of opponent neighbouring state. For example, India involvement in the early periods of Tamil insurgency affected the peace process of Sri Lanka. Tamil militants had safe asylums in India where they operated in Sri Lanka before 1987. India had directly interfered in the ethnic conflict of Sri Lanka under the evasion of food supply to the besieged Tamil militant just before the India-Sri Lanka Agreement of July 1987 (Chowdhury & Islam, 2017). Border peace between India and Bangladesh is often complicated by the Bangladesh status as Maoist protagonist and shelter place for ISI activities. Indo-Pak peace process is the most regretful instance of spoiled bilateral relations due to terrorism. The militant groups of Pakistan are still conducting so called freedom activities in Indian occupied Kashmir. Pakistan supports the Kashmir militancy; India and Afghanistan support the deadliest Tehrik-e-Taliban in Pakistan; Bangladesh shelters the northeast Naxalite insurgents while China's backing of first phase Naxalite revolt in the early 1970s and late 1960s advocate the externally produced political violence in South Asian nations (Muni, 2003).

The terrorist outfits took benefit of marginalised ethnic communities and the groups suffered by displacement due to natural disaster or political turmoil along with victims of discrimination mostly approve their revolutionary ideologies. Moreover, Terrorist organisation provides logistic and ideological support to each other across the borders due to having common grounds between their theories. LTTE approach towards Indian and Nepalese Maoists is an example of these supportive linkages. The Maoist parties of India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka had founded an umbrella organisation in 2001, namely Coordination Committee of Maoist Parties and Organisations of South Asia to supercharge revolutionary struggles (Nayak, 2008). The linkage among Indian Islamic jihadist groups, Pak-Afghan Taliban and Al-Qaida are evident in this regard. If one looks at state specific insight of South Asia in a comparatively erudite manner then it seems that despite the major insurgencies due to radical Islam, the huge swathes of South Asian territory are under siege of non-Islamist terrorists. These terrorists include left wing extremist like Maoist and Naxalists that are prevailed in India, Nepal and to some extent in Bhutan (Lakshman, n.d.).

The terrorism and policies to counter its perils has adversely affected the political structure by encouraging militarism, aggressive patriotism, racism and right-wing extremism in South Asia (Muzafar, 2016). The case of Sri Lankan Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) gives corroborative evidence for this argument which provided the excuse to Sri Lankan government for sabotaging democracy. The devolution of LTTE into a radical outfit validates the use of brutal force and hawkish policies to wipe out the terrorism. However, these attempts were adjudged necessary but at the same time these led to monolithic upswell in Sinhala nationalism which is now major hinder in the path of diplomatic settlement between Tamil minority and Sinhala authorities. The increase in military build-up was also effectively seen in Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh deal with rising insurgent groups. Bhutan has

organised its defence power vis-à-vis Maoist insurgency from prevailing in its territory from neighbouring Nepal. Bangladesh also created Rapid Action Battalion to grapple with rising radicalism (Khon, 2011).

Hindrance in economic growth is another adverse effect of terrorism. It obtruded substantial economic costs on the nation of South Asia. The direct cost includes demolition of economic infrastructure and cessation of economic activities resulting from the terrorism events which wipe out the factories, estates and crops. It is the menaces of terrorism which dwindled down the significance of South Asian states for foreign investment thus causing economic distortion. South Asian nations especially Pakistan and Afghanistan are affected by this terrorism induced phenomenon. Afghanistan is facing scarcity of industrial development due to decade long embroilment in conflicts and terrorism. Even Pakistan has faced premature industrialization when its economic hub Karachi was burning with sectarian killing and terrorist attacks. The direct cost of terrorism in Pakistan was estimated Rs. 150 billion and the indirect cost Rs. 230 billion since 2002-03 to 2007-08 (Nabi, 2010).

The capital loss faced by South Asia due to terrorism is the spoilage of indispensable peace process dialogues especially between India and Pakistan. The success of peace dialogues lies in bilateral trust, but the terrorism is the major cause of mistrust among South Asian nations. Indo-Pak relations are swinging thenceforth they got independence in 1947. Both states are enthusiastic to maintain friendly bilateral relations, but such willingness are spoiled by terrorist activities. Terrorist activities have hindered any opportunity of successful peace dialogue that bring the amity between India and Pakistan and hence peace in all South Asian region. The bilateral relation of these two major South Asian states is entangled in game of allegation and counter allegation where the officials of both countries accuse each other's of being epicentre of deadliest terror activities. However, it is the reality that the terrorism has deeply ingrained in both India and Pakistan. According to Global Terrorism index 2014, terrorism in India has raised by 70% from 2012-2013 and the deaths increased from 238 to 404. However, the most terrorism incidents in India have low fatalities. Moreover, 70 percent of terrorist attacks were nonlethal in 2013 in India. Attacks in India are conducted by 43 different terrorist groups which were either communist separatist or retaliatory Islamicist of Kashmir origin (Chowdhury & Islam, 2017).

Similarly, terrorism in Pakistan is sturdily originated from its proximal Afghanistan and the mostly attacks are occurred at its western border in which notorious terrorist organisation TTP is involved. Terrorism in Pakistan increased by 37% in casualties and 28% injuries from 2012 to 2013. It is an interesting in context of terrorism in Pakistan that almost half of the total attacks in Pakistan were not claimed by any group. In 2013, the most fatal terrorist group in Pakistan was TTP which was responsible for almost one fourth of all deaths and 49% of all attacks whose responsibility were claimed by any group. However, terrorism incidents in Pakistan have declined for previous three consecutive years (Chowdhury & Islam, 2017). In 2017, there were 21% decline in terrorism activity as compared to 2016 in Pakistan (Sinai, 2018).

Terrorism is one of those factors which spoiled the peace process in South Asia. Peace in South Asia is dependent upon cordial relations between India and Pakistan, the two arch-rivals. In recent decades, the bilateral relations of India and Pakistan were rotten by worst incidents of terrorism such as Mumbai attacks and attacks at Indian military bases. India and Pakistan relations can only be strengthened by a composite dialogue process but the terrorism incidents in India derailed any fruitful progress. Terrorism has held the South Asia as hostage. It has erased any kind of development in bilateral relation and interconnection of South Asian people. People to People contact is also helpful in improving bilateral relations of South Asian nations but terrorism also seized this opportunity. Chowdhury & Islam (2017) appraised the peace process between India and Pakistan in historical perspective and they concluded that terrorism especially transborder terrorism was remained a barrier to peace process of India and Pakistan. Terrorism created mistrust among peace process parties and renewed the suppressed hostility. Terrorist often detonated at the time of peace talks. As for example, when the tragic incidence of Mumbai occurred in 2008, then Shah Mehmood Qureshi, the foreign minister of Pakistan, was visiting India to resolve the issues like Kashmir, Chenab river dispute, trade barriers. After the incidence, India repeated the rhetoric of state sponsored terrorism by Pakistan and blamed Pakistan for designing the attack. Another cardinal blunder which India made at that time was cancellation of peace talks (Javaid & Kamal, 2013).

So, it is right way to counter terrorism at regional level by multilateralism and identify the terrorists which are responsible for deteriorating the peace process. In this scenario, SAARC itself awfully failed in devising any efficient regional based approach to jointly deal with most lethal challenges to South Asian nations. If there is any

arrangement within SAARC to deal with menaces of terrorism, then some reluctant members put a hurdle to its implementation (Jabeen & Choudhry, 2013).

Terrorism: A Challenge to National Security of Pakistan

Pakistan is country which effected largely due to terrorism stigma. The modern wave of terrorism in Pakistan was started in the decade of 1980 and late 1970. The major events which affected badly Pakistan during this period were Soviet-Afghan war and Iranian revolution. These events along with opportunistic domestic politics had created a violent upheaval in political environment of Pakistan. In these decades, politics of Pakistan was also riddled with chaotic situation. The military coup of General Zia and hanging of an elected premier Bhutto had isolated the military institution. In return, Gen. Zia desperately followed a policy of Islamization to retain its power and prove the coup legitimate. This politically inspired religious move during Zia era motivated the militancy, extremism and sectarianism in Pakistan. Many researchers blame Zia for provoking extremism in Pakistan (Azam, 2014). Moreover, after the end of Soviet- Afghanistan war many trained militants (mujahideen) having combat experiences from all over the world entered Pakistan. State's failure to disarm them resulted in sectarianism violence and instability in Pakistan during and aftermath of 1990 (Musharraf, 2000).

In this way, many researchers claim that terrorism in Pakistan is by-product of Pakistani involvement in the US led wars against communism and terrorism in Afghanistan (Rabbi, 2012). However, there are other factors which are destabilizing Pakistan by provoking terrorism. There is lot of debate among scholars on the root cause of terrorism. Some Scholars consider that it is due to economic deprivation while other argues that terrorism is a matter of divide in society based on ethnicity, culture and religious (Haider et al., 2015). Economic deprivations include poverty and unemployment. Extensive literature reports four major factors which are the root cause of terrorism and these factors are widely present in Pakistan at extreme level. These factors include lack of law enforcement, poverty, unemployment and foreign involvement. The poor law enforcement has plagued Pakistan which is the first major cause of terrorism. According to Rule of Law Index 2014, Pakistan's administration has miserably failed in enforcing law and administration in Pakistan. Pakistan ranked 95th out of 99 countries for regulation and law enforcement while ranked last for security situation. The index also stated that judicial system of Pakistan is very slow and ineffective, and it is easy to violate law in Pakistani society (World Justice Project, 2014). This feature has proved a seedbed for militancy and terrorism in Pakistan. Poverty is the second major cause of violence and terrorism. Pakistan is also replete with poverty as 60% of Pakistan's population cannot afford even 2 dollars per day ("Over Half," 2014). Therefore, many parents cannot feed their children properly and cannot afford their education expenses. Mostly, children get admission in madrassa (religious schools) where they might learn sectarianism and intolerance. Pakistan's youth in this way can be easily detracted and they can join militant outfits. The estranged youth do so to improve their lifestyle and feed their poor families.

Historically speaking, Pakistan had patronized militants in Afghanistan and Pakistan to achieve strategic objectives in the region. But Pakistan has diverted from its pro-Taliban policy and participated in US led War on Terrorism which incited the militant to attack Pakistan (Azam & Javaid, 2017). Pakistan has witnessed an increased targeting of military and police personals, infrastructure and civilian population after joining the US led war on terrorism. The deadliest organization in which most anti-Pakistan elements have been organized is TTP (M. Khan & Wei, 2016). Foreign involvement also contributed to terrorism in any territory. In this way, India, America and Israel make most notable involvement in provoking terrorism. Pakistan shares a long border with India without any natural barrier while the border with Afghanistan is porous in nature. India and Afghanistan claimed that Pakistan has dual policy regarding Taliban and they have strong repercussion about this. They consider Pakistan as a mother of all evils and therefore try to destabilize Pakistan. Moreover, America also considers Pakistan as a major impediment in achieving its goals in Afghanistan. It is commonly perceived among Pakistan's academia and media that foreign intelligence agencies are supporting, training and financing terrorism and separatism in Pakistan. (Siddiq, 2011). Unemployment is also a source of militancy and terrorism. Unemployment generates grievances among educated youth and their joining of terrorist outfits has very devastating consequences. Educated but unemployed youth provide technological and ideological assistance to banned organisations (Haider et al., 2015).

War on Terror and its Impacts on Pakistan

The devastating incident of 9/11 which resulted in 2752 fatalities had jolted the entire world. After that, a resolution was passed in the UN Security Council which obliged all the member states to jointly work at urgent basis to inflict severe punishment on the culprits and sponsors of the world trade centre attack. The UN general assembly also called for similar kind of global cooperation against terrorism. In this way, the US led War on Terrorism was endorsed by the global community to some extent. At that juncture, the UN and global community enforced Musharraf to join a war whose time-period, dimension and consequences on the region was unpredictable. It was a very difficult time for Pakistan to wage a war against her own nationals whom she had been supporting and financing for 22 years (Pattanaik, 2008).

The incident of 9/11 had led to significant shift in international laws which previously didn't justify the military intervention of a heavy state against another autonomous state even though the targeted state is not directly involved in terrorist activities. The US put certain demands to Pakistan whose nature and intensity demands that impartiality would not be tolerable. These demands were totally against the interests of Pakistan and have the potential to adversely impact on Pakistan security. Musharraf succumbed instantly to all those demands without prior consultation with Pakistan's democratic officials. This hasty and one-man decision has severely affected Pakistan in terms of socio-political, socioeconomic as well as security. Moreover, the US extended the war on Pakistan territory in the form of drone strikes which brought forth more militancy, terrorism and suicidal attacks tendencies in Pakistan (Yamin, 2015). One of the worst commotions of whole drone crusade was a 2006 strike at religious school in Chenagai located in tribal Bajaur Agency which killed 80 civilians out of which 69 were children. These kinds of strikes had jolted the security environment of Pakistan and enraged the sentimental Pashtun society to wage a war against their own state (M. I. Ahmad, 2015). Pakistan has confronted series of mega terrorist attacks in 2009 and then onward. Major terrorist attacks include the General Headquarters of Pakistan Army attack, Sri Lankan cricket team attack, Manawa Police Training Centre attack, APS attack and recently attack on a rally in Mustang. These kinds of attacks coupled with American warmongering attitude have waned the joint efforts of Pakistan's stakeholders to reconcile the provocative elements of Pakistan. Moreover, this attitude also remained a big hurdle in devising a durable solution to Afghan conflict.

Pakistan is already suffering from illiteracy especially at its western border and the US war on terror has increased the illiteracy rate in Pashtun areas. Militants have attacked several schools in FATA and KPK to infuse militancy in youth. Destruction of schools and targeting of teachers and students has terrified the parents and they refused to educate their children in schools. These attacks were often directed towards female educational institutions. There is no specific data collected by Pakistan's officials on number of attacks at educational institutes and the resulted deaths and injuries. However, according to Global Terrorism Database, there were total 867 attacks from 2007 to 2015 on educational institutions which resulted in 392 deaths and 724 injuries (Human Rights Watch, 2017).

As Pakistan shares a most porous and longer border with Afghanistan, Afghan refugee influx has immensely impacted the Pakistan especially KPK, Balochistan and quasi-autonomous tribal areas adjacent to Afghan border. Massive influx of Afghan refugee came to Pakistan after 1979. After the end of Soviet-Afghan war, internal strife hindered the Afghan refugees to get back to Afghanistan. However, after the collapse of Taliban regime and American invasion, Pakistan tried to repatriate the refugees but cannot accomplish full repatriation. According to reports, 3.8 million refugees have returned Afghanistan since 2002, but still there are more than 3 million registered Afghan refugees. While there are also lot of unregistered Afghan refugees and enumeration is yet to be calculated (A. Khan, 2017). As a result, Pakistan has become the most vulnerable and exposed country to illegal transborder movements which include drugs, arms and human smuggling.

Agriculture contributes to 44.7% of Pakistan labour and is a source of 21.8% of GDP. Agriculture has remained a main source of earning for terrorism affected areas such as Federally Administered Areas and KPK. Swat district has 98,100 hectares of arable land and 80% of its population solely depends upon agriculture. Evidence showed that, Swat valley was suffered from loss of 35 billion. During 2007-2009 and its 55 to 77 percent of the total fruit was wasted due to insurgencies and military operations. This was due to artillery shelling, devastating the irrigation system of the area by blasts and imposition of several curfews by the Pakistan army to maintain state's writ in the region. The agriculture growth in Pakistan has sharply decreased to 1.2% in 2010-2011 which was

previously recorded as 6.5% in 2004-2005. However, terrorism is not sole responsible for the sharp decline in the agricultural growth in Pakistan, but it is the major factor in agriculture devastation of Swat and FATA (T. Khan, 2013).

Tourism is the major source of any country economic growth. Pakistan is blessed with natural beauties and important points for the tourist attraction. Terrorism has a negative impact on tourism industry. According to a study, a single terrorism attack in Spain has decreased the number of tourists by 140,000. Tourism is believed to a profitable industry and many nations lost billions of revenues collected by tourism due to terrorism. Unfortunately, Pakistan also lost an opportunity to attract foreign tourists and the most notable tourist places are in northern parts of Pakistan. Hotel occupancy rate in Pakistan decreased after the bombing of a hotel namely Marriot in Islamabad. Swat valley witnessed a loss of 60 billion PKR from 2007-2009 (T. Khan, 2013).

Conclusion

Insurgency always destabilizes nation states of South Asia as it manifests itself as homeland of multi-ethnic societies. Every nation State has different ethnic groups. These ethnic groups often become fault lines for that State. The regional hegemon, India converted these fault- lines into battle lines through overt and covert support to different insurgent groups, operating in South Asia. Interstate conflicts over boundary demarcation, internecine ethnic conflicts, transboundary illegal trafficking and terrorist activities are some dangerous backdrops of security in the region which provide a chance to a state for accomplishing their desiring goal in rival state landscape via this new tactic of war so called terrorism. Other threats to security include immediate spill over effect of militancy and instability in Afghanistan to SAARC members, aggressive patriotism coupled with separatism. These parameters have transformed the security environment of South Asia and shifted the foreign policy towards their neighbours. In contemporary environment, terrorism is complex threat which exceeds the borders. Terrorists are more coordinated and there is sleight and sophistication in their plans and the execution of their acts is more lethal and precise. South Asia is plagued by the terrorism and the regional countries have not developed any effective joint strategy to counter terrorism. South Asian nations especially India and Pakistan cannot tackle terrorism unilaterally. Another dilemma of terrorism in South Asia is that the terrorist of one nation is declared as freedom fighter by another nation. There is a dire need to solve Kashmir dispute and then identify the terrorists which are derailing the peace of South Asia. The porous nature of the boarders of some States of South Asia like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh etc are providing easy access to terrorist groups to destabilize security situation of the region. These non-states actors including various terrorist organizations like Daish, Al Qaida are operating in South Asia and its surrounding regions. These non-state actors have spillover effects. Not only they take the lives of peoples, but also discouraged foreign investment. In this bleak scenario, Pakistan faces more challenges other than any state of South Asia due to its long and insecure shares of boarder with Afghanistan. After 9/11, Pakistan became the front-line state in the war on terror therefor bore the major impacts of its fallout. The Global war on terrorism claimed the 70 thousand precious lives of soldiers, civilians and irretrievable material loss. Terrorism is asymmetric warfare.

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