

*Moonis Ahmar*

## **THE CHALLENGES OF COUNTER-TERRORISM IN PAKISTAN**

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### **Abstract**

Counter terrorism is not only a forceful response to the acts of terror, but also means a comprehensive combination of hard and soft power. The use of military or semi-military means to counter terrorism is one way to prevent the further loss of innocent lives but in order to effectively deal with the threat of terror, the application of social, psychological, economic and political means are also essential. This paper will take into account six important factors which cause the outbreak of violence and terrorism in Pakistan and the question of successes and failures of counter terrorism strategy. First, inter and intra-sectarian conflict; second, growing militancy in younger generation; third, the role of autonomous and secessionist groups particularly in Balochistan; fourth, army's bewildered approach on dealing with the threat of terror; fifth, media's role in curbing the incidents of terrorism and finally, the level of awareness or the lack of awareness which exists in Pakistan on the growing power of non-state actors who are in present circumstances responsible for the bulk of violent and terrorist acts in the country.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The threat of terrorism is now a global phenomenon. What is more significant while dealing with the threat of terrorism is the methodology to counter the menace which is a cause of unprecedented insecurity and physical damage to the mankind. Pakistan, in the last forty years has experienced unabated incidents of terror claiming thousands of innocent lives. Yet, despite the deepening of terrorism in different parts of Pakistan, there is no clear and coherent policy to counter terrorism. As a result, one can observe the permeation of violence and acts of terror in different segments of Pakistani society.

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Counter terrorism is not only a forceful response to the acts of terror, but it means a comprehensive combination of hard and soft power. The use of military or semi-military means to counter terrorism is one way to prevent the further loss of innocent lives but in order to effectively deal with the threat of terror, the application of social, psychological, economic and political means are also essential.

With a population of 180 million people and vulnerable to external and internal factors which augment violence and terrorism, Pakistan's predicament as a nation state is twofold: first, the insurgency in Afghanistan having dangerous security implications on Pakistan and second, the fragile nature of state and society which tends to promote non-state actors attempting to establish their own order and way of life by force. Furthermore, with the augmentation of extremism, intolerance, radicalization, militancy and terrorism in different parts of Pakistan, one can expect the further marginalization of moderation and sanity at the societal level.

While undertaking an analytical research on the issue of counter terrorism in Pakistan, one can raise the following questions:

1. What is the nature of terrorist *threat* in Pakistan?
2. Can Pakistan *cope* with the threats and implications of terrorism by formulating a clear and coherent counter terrorism policy?
3. How Pakistan can deal with the *fault lines* in the state and societal structures which are largely responsible for augmenting the level of violence and insecurity?
4. How Pakistan can counter the threat of terrorism by dealing with those external issues which are a source of *intensifying* the acts of terror?

This paper aims at examining the challenges of counter terrorism in Pakistan by covering the following themes:-

1. *Conceptual framework;*
2. *The deepening and transformation of terrorist threat;*
3. *The role of state actors in formulating a counter terrorism policy;*
4. *Gaps in counter-terrorism policy;*
5. *External factors in mapping counter-terrorism policy; and*
6. *Successes and failures of counter-terrorism policy.*

Furthermore, this paper will also take into account six important factors which cause the outbreak of violence and terrorism in Pakistan and the question of the successes and failures of counter terrorism strategy. First, inter and intra-sectarian conflict; second, growing militancy in younger generation; third, the role of autonomous and secessionist groups particularly in Balochistan; fourth, army's bewildered approach on dealing with the threat of terror; fifth, media's

role in curbing the incidents of terrorism and finally, the level of awareness or the lack of awareness which exists in Pakistan on the growing power of non-state actors who are in present circumstances responsible for the bulk of violent and terrorist acts in the country.

## 2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Counter terrorism as an approach to effectively deal with the threat of terror varies from case to case. Depending on the nature of threat, individuals or groups involved in that threat and the damage caused as a result of the act of terror, strategies to counter terrorism are formulated. Therefore, while defining the strategy of counter terrorism it can be stated that, “when referring to counter terrorism measures we mean both defensive measures, to reduce vulnerability to terrorist acts, and offensive measures, to prevent, deter and respond to terrorism, doing with any contingency measures preparing for or having the ability to respond to a terrorist attack/incident.”<sup>1</sup>

Counter terrorism measures cannot be taken in isolation or without considering domestic realities into account. If the society is vulnerable to forces that have a free hand in carrying out violent and terrorist acts, counter terrorism measures must be formulated while considering the level of indigenous support. While discussing “counter terrorism, one must first understand what motivates those whom the counter terrorist is trying to defeat.”<sup>2</sup> As without motivation, no violent or terrorist individual or group can sustain its existence. Counter terrorism measures got a new shape in the post-9/11 scenario because of two reasons. First, the level of threat which was encountered by the United States after September 11 was unprecedented and required a holistic approach which can seek the support from other countries. Second, a better understanding of the mode of operation, support base, funding, training and activities of terrorist groups in order to launch effective counter terrorism measures was also required. Some of the counter terrorism measures which may have positive impacts on neutralizing the activities of terrorist groups and organizations are as follows:

1. Political measures;
2. Social measures;
3. Educational measures;
4. Economic measures;
5. Military measures;
6. Intelligence measures;
7. Judicial measures; and
8. Media measures.

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<sup>1</sup> For further information, see, S C Graeme, C. S. Steven and Rohan Gunaratna, *Counter Terrorism*, Santa Barbara: ABC – CLIO, Inc. 2004, p. 102.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

With a combination of hard and soft power, one can seek better results from counter terrorist measures. Political measures include political reconciliation, accommodation, empowerment, tolerance and coexistence. When some of the groups are marginalized and politically not on board, hard line and extremist elements take advantage of the situation and become a source of violence and terrorism. In case of social measures, one way to deal with extremism and radicalization in society is to promote social harmony, mobility and interaction between and among different social groups so that a better sense of understanding can be created. By promoting literacy and better education, one can defeat those elements who take advantage of ignorance and illiteracy for inducting extremism and militancy.

Economic measures are a key to counter terrorism because violence and acts of terror can get adequate space when there is poverty, unemployment, underdevelopment and backwardness. By providing equal employment opportunities, introducing various developments and training programs and bettering the country's economic profile, there may be a possibility of neutralizing those elements who take advantage of economic predicament of people.

Military measures include targeting militant and terrorist hideouts and sanctuaries and cutting off their command and control set-up including supplies. But, the problem with military counter terrorism measures is the possibility of the loss of human lives or collateral damage. When the Pakistan military launched anti-terrorist operation in tribal areas in 2004 and in Swat in 2009, it was alleged that civilian casualties had taken place and millions of people were rendered homeless. The drone attacks launched by the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) on the tribal areas of Pakistan resulted into collateral damage. Intelligence measures can help counter the planning and operations of terrorist groups. These can also help contain their funding and supplies and isolate their rank and file.

Judicial measures can ensure prompt hearing and award of punishment to those found guilty of acts of terror. If the judicial system is less efficient and more corrupt, terrorist groups may get space to sustain and broaden their activities. Finally, media measures include providing awareness to people about the threats of terrorism and militancy. If people are better informed about the negative features of militancy and terrorism, it will be easier to neutralize the activities of terrorist groups.

In a nutshell, counter terrorism measures, if taken properly and with adequate planning can go a long way in effectively dealing with a threat which has taken millions of people as a hostage.

In counter terrorism strategy, the role of the United States is critical because in the last ten years or so, Washington is heavily involved in dealing with the threat of terrorism at different levels. The question which arises while examining the U.S. counter terrorist strategy is: to what extent there is a difference between

the Bush and Obama administrations in dealing with terrorism? Audrey Kurth Cronin gives the following account of the difference in counter terrorism strategy of the two administrations:

There were two key policy differences between Obama and Bush administration approaches to counter terrorism, flushed out publicly by the new administration in mid-2010. First was the effort to disaggregate the threat to respond to different elements of Al-Qaeda differently. The second broad shift was the administration's attempt to inoculate the American people in advance of a tragedy. An emphasis on protecting core values, planning for contingencies, and avoiding fear and paralysis in the wake of held out hope of defusing the classic power of terrorism to leverage popular fear, inflame political factions and provoke devastating overreaction.<sup>3</sup>

It seems, even more than two years since coming into office, the Obama administration has not been able to undo the legacy of Bush's handling of the terrorist threat. There is no major or a qualitative change which has taken place so far under Obama administration, except coming up with Af-Pak policy, while dealing with the issues which negatively impacted on the image of the United States before the outside world. Except his decision to close down the Guantanamo bay prison, Obama has not deviated from any of the policy steps to combat terrorism that were taken during the Bush administration.

In the dynamics of counter terrorism, much depends on how the United States is able to rationalize its counter terrorism strategy. So far, Pakistan has not been able to have consensus with Washington to counter terrorism particularly on the issue of drone attacks and launching military operation in South Waziristan. U.S. and Af-Pak policy, as outlined by the Obama administration in 2009, aims at dealing with the threat of terrorism under the framework of a joint policy on Afghanistan and Pakistan. That policy is criticized in Pakistan because it doesn't take into account the fact that it is Pakistan which has suffered enormously because of countless acts of terror and cannot be equated with Afghanistan where the mishandling of affairs by the foreign forces tend to augment violence and terrorism. Furthermore, when the U.S. officials remind Pakistan to 'do more' in combating terrorism or what they call as the 'safe heavens' of terrorist groups in the tribal areas, stalemate in Pak-U.S. strategic ties continues. The problem with Pakistan is its military is now overstretched in counter terrorism operations. Opening another front in the form of military operation in North Waziristan will augment more pressure and also invite domestic backlash. Certainly, there are serious gaps and differences in the U.S. and Pakistan counter terrorism perception and strategy. Both sides also differ on the identification of threat and the use of force against groups perceived by the U.S. close to Al-Qaeda.

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<sup>3</sup> Audrey Kurth Cronin, "The Evolution of Counter Terrorism: Will Tactics Trump Strategy?", *International Affairs* (London), Vol. 86, No. 4 (July 2010), pp. 854-55.

### 3. TERRORIST THREAT AND ITS TRANSFORMATION

The threat of terrorism in Pakistan surged in the post 9/11 period. Yet, even before 9/11, incidents of violence and terrorism caused enormous loss of human lives. During the 1980s and 1990s, the nature of terrorist threat was different as most of the acts of terror were the direct consequence of the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan and the deepening of political, sectarian and ethnic strife in the country. In early 1980s, the military regime of General Zia-ul-Haq held *Al-Zulfiqar*, a group established by Mir Murtaza Bhutto, elder son of former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, responsible for carrying acts of terror namely the hijacking of a domestic flight of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) on March 3, 1981. Al-Zulfiqar was also held responsible for various acts of terror. These included carrying out assassination attempts, bomb blasts and targeting communication network in order to exert pressure on the Zia regime.

What has happened in the last four decades or so is the transformation of terrorist threat in Pakistan. The growth of militancy, extremism, intolerance and radicalization augmented the terrorist incidents in Pakistan. Till the year 2000, suicide terrorist attacks were not common in Pakistan but in the post-2000 period, one observed the growth and expansion of these attacks in public places, military installations, mosques, religious schools and churches. The U.S. led attack on Afghanistan and the dismantling of Taliban regime further compounded the level of terrorist threat in Pakistan. As has been remarked by a Pakistani strategic analyst that,

Since 2001, the threat posed by militancy has increased as the ongoing conflict, poverty and lack of development have made it easier for Taliban to recruit foot soldiers. The new leaders of the various Taliban and militant groups are young men, mostly in their thirties, who are battle-hardened from the last decade and are far less willing to compromise.<sup>4</sup>

The mingling of Taliban with the local population particularly in Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa (former North Western Frontier Province) and Balochistan, the two provinces of Pakistan bordering Afghanistan, indicated indigenous sympathy, if not direct support, for a cause which demanded resistance against the foreign forces in Afghanistan. Not only the tribal, but also the settled areas of Pakistan came under the grip of terrorism believed to have been carried out by the banned Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and other sectarian groups. According to a report published in IISS's (International Institute of Strategic Studies, London) Strategic Comments, "within the settled areas, Pakistan has continued to see high levels of jihadist violence both against its security perpetrated by groups such as Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Jash-e-Mohammad, HUJI and Harkat-al-Mujahideen which together with LeT, are collectively known as the 'Punjabi Taliban,' a term which

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<sup>4</sup> Ayesha Siddiqi, "Pakistan's Counterterrorism Strategy: Separating Friends from Enemies," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (Winter 2011), p. 140.

reflects their growing alignment with the TTP and Afghan Taliban. That such groups pose a threat to Pakistani state is no longer in doubt and reflects the degree to which Jihadism in Pakistan has become a double-edged sword.”<sup>5</sup> The real test case for the state of Pakistan is how to deal with the escalation of terrorist threat and to what extent the use of force can neutralize the terrorist infrastructure? The emergence of banned terrorist groups from some other names adds to the predicament to the state authorities of Pakistan because it becomes a major challenge how to neutralize the mode of support base and mode of operation of individuals and groups who continue to operate by carrying out more and more terrorist activities under different names.

One way to effectively deal with the threat of banned and clandestine terrorist organizations in Pakistan is to first understand the nature of transformation which took place in the rank and file of such organizations and then to isolate them from the mainstream population. The problem faced by the successive governments in Pakistan is that, they have failed to mobilize people, particularly in those areas where enormous civilian casualties took place as a result of terrorist acts.

There are two contradictory perceptions related to the threat of terrorism in Pakistan. First, there is no likelihood of reducing the threat of terror unless CIA managed drone attacks on the tribal areas of Pakistan are stopped and the U.S. led forces leave Afghanistan. The surge of anti-Americanism as a sequel to the Taliban-led insurgency against foreign forces and the non-combatant casualties because of drone attacks in the tribal areas of Pakistan tends to augment the level of anger and antagonism, thus, giving space to those groups who use violence and terrorism as a means to fight what they call ‘jihad’ against foreign forces and their supporters both in Pakistan and in Afghanistan. Second, unless the domestic issues which deepen economic miseries of people are sorted out, the threat of violence and terrorism in Pakistan cannot be curtailed. In a country of 180 million people where there are serious issues of governance and economic disparities, enough space is provided to militant and extremist groups who use religion or ethnicity for the pursuance of their political objectives.

If there are negatives in the transformation of terrorist threat in Pakistan, there are also positive aspects. For instance, after reaching its peak, terrorist threat has subsided to some extent. According to a report released by the Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies (PIPS), Islamabad in January 2011, “Pakistan gained ground against militant violence in 2010, but urban terrorism is a growing threat and military success will not bring stability unless a comprehensive strategy is developed. Incidents of violence and terrorism in Pakistan fell by 11 per cent in 2010 compared with the previous year. The number of suicide attacks fell by 22

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<sup>5</sup> “South Asia still beset by violent extremism”, in IISS Strategic Comments, available at: <http://11sn130w.snt.130.mail.live.com/> accessed on 12 January 2011.

per cent to 68 in 2010 compared with 87 in 2009.”<sup>6</sup> According to PIPS’s report, “a total of 2,113 militant, insurgent and sectarian attacks were reported across the country in 2010 killing 2,913 people. As many as 93 militant attacks which killed 233 people were reported in 2010.”<sup>7</sup> Yet despite decrease in violent and terrorist incidents in Pakistan, as cited in PIPS report what is lacking in counter terrorism measures are: “better coordination among intelligence agencies, capacity building of law enforcement agencies, curbs on terrorism financing and most importantly, adequate measures to prevent banned militant groups from operating across the country remained persistently lacking.”<sup>8</sup> To what extent, the state authorities in Pakistan are able to cope with internal fault lines which impede efforts for tracking down and punishing those involved in various terrorist incidents? Transformation in effectively dealing with the threat and challenge of violence and terrorism in Pakistan is quite slow because of two main reasons. First is the lack of sophisticated technology available for the security agencies to cope with the acts of terror and second is the slow judicial process to deal with the cases of terrorism.

#### 4. THE DILEMMA OF COUNTER TERRORISM

The challenge of counter terrorism in Pakistan is different as compared to other countries. First, no country in the last four years has witnessed so many terrorist acts, including suicide attacks as Pakistan. It is not only the number of casualties and injuries which has taken place in Pakistan but the diversity in carrying out terrorist attacks. Not only the terror targets are security forces, government installations but mosques, religious schools, shrines, shopping centres and churches have also not been spared. When the threat of terrorism in Pakistan is so massive, the question of countering that threat is also quite critical. Is there any anti-terrorism mechanism in operation in Pakistan? To what extent, the use of hard power in counter terrorism operation can yield positive results? Why the role of clergy in Pakistan to effectively counter terrorism is not that significant and how the civil society can play a vital role in isolating the terrorist groups? How external factors impede counter terrorism measures and how a better coordination among the countries of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) can help curb terrorist acts?

In the realm of counter terrorism, the role of state is crucial because it is responsible for the protection and safety of its citizens. One important segment of state which plays a major role in counter terrorism measures in Pakistan is the military. To what extent military can deal with those elements over a period of time taking advantage of Afghan jihad and using religion for political purposes deepened their influence in the state and societal structures of Pakistan? The

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<sup>6</sup> *Daily Dawn* (Karachi), 17 January 2011.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*



emergence of various militant religious groups in Pakistan having a regional and global network cannot be overlooked. Therefore, it is not wrong to argue that,

No amount of counter-terrorism operations will work unless the government has a plan to generate a new discourse that can counter *takfiri* ideology and the orthodox interpretation of Sharia law. It is critical for the Pakistani government and civil society groups to combine forces and emphasize the fact that terrorism is linked with an ideological battle in the country.<sup>9</sup>

Elaborating flaws in Pakistan's counter-terrorism strategy, Ayesha Siddiqi, a noted security analyst of Pakistan, states that the "primary flaw of Pakistan's counter terrorism policy, however, is that it is defined and driven by the military and that institution's strategic objectives. It is easier to use the military option than to address the problem of changing the basic narrative and socio-economic condition that drive military in the first place."<sup>10</sup> That type of an approach pursued by the military can put several obstacles in counter terrorism operations. For instance, a widely shared perception in various strategic circles in the West and also in India about Pakistan's military approach on countering terrorism is about its reluctance to take action against groups who are perceived to be involved in cross border terrorism. As long as there is no clear cut policy on the part of Islamabad to follow an even-handed approach *vis-a-vis* all terrorist groups, one cannot expect its counter terrorism strategy to yield positive results.

When U.S. Vice-President Joseph Biden visited Islamabad in January 2011 and in his meetings with the high ranking Pakistani officials insisted that military should launch operation in North Waziristan, he got a cold shoulder from Islamabad. Perhaps, the reluctance on the part of Army generals to target what the United States believes 'safe heavens' of al-Qaeda in North Waziristan is because they want to avoid the opening of another front. That type of a situation brings into question insurgency in Afghanistan and Kabul's repeated assertions blaming Pakistan of not preventing terrorist groups operating across the border.

Further discussing Pakistan's counter terrorism strategy while relating to the contradictions which that strategy implies in case of Afghanistan, Siddiqi argues that it is contradictory because it is "caught between the inclination to fight militant forces and yet having to partner with same to strengthen its future bargaining position. The policy flows out of Pakistan's multiple strategic requirements: it needs to remain engaged with the United States, to save itself from the Taliban attacking the Pakistani state, and to fight India's growing presence in Afghanistan. Caught between these issues, Islamabad's counter terrorism policy and objectives continue to lack clarity. At best, the policy illustrates the tension between Islamabad's need to protect itself against an

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<sup>9</sup> Ayesha Siddiqi, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 149-150.

internal enemy and its sensitivity toward the external threats from India.”<sup>11</sup> As long as the Pakistan army continues to differentiate among the various groups on the basis of their tactical position *vis-a-vis* the Pakistani state, terrorism will continue. There seems to be little interest to marginalize or eliminate the core militant groups operating inside Pakistan.<sup>12</sup> For how long Pakistan’s military will pursue the approach of protecting its “human strategic asset” who happen to be “dangerous people” threatening not only American/Western interests but also a major source of instability in the region is yet to be seen. Islamabad has tried to carefully sidetrack the pressure which is being exerted particularly from the United States to “do more” so as to dismantle what it calls “terrorist infrastructure” particularly in the tribal areas of Pakistan. Siddiq examines the dichotomy in Pak-U.S. relations in the context of terrorism by arguing that, “both the United States and Pakistan appear to lack clarity on how to define the threat they are facing and what are attainable objectives. Although the prospective date of U.S. withdrawal has caused its fair share of controversy, Islamabad’s counter terrorism policy suffers from its own set of problem, beginning with over emphasizing the military approach. On a safeguard level, the main issue with Islamabad’s approach to fighting terrorism is that it is almost completely controlled by the armed forces. They have a four tiered approach: clear, hold, develop, and disintegrate, an approach used by the army in its operations in Swat in 2007 and in South Waziristan in October 2009.”<sup>13</sup>

Then there is the issue of who formulates and controls counter terrorism strategy in Pakistan: whether it is under the military or under a civilian control and to what extent the two are able to effectively coordinate on dealing with the threat of terrorism in the country?

Samina Ahmed, Director, International Crisis Group (ICG), Pakistan, is of the opinion that, “until and unless there is meaningful civilian control over counter terrorism policy, accompanied by the necessary investments in police and prosecutors to enhance investigative capacity and case building and until judges and witnesses are protected, even those terrorists that are captured and tried are likely to go scot-free.”<sup>14</sup> This brings into picture the issue of major flaws

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* She elaborates flaws in Pakistan’s counter terrorism by arguing that, “one of the greatest flaws of the overall counter terrorism approach of the allies, certainly Pakistan is the concentration on the use of force. This is not to argue that the military option should not be used at all or that the state must not protect itself against terrorists. The military option, nevertheless, does not help eradicate militancy and emphasize the idea that change comes about through the use of force. In this respect, the drone attacks seem to add to the problem of the military” , *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 150-151.

<sup>14</sup> Samina Ahmed, “Pakistan: The Hidden War” *Foreign Policy*, 23 December, 2010, available at: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south.asia/pakistan> accessed on 10 January 2011.

in Pakistan's criminal justice system where those involved in deadly crimes are able to get away by taking advantage of loopholes in the trial process. As a result, counter terrorism mechanism in Pakistan is unable to cope with the rise in violent and terrorist acts. Referring to the shortcomings in the procedure for punishing those involved in terrorist activities, Samina Ahmed argues that,

The failure of Pakistan's criminal justice system to pre-empt, investigate and convict terrorists and other major criminals is alarming. A low conviction rate, hovering between 5 to 10 per cent, is unsurprising in already decrepit prosecutors, also poorly trained fail to build cases strong enough to stand in court. Corruption and intimidation run rampant in a system that lacks the most basic modern tools, including forensic evidence and timely access to telephone records.<sup>15</sup>

How to deal with the gaps in Pakistan's judicial system so as to seek a breakthrough in counter terrorism is a big challenge. Since 1997, some headway has been made to streamline anti-terrorism laws. When there was surge in terrorist acts in Pakistan as a result of sectarian conflict, the then government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif promulgated the Anti-Terrorist Act (ATA) of 1997. "The Act declared that if a provincial government needed military and civilian armed forces to prevent terrorist acts or scheduled offences it could request the federal government which would decide which forces were required for deployment to the affected area (Section 4). The Act provided all powers to law enforcement personnel to arrest any person and enter and search any house without warrants."<sup>16</sup> The Act became a source of criticism particularly launched by the opposition Pakistan People's Party (PPP) blaming the ruling party of using ATA for political purposes. Various changes were made in that Act through ordinances and amendments like:

1. Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Ordinance 2001.
2. Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Ordinance, 2002.
3. Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Ordinance, 2004.
4. Anti-Terrorism (Second Amendment) Act 2005.

Yet, "despite a long history of anti-terror laws in Pakistan, the country continues to suffer from widespread terrorism and invites frequent comments from the Western media regarding its failure to ensure peace, law and order."<sup>17</sup> Four major fault lines which one can identify in the context of judicial process of counter terrorism in Pakistan are:

1. Reluctance of witnesses to witness and testify in ATC because of fear.
2. Less stringent laws to deny bail to the suspects.

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>16</sup> Saba Noor, "Evolution of Counter Terrorism Legislation in Pakistan," *Peace and Conflict Studies* (Islamabad), September 2008, p. 5.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

3. Unscientific methods of interrogation.
4. Undue delay in winding up the case.

Overall, it is the environment which matters in pursuing an effective counter terrorism strategy. If the environment is conducive for groups who cause fear, panic, insecurity, chaos and disorder then it becomes difficult for the state to take strong action against individuals and groups responsible for the acts of terror. Otherwise, if the environment is unfavourable and hostile to the groups who intend to carry out their terrorist activities, one can expect a better counter terrorism strategy to unfold.

## 5. SUCCESSES AND FAILURES

If terrorist groups are motivated and ideologically committed to achieve their objectives, can there be an ideological response to deal with the acts of terror? How far there can be an ideological response to the threat of militancy and terrorism as far as Pakistan is concerned? How the counter-terrorism policy can transform its failures into successes? A Pakistani security analyst points out that, "A counter ideological response to neutralize and defeat terrorism has become a popular theme in the anti-extremism discourse. It is widely believed that ideology is the key motivating force behind the current wave of terrorism. In fact, academic journals and counter terrorism experts take for granted that Islamic extremism has roots in a particular extremist version of religion. Therefore, promotion of a moderate and peaceful version of religion is essential to combat terrorist roots."<sup>18</sup> An effective ideological response to terrorism in a given situation is the best possible option. That response needs to be formulated in such a manner that the moderate segment of clergy is able to neutralize the influence of those groups who justify the use of violence and terrorism in the name of religion.

The successes and failures of Pakistan's counter-terrorism policy can be analyzed from four perspectives. First, is the state perspective, which is again divided into military and civilian ones. In the post-Musharraf era, one has yet to see the firm control over national security affairs by the civilian leadership. During the military and quasi-military rule in post-1971 Pakistan since the days of Zia-ul-Haq till Musharraf, national security and national interests were equated resulting into the mess which one can see in Pakistan today. The military made sure that national security policy must also represent the country's national interest whether it was the issue of supporting particular Mujahideen groups in Afghanistan, or supporting the Taliban regime. Same was true in case of India as the military establishment resolved that it was in the national interest of Pakistan

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<sup>18</sup> Mohammad Amir Rana, "Counter – Ideology: Unanswered Questions and the Case of Pakistan," Perspectives on Terrorism, available at: <http://www.terrorismanalyst.com/pt/index.php?option=com-rokzjin> accessed on 4 January 2011.

to use Jihadi groups against the Indian controlled parts of Jammu and Kashmir. The permeation of Jihadi culture, violence and terrorism in Pakistani society was the direct consequence of equating national security with national interests. It is yet to be seen, in the post-Musharraf era if there is any change in statecraft with reference to national security and national interests because theoretically there is a civilian government and the military is supposed to remain subservient to the civilian authority. Second, the societal perspective, which is very divided because of fragmented civil society. When extremism, militancy, radicalization and terrorism become part of the culture and there is to a large extent silence on the part of the majority of people, it means counter terrorist efforts have failed. When a handful of extremists take the society as a hostage and try to impose their way of life, one can expect the deepening of insecurity and instability. When the Punjab Governor Salman Taseer was gunned down by his own body guard in January 2011 in Islamabad on the ground that Taseer had criticized blasphemy laws, majority of people remained silent and failed to condemn that heinous crime.

Third, is the political perspective, as political parties are more or less non-serious in dealing with the threat and challenge of terrorism. In fact, religious parties are unwilling to categorically condemn acts of terrorism, particularly suicide killings. So-called secular parties lack the courage and political will to take on religious fanatic groups. Lack of consensus among political parties to deal with violence and terrorism has been counterproductive because the forces of intolerance and militancy seem to have gained more space and ground. Parliament, which should have taken the initiative in pursuing counter terrorism measures, is not playing a due role. It is still not clear who is going to formulate counter terrorism strategy: should it be the military or the civilian leadership or both need to form a consensus on the methodology to deal with terrorism. Finally, the economic perspective, as sustained violence and terrorism going on in Pakistan since last several years have caused a serious damage to the country's economy. It is estimated that Pakistan's cost of war on terror has increased to 40 per cent to Rs.678 billion from Rs.484 billion in 2007, causing an adverse impact on the country's socio-economic development. The expected direct cost of war on terror will be Rs.114.03 billion in 2008-09 from Rs.108.527 billion in 2007. The indirect cost will increase to Rs.563.760 billion from Rs.375.840 billion.<sup>19</sup> An official document of Finance Ministry, Government of Pakistan revealed that "owing to being part of US-led war against terrorism, Pakistan has estimated a loss of Rs.2.080 trillion on its economy on account of exports, foreign investments, privatization, industrial output and tax collection during the last five

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<sup>19</sup> Pervez Zaiby, "Economic impact of war on terror and continuing recession," *The News International* (Karachi), 8 December 2008.

years from 2004-05 to 2008-09.”<sup>20</sup> Addressing a press conference in the United Nations on 13 November 2008, Pakistan Foreign Minister, Shah Mahmud Qureshi said that, “over the past seven years losses suffered by Pakistan in the war against terrorism amounted to \$34.5 billion.” He further said that, “Pakistan paid a huge price, both economic and human terms, to protect itself and the world.”<sup>21</sup> Pakistan’s involvement in war on terror and the costs of home grown terrorism seem to have put Islamabad in a quandary. Anti-terrorist military operation in Swat and in the tribal areas of Pakistan also caused a heavy burden on the country’s economy.

Since Pakistan will have to live with the phenomenon of terrorism for a long period of time, it is time a plausible and pragmatic counter-terrorism strategy is formulated and implemented. If an approach based on seriousness and professionalism is pursued by Islamabad to rid the people of Pakistan from the menace of terrorism, one can expect some headway in dealing with groups who are responsible for enormous misery and pain. Furthermore, Pakistan’s counter terrorism strategy may not be effective unless an understanding with its eastern neighbour i.e. India is also reached. This would require a formulation of a counter terrorism policy that would be jointly implemented by New Delhi and Islamabad while keeping in view the areas of mistrust and discords and addressing the issues which compel the two sides to launch allegations and counter allegations of supporting the acts of terror.

On the whole, if terrorism is a challenge, it is also an opportunity. It is time, Pakistan, both at the state and non-state level, deals with the issue of terrorism in a serious and professional manner. Counter terrorism mechanism would require a better coordination between the civilian and military authorities to liquidate the network and activities of various terrorist groups. If the opportunity to effectively counter terrorism is lost, one can expect the deepening of violence and instability in Pakistan in coming years.

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<sup>20</sup> See Mehtab Haider, “Pakistan to seek \$ 20 billion from IFIs to compensate for wars on terror losses,” *The News International* (Karachi), 15 November 2008.

<sup>21</sup> See news item, “Pakistan suffered loss of \$ 34 billion in war on terror: Qureshi”, *Daily Dawn* (Karachi), 11 November 2008.