



Terrorism and Insurgency in the Tribal Areas: Investigating the Historical Roots and Dynamics of Terrorism and Insurgency in Pakistan's Tribal Regions

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Abstract: *This research delves deeply into the origins and evolving dynamics of various regions in Pakistan, presenting a nuanced and intricate image shaped by diverse elements and social intricacies. The interplay between global developments and inherent complexities has given rise to a milieu fraught with persistent challenges. These regions, steeped in historical tribal traditions, have experienced pronounced instability, exacerbated by pivotal events such as the Soviet-Afghan War. The study systematically investigates the transformative journey of terrorism and insurgency, scrutinizing the contributing variables. The primary objective of this paper is to furnish readers with a comprehensive understanding of the factors underpinning terrorism and insurgency in Pakistan's tribal areas. It accomplishes this by delving into historical events, cultural components, and geopolitical influences that have intricately woven the tumultuous past of the region.*

Introduction

Terrorists influence fear through the use of violence to achieve their objectives. A consideration of what motivates terrorists to employ mindless violence against civilian or non-combatant targets is essential for assessing the phenomenon. The current debate of 'root causes' often focuses on finding the causes of antagonism toward civilization in the mind of a fanatic terrorist at the individual level. The debate about what motivates a terrorist, however, overlooks the factors that enable a terrorist to conduct terrorist activities. As argued by Walter Laqueur, even if better control can be achieved over the extremist motivation for terrorism, there will still be a few isolated individuals for whom the temptation to employ terrorism—if the opportunity remains—will be hard to resist.

In comparative terms, according to data from the Global Terrorism Index, terrorism attacks have declined since 2018 in Pakistan, as the total

number of terrorist incidents dropped from 369 (causing 543 deaths) in 2018 to 279 (causing 300 deaths) in 2019, bringing the number of deaths from terrorism in Pakistan to its lowest annual number since 2006. The Global Terrorism Index has not yet made data available for Pakistan in 2020. According to the South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), there were 319 terrorism-related incidents in Pakistan in 2020. According to Pakistan's National Counterterrorism Authority (NACTA), terrorist attacks caused 357 deaths in Pakistan in 2020 (through December 21), a clear increase in the number of victims of terrorism from the previous year.

Due to its detrimental effects on South Asian nations' social, economic, political, and physical infrastructure, terrorism has placed a heavy weight on them. According to Daraz et al. (2012), Pakistan has been disproportionately affected by the social, economic, and human costs associated

with terrorism. Remarkably, Pakistan is falsely accused of being a supporter of international terrorism while simultaneously being presented as a leader in the global fight against terrorism. In Pakistan, terrorism is a complex problem with a number of contributing aspects, one of which is psychological. This essay makes an effort to discuss important psychological factors that, in our opinion, contribute to terrorism in Pakistan.

Literature Review

The historical fundamentals of insurgency and terrorist activity have a close connection with the social makeup of Pakistan's tribal regions. Zeman (2009) highlights the strain between the national government's attempts to impose control against the tribes' needs for sovereignty through an analysis of tribal customs. In the past, this battle has produced an environment that is favorable to insecurity declarations (Zeman, 2009).

Since an increased campaign of Predator attacks began two years ago, foreign jihadist organizations like al-Qa'ida, the Islamic Jihad Union, and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) have become considerably less noticeable in the FATA. According to one count, there were over thirty strikes in the FATA in 2008 alone. Locals also allege that foreign militants are depending more and more on their local comrades for daily tasks like shopping.³²⁹ Several sources contacted for this paper stated that although Uzbek and other foreign militants are still thought to number in the thousands, they are increasingly crossing the border to join Afghan Taliban fighting units as snipers, trainers, and skilled bomb-makers.³³⁰ While there isn't much evidence that directly connects al-Qa'ida members to criminal activity in the FATA, there are many signs that the group is becoming more powerful over local militant groups like the TTP, which are also becoming more violent, radical, and involved in criminal activity. Similar to their actions in Afghanistan, al-Qa'ida agents in Pakistan seem to assume an advisory role, offering guidance to local militants who could have greater freedom of movement. Most importantly, it appears that al-Qa'ida has

used its media power and ideological clout to undermine the legitimacy of the Pakistani government and encourage collaboration among a diverse range of Pakistani militants in order to subvert the government's authority and erode its support for American efforts in Afghanistan.

By analyzing the mechanisms of terrorist activity, Rahman (2019) offers insights into the motivations underlying terrorist actions. Beliefs that rationalize violence sometimes stem from intricate interplays between economic, religious, and political influences. Similar sentiments are expressed by Azar (1988), who emphasizes the need for enhanced understanding for tackling the complex web of variables that encourage terrorism among persons of tribal cultural heritage.

Rashid (2014) has noted the many factions involved in the insurgency as well as its dynamics. The major causes of insurgency, according to the studies, are complaints over the distribution of resources, oversight, and unresolved matters. Basit (2021) offers more evidence in favor of such a claim, arguing that the insurgency in the tribal areas is a mirror of greater geopolitical conflicts in which the powerful use the disgruntled local population for their strategic gain.

One of the most direct consequences of war and violence in Afghanistan has been the flow of refugees into Pakistan that began with the Soviet-Afghan war in 1979 and continues in the post-9/11 landscape.¹² Pakistan has been home to the largest refugee community in the world for over three decades. At peak levels, approximately 5 million Afghan refugees lived in Pakistan.¹³ Although it is claimed that 3.5 million Afghan refugees have been repatriated to their home country with the assistance of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) since March 2002, about 2.2 million Afghan refugees remain in Pakistan.¹⁴ Afghan refugees who are often unable to find means of employment remain vulnerable to crime as well as recruitment by militant groups.

Khan's (2022) analysis of tribal dynamics demonstrates the resilience of traditional systems, which frequently coexist with or resist formal state institutions. The intricate social structure of the tribes has stood firm against being included in the overall Pakistani state throughout history to preserve its own political and cultural practices.

The Pakistani government made formal efforts to integrate the tribal areas all through the post-colonial era. However, resistance to these efforts led to a tangled relationship between the state and the native regions. Localized power structures persisted and served as the basis for resistance to centralized authority since they were deeply embedded in the customs of tribes (Qureshi, 2018).

The Soviet-Afghan War and other outside factors gave the historical narrative a new angle. Barakzai (2015) delivers an estimate of this period that reveals the impact of foreign conflicts on the tribal areas. The arrival of Afghan migrants, the backing of local guerrillas, and the ideological consequence of the Afghan conflict radically changed the dynamics of the tribal regions, making future variabilities anticipated.

In consequence, there is an obvious relation between the historical roots of terrorism and insurgency and the traditional socio-cultural dynamics of Pakistan's tribal areas. The endless problems that the tribal territories experience are related to the tension that exists between the central authority and tribal autonomy. This conflict is worsened by external forces.

The Upsurge of Violence and Insurgency

Particularly in the instance of Pakistan's tribal regions, the Soviet-Afghan War directly proportion to the growth of terrorism and insurgency. Barakzai (2015) provides valuable insights into the pouring effects that profoundly affected the tribal regions during this critical stage. The entry of Afghan migrants, the ideological fallout from the Afghan conflict, and the emergence of local militias significantly

impacted the political and social climate in the areas.

The Afghan war created a climate that led to the radicalization of specific local communities in addition to creating a compound network of relationships and disputes among various mujahideen organizations. According to Rana (2011), Foreign elements provided both material backing and ideological influence to militant groups forming in the tribal areas throughout the Afghan War, acting as a catalyst for their agenda to survive.

Such groups, which had originally been anti-Soviet, changed into participants with more expansive regional and global goals in the post-Afghan War era. Rahman (2019) scrutinizes the causes of terrorism in the region, focusing on the means that initial grievances from the Afghan conflict have evolved into complex, long-lasting ideologies that include socioeconomic, political, and religious elements.

Malik, in his study (2019), emphasizes the need for a thorough understanding of the many elements that lead to terrorism. Following the Afghan War, the study reveals that local and global dynamics remained intertwined as militant groups exploited the locals, spread fear, and aligned themselves with transnational extremist dogma.

In sum of the assumption, there is a possibility that the emergence of terrorism and insurgency in Pakistan's tribal areas is related to the Soviet-Afghan War. A mixture of external influences and shifting local dynamics led to the complex issues that tribal regions faced in the next decades.

Dynamics of Terrorism

The flow of arms from Afghanistan to FATA is an important factor enabling militancy and terrorism in the region in recent years. It can be traced to the Soviet-Afghan war (1979–88) when the region became a convenient training ground, operational base, and safe haven for the mujahideen (religious warriors). The mujahideen

included Afghans waging jihad (religious struggle) and thousands of volunteers who had poured in from around the world to fight against the Red Army. Over the years, many foreign fighters, particularly of Arab and Central Asian origin, were able to integrate into FATA by marrying local women and bringing gifts in the form of money for the local tribes.³² They remained in the region after the retreat of the Soviet forces. During the Soviet-Afghan war, FATA was also used as the primary supply conduit for arms and aid from the CIA, Saudi Arabia, and the ISI to support the Afghan jihad.

The scars of the Soviet-Afghan War etched deep into the fabric of Pakistan's tribal communities, becoming fertile ground for the cultivation of extremism, as Rana (2011) argues in his exploration of the theoretical underpinnings of terrorism in these regions. This conflict, along with the subsequent influx of foreign ideologies, spurred the formation of diverse groups, their banners ranging from nationalist fervor to transnational jihadist aspirations.

Malik (2019) presents a nuanced portrait of terrorism, contending that it is a complicated network in which regional grievances converge with global factors rather than just being a local occurrence. Radical ideologies may thrive on poor leadership and disenfranchised populations within tribal societies, which is made possible by this complex dance. Malik argues that this junction necessitates nontraditional counterterrorism strategies that go beyond easy fixes.

Hussain explores the development of terrorist organizations in tribal regions in his 2017 research, demonstrating their capacity to adapt to changing geopolitical environments and make use of local conditions like a chameleon. They are a cunning and powerful opponent because of their perpetual change and capacity for reinvention. Hussain emphasizes the additional challenge this presents for counterterrorism operations since eliminating one version frequently makes room for another to emerge from the ashes.

The threat of terrorism in Pakistan's tribal regions has existed for many generations, with the Taliban's ascent and the wounds from earlier wars, such as the Soviet-Afghan War, influencing its ideology. Finding long-term solutions requires unraveling these historical strands as well as comprehending how marginalization and poverty interact.

Dynamics of Insurgencies

Insurgencies in Pakistan's tribal areas are primarily driven by local conflicts over governance, resources, and historical injustices; they are also fueled by regional wars and global ideologies. According to Rashid (2014), these intricate disputes cause great hardship for people in the region by uprooting communities, committing violent crimes, and violating human rights. They also destabilize the area.

Hussain's (2017) analysis, which highlights that the insurgency is caused by the existence of several organizations with distinct goals rather than a single, monolithic organization, lends credence to this point of view. Because local dynamics are so diverse, some parties aim for radical objectives, while others want more autonomy within the boundaries of the current state.

The relationship between the functioning of insurgencies and, more importantly, geopolitical issues is brought to light by Rashid's (2014) research. The report's assertion that foreign actors frequently use local crises for their strategic gain further muddies the picture. Consequently, when rebelling organizations get involved in local power struggles and efforts to address the core reasons for the insurgency, it becomes more difficult.

Understanding the historical background is essential to understanding the dynamics of an insurgency. Tribal groups are still affected by the legacy of the Soviet-Afghan War, claims Barakzai (2015). Post-war insurgencies were spawned and became stronger as a result of the advancement of weaponry. It made the easy path to the

dissemination of radical ideologies and the dissolution of previous power structures.

The Pakistani government has employed a range of strategies to contain the spread of terrorism and insurgency in the tribal areas. These actions, which range from military operations aimed at eliminating terrorist strongholds to development initiatives designed to enhance educational and economic opportunities, acknowledge the intricate web of challenges at play. But it's imperative to recognize the deeper scars brought forth by historical injustices, interethnic strife, and subpar governance practices. Only by creating all-encompassing solutions that concurrently address current security threats and long-standing socioeconomic grievances can a lasting peace be reached. Creating these remedies might include fortifying regional governance structures, tackling resource disparity via transparent and equitable allocation protocols, and merging safety protocols with proactive community engagement endeavors.

Local Dynamics and Tribal Structures

Due to their special status under the constitution, tribal lands are within the federation's executive branch. The NWFP province's governor represents it and serves as the tribal region's chief executive. Despite having the ability to enact laws for the entire nation, the twelve members of the National Assembly from tribal regions are paradoxically restricted in their ability to legislate locally. This is because they are elected by an adult franchise. Eight senators from FATA are members of the Pakistani Senate. The FATA Secretariat functions as a specialized administrative entity, with four additional secretaries supervising different departments, a chief secretary, and an additional secretary filling important positions.

The complex tribal regions of Pakistan make it hard to draw precise borders on a map. It is a complicated tapestry full of opportunity and danger, and decision-makers must be adept cultural cartographers, seeing the unseen spaces where laws sift through customs. Finding a

balance between fearless leadership and unwavering respect for tradition is a crucial first step. The only way to advance without inciting bloodshed is to comprehend this intricate cultural code, which manifests itself in everything from whispered jirga pronouncements to shifting tribal allegiance. This requires an understanding of the resentment of past wrongdoings, the enduring consequences of past rivalries, and the complex web of allegiances that binds communities together. If this isn't done, there's a possibility that development initiatives will fail and resentment will increase, turning progress into an elusive dream. Instead, it is necessary to build a road where new advancements gently tread on old wisdom, nourish tribes rather than uproot them, and allow the past and present to coexist vibrantly and peacefully. Legislators must perform a delicate balancing act by adopting the persona of *bukanwalas* and weaving development, comprehension, and trust into the very fabric of these resilient communities.

The Causes of Terrorism

Terrorism festers in Pakistan's unstable tribal areas like a weed suffocated by a maze of interrelated problems. Political marginalization, a bitter fruit of past injustices such as neglect and displacement, festers into anger, making people, especially young people who are most vulnerable, prone to the attraction of violent extremism. This toxic vine is entwined with simmering religious strife, wherein external players manipulate pre-existing splits like the Deobandi-Barelvi divide, and regional crises like the Afghan war feed sectarian fires. Communities that are choking on poverty and opportunity due to economic hardship, another toxic vine, become a breeding ground for extremists promising fast fixes and a perverted feeling of belonging. This dangerous combination keeps the area stuck in a never-ending cycle of terror attacks, instability, and stunted economic growth. Escalating resentment and hopelessness. Bold action is required to break free: resolving past injustices via inclusive government, encouraging interfaith dialogue to

mend religious scars, and utilizing sustainable development measures to address economic imbalances. A better future can only bloom in these troubled places by pulling out these intertwined weeds and planting the seeds of hope.

Understanding the twisted reasoning behind Pakistani tribal militancy is crucial for crafting effective policies. Going beyond just imprisonment, comprehensive solutions must tackle the deeper factors fueling extremism, like poverty, lack of opportunity, and political grievances. Community-driven programs, education initiatives, and countering online radicalization are vital to break the cycle of violence and pave the way for lasting peace.

Psychological Factors

Terrorist acts result from a long process of cognitive tolerance and integration across a series of phases rather than from a sudden flash of inspiration. To call the terrorists insane or psychopathic is a mistaken reductionist approach (Atran, 2003; Horgan, 2008). A profound, underlying search for significance and personal meaning may be the driving force behind terrorist acts. A number of these motivations have been analyzed in recent years. The kinds and ranges of motivating elements that are essential to terrorism are different in various assessments. Some authors cited a "cocktail" of reasons, while others emphasized the importance of a single motivation (Sageman, 2004; Bloom, 2005).

The quest for significance and validation is a crucial psychological aspect. Individuals facing oppression and persecution may seek an illusion of purpose and empowerment through terrorism. Personal grievances can originate from broader sociopolitical concerns, fueling a desire for revenge and retribution alongside the emotional impact of upset or loss.

In areas where violence is unrelenting, people's mental health deteriorates significantly. It's true that witnessing or experiencing violence increases one's propensity to use violence oneself. We refer to a person's decision to adopt extremist

ideologies and the belief that violence is acceptable as "radicalization." Peer pressure and friends play a big role in influencing people to take this turn.

Government Responses

For many years, the unstable tribal regions of Pakistan have served as a combat zone for insurgency and terrorism. The government's response has been a multifaceted, intricate tapestry.

Military Action is the first thread. Operations like Radd-ul-Fasaad and Zarb-e-Azb were designed to break up terrorist organizations by destroying their networks and hiding places. Gul (2020) emphasizes the significance of these kinds of programs in dealing with pressing security issues. But Malik (2019) cautions that concentrating just on the military might run the danger of ignoring the more fundamental causes of conflict.

The socioeconomic development thread is the second. Acknowledging this, the government also used socioeconomic factors in an effort to heal societal rifts. Initiatives with the goals of reducing inequality, enhancing governance, and building community resilience. However, even Qureshi (2018) recognizes the complex dance between the state and communities, where historical conflicts can make integration efforts difficult to implement.

International cooperation is the third thread. Pakistan has not fought this war by itself. The world community has thrown its weight behind them, tying in foreign aid, military backing, and diplomatic involvement. However, as Qureshi (2018) warns, smooth coordination and averting unexpected outcomes are necessary to make sure that this help doesn't undermine Pakistan's own objectives.

The intricate tapestry is still unfinished. Even if progress has been achieved, long-term success will require a more sophisticated strategy, a masterwork that explores the broader instability rather than only addressing short-term security

issues. To genuinely rehabilitate these areas, socioeconomic growth, sound administration, and sincere community engagement must emerge as the distinguishing features. The battle against terrorism can only be integrated into a long-lasting peace at that point.

International Impact

Tremors of insurgency and terrorism in Pakistan's unstable tribal areas resonate well beyond national borders, posing a threat to international peace. Superpowers and even their closest neighbors are among the nations involved in this struggle, with their actions and inactions influencing the direction of this volatile area.

Qureshi (2018) provides a clear picture of this complex environment, where handling the complex interactions between states and indigenous populations depends heavily on foreign engagement. A collaborative strategy is necessary due to the constantly shifting terrain of terrorism, especially along the porous border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Due to the border's sieve-like permeability, which has served as a highway for players seeking to destabilize the situation, international collaboration is a vital tool in this joint struggle.

Barakzai (2015) reminds us succinctly that the effects of this conflict are global in scope and have an influence well beyond national borders. A complex web of international strands is woven by the legacy of the Soviet-Afghan War, which is marked by the shadow of radical ideologies, the entrance of foreign players, and chronic tribal instability. A concerted global reaction is not an option but an absolute imperative to untangle this interwoven tapestry.

Pakistan may have supporters in the struggle from abroad in the form of development programs, military assistance, and diplomatic outreach. Qureshi, meanwhile, cautions against going down this dangerous route since poorly thought-out acts can backfire catastrophically, and misplaced involvement might boost the wrong actors. Unhelpful local structures can be

strengthened by development, and animosity can be fanned by poorly thought-out military actions. Careful coordination is essential to guarantee that foreign initiatives support Pakistan's objectives and provide it more leverage in stabilizing these unstable areas.

This warning is reiterated by Malik (2019), who reminds us that every decision has an impact on the world at large and that it is important to carefully analyze these effects. Once a hotbed of regional unrest, Pakistan's tribal areas are now a global hotspot, with its earthquakes creating a network of interrelated hazards that jeopardize not just the country but also the delicate balance of world security.

Conclusion

History smolders in Pakistan's rough tribal areas like dormant embers, ready to burst at the least wind. Tradition has become a battleground in this place, where it was previously a shield. The present study explores this shift by examining how the innate advantages and weaknesses of tribal government arrangements facilitated the emergence of violent extremism. Through a historical journey, the strands of violence, foreign interference, and political marginalization are untangled from a tapestry of antiquated customs and jirga-led self-governance.

These tribes' colorful tapestry, which included unique rites and customs, flourished in a realm apart from the country as a whole. Belonging to a tribe was a stronghold, and jirgas, crafted over many decades of custom, acted as its tribunals, preventing outsiders from entering. However, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s tore through this fabric, bringing in outside actors and igniting a complex crucible of struggle, much like a desert wind uncovering old remains. In this boiling pot, militant factions arose, using weapons at first to fend off invaders but eventually creating the complex web of bloodshed that still ensnares the area to this day.

The goal of this study is to unravel these tangled strands by charting the evolution of

custom from shield to battlefield. It aims to shed light on the complex dance of variables that gave rise to and continue to maintain violent extremism in the heart of these ancient territories by analyzing the interaction of historical events, internal complexity, and foreign influences. It's an exploration not just of the problems but also of possible answers, providing a window into how tradition, which was once a weapon, might be reshaped into a link to a future with more peace.

Extremist stories are purposefully used to draw people in and give them a sense of accountability for eventually joining violent groups. Socioeconomic factors have a major role in the appeal of militancy; for instance, poverty, unemployment, and economic inequality create an environment that is conducive to recruiting. When political and ideological impulses are blended with economic frustrations to form a potent mixture, extremist ideologies are maintained.

The embers of global jihadist ideology smolder in Pakistan's tribal areas, their flames licking at the tinderbox of regional grievances. For militant organizations, transnational currents of flaming extremism and complex networks of weaponry trafficking constructed by organizations such as Al-Qaeda provide a poisonous elixir that enables them to spread their tentacles far beyond national boundaries. The existing unstable geopolitical environment in the Middle East is further exacerbated by this worldwide cocktail of instability, which feeds regional conflicts, undermines weak regimes, and creates new security nightmares.

In response, the Pakistani government has attempted to douse these flames using a two-pronged strategy: the charitable initiatives, which aim to alleviate economic hardship and promote societal progress, and the military campaigns, such as Zarb-e-Azb and Radd-ul-Fasaad, which aim to destroy militant strongholds and cut off insurgency networks. Although these tactics have resulted in tactical successes, a strictly military strategy has limits as pronounced as the desolate hillsides.

The fight over Pakistan's tribal territories is not only a domestic dispute; rather, it is a miniature version of the worldwide campaign against violent extremism. Pakistan has the potential to change the perception of these war-torn regions, turning them from hostile environments to peaceful havens that benefit not just itself but the whole globe. This may be achieved by emphasizing sustainable solutions, empowering local populations, and promoting regional collaboration.

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