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A Historical Recount of Terrorism in Pakistan: From Partition in 1947 to the Army Public School Massacre in 2014

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Abstract *The issue of terrorism is as old as the country itself. To begin with, there were infrequent low intensity periodic incidents of terrorism. However, state un-willingness or un-preparedness, in the beginning, allowed the issue to grow in strength. Furthermore, the disturbance in Afghanistan and ultimately the incident of 9/11 proved instrumental in providing the terrorists an opportunity to bounce back by inflicting serious to the state in terms of human deaths and economic losses. But among them all, the APS incident on December 14 2014, proved to be the worst in terms of human loss and exposed the terrorists as the ones who deserved no mercy. This paper reviews the historical accounts and tries to fix where the state and its institutions committed a mistake. It suggests that had Pakistan not been soft to individual incidents of terrorism, and had it not involved itself so much in Afghan affairs, the issue may not have worsened to cause so much damage and loss.*

Key Words: Terrorism, Pakistan, Army Public School, Massacre, Pak-Afghan Border

Introduction

Over the years, Pakistan has become a center for terrorism which has grown in scale, intensity and frequency. Although the government has started a number of military operations to uproot the terrorist networks as well as fencing the Pak-Afghan border in order to check the infiltration of miscreants from Afghanistan, these measures have failed to bring the desired results as terrorism still don't allow people to sleep and live in calm. There is no doubt that the backbone of the terrorist outfit has been seriously damaged. One can't deny the fact that the outlawed still have the potential to reorganize and challenge the state's strongest institution, the Pakistan Army.

Going through the history of terrorism in Pakistan, one is convinced that the

phenomenon of terrorism is not something new. It is as old as the state itself. One can see many events and incidents of terrorism. But those events hardly made headlines for being low in frequency as well as intensity. Furthermore, these incidents were not big enough to disturb or paralyze national life, and so people never thought of them to be of any significance. However, the Russian invasion of Afghanistan gave a new boost to the era of terrorism in the name of religion as terrorists were now in a better position to take advantage of the disturbance in Afghanistan and found safe heavens there to grow in number and strength too. But the turning point was 9/11 and the subsequent attack on Afghanistan by the allied forces that disturbed and ultimately

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caused terrorists to disperse in search of shelter. It was at this point that many heavy-weight terrorists crossed over the border to come to Pakistan, especially FATA, where they, after some time reorganized themselves and launched attacks on Pakistan security forces fresh. Pakistan security forces bore the worst kind of losses, millions were displaced and economic activities were hampered. All this culminated in the APS incident where some 145 small teenage kids were killed on December 16, 2014.

Pakistan Interference in Afghanistan's Affairs and the Influx of Terrorism

Pakistan interfered in the civil war of Afghanistan due to three strategic and historical reasons. **First**, there is, there exist a strong sense of historical wrong among Afghan people on the Durand Line and the illegitimacy of widely accepted border with Pakistan. This issue remains a serious contention from the history of the sub-continent and far from getting resolved anytime soon. Engraved to separate the British Raj's region of sub-continent and protect its borders, the Durand Line agreement in 1893, somewhat contentious, determined the fortune of Afghanistan's present-day national construct. This enforced, and injustice agreement not only angered Kabul's leadership, which was an insult to its national honor and political sovereignty but also divided the Pashtun living in the frontier regions. The Afghan nationalism and the illegitimacy of the Durand Line in the Afghan eyes further aroused after the third war between Britain and Afghanistan in 1919. The outcome of this remained unclear on this boundary question, but Afghanistan won independence from British influence on foreign policy. According to the agreement of Rawalpindi (1919), the government of Afghanistan had accepted the border between India and Afghanistan, which Amir Abdur Rahman had accepted in 1893. The late Amir Abdur Rahman had not wished to give up governing over the northern Pashtun tribal agencies and also considered Peshawar as the city of Afghanistan. Both of these were captured by the British and then inherited by Pakistan without any considerable discussion with Afghanistan [JaffreLot](#) (Jaffrelot C. , 2017). To

Afghanistan, this was not only a political but also a social challenge that deeply rooted sense of Pashtun nationalism in the tribal areas of South and East Afghanistan. During Partition, the Pashtun nationalism was raised in the shape of the Khudai Khidmatgar Movement in the northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) directed by Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan (Bacha Khan). Bacha Khan wanted to separate Pashtunistan, but his dream was not fulfilled.

Feeling cheated and hurt by the fact that the British had carved a new state next door without discussing potential boundary dispute, and the Karachi (then the capital of Pakistan) accepted the territorial limits of the British Raj unconditionally, Kabul refused to recognize Pakistan at the United Nations in 1947 [\(Sattar, 2020\)](#). In fact, adding fuel to the fire, Kabul signed the treaty with India in 1950. Pashtun tribesmen, with support from Afghan troops, attacked the northern border of Pakistan and penetrated thirty miles northeast of Chaman in Baluchistan [\(Paliwal, 2017\)](#). Frontier clashes increased between Afghanistan and Pakistan in the age of Daud Khan. There was the aggressive promotion of separatist agenda from Daud side against Pakistan. According to a US government report, "in 1960 Daud sent soldiers across the edge into Bajaur in a foolish and unproductive effort to use events in the area and to promote the Pashtunistan problem, but Afghanistan military forces were defeated by Pakistan military". Daud even approached India in order to put military pressure on Pakistan, but New Delhi refused. Later on, on September 6, 1961, Pakistan and Afghanistan served diplomatic relations.

The Durand Line is a hot issue in Afghanistan even today. The contemporary Afghan elite and masses view the border as illegitimate, and no Afghan government, including the Taliban regime (1996-2001), which was dependent on Pakistan, had accepted the Durand Line question. The border was meaningless to the Taliban because they reasoned that there should be no border between Muslim states. Two months before 9/11, a ninety-five members of equipped groups of Taliban stayed in Mohmand Agency in the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) region. They were welcomed by the local chieftain. The Taliban decided to hoist in

defiance of Pakistan's authority in the area. According to Pakistan's media, the Taliban visit and their hoisting of flags revived Afghanistan's claim on the area, which had shocked Islamabad. This issue remained dormant after the US intervention in 2001_(Jaffrelot C. , 2017).

The **Second** enduring theme of this relationship is the fact that the perseverance of the Pashtunistan issue and the Durand Line dispute coupled with its conflict with India has aggravated Pakistan's territorial insecurities. To pacify the Kabul revisionist demand on the border issue, Pakistan approached Afghanistan. Though many academic works correctly link Pakistan's Afghanistan policy to its military's notion of gaining "strategic depth" against an Indian military assault, there is more to this relationship. As Khalid Nadiri argues, the tense relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan is not only due to Pakistan's enmity with India but also due to some historical domestic gaps in Pakistan and its hostile effect on Afghanistan relations. There is great worry in Pakistan that a strong Pashtun government in Kabul will revive the demand for Pashunistan and will do a military campaign similar to that of Daud Khan. Therefore, in this context the former Pakistani PM Zulfikar Ali Bhutto responded to Daud Khan's border provocations by militarily supporting antigovernment Islamists like Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Ahmad Shah Masoud, Burhanuddin Rabbani. In order to stop the raising of border issues and build strategic parity, Pakistan supported the rebels of Kabul. Having already lost half of its territory and more than half of its population (creation of Bangladesh) in the 1971 war with India, there was no way Pakistan was letting go more territory in the west_(Rubin, 2002).

The opportunity for Pakistan to interfere in Afghanistan politics met in the 1970s when USSR sent their military troops to Afghanistan soil. At that time, the military dictator General Zia ul Haq in collaboration with the United States started supporting Mujahideen against the Soviet Union. Pakistan's success in toppling the Soviet ambitions in Afghanistan and making the Mujahideen dependent on Pakistan made it believe that it could alter the geostrategic situation by installing a friendly regime in Kabul. After the USSR defeat and its exclusion from Afghan soil, Najibullah was set

on the throne and was a fierce critic of Pakistan. Later he was killed, and the Taliban started to struggle to gain control over Kabul. During these years, there was a civil war in Afghanistan and Pakistan started direct military intervention in Afghanistan and its agencies decided to support Hekmatyar to capture Kabul using forces in the first phase of the Afghan civil war_(Rubin, 2002). However, it was not until September 25, 1996, when Kabul fell to the Taliban, and Pakistan reached closest to achieving 'strategic depth' over Indian in Afghanistan_(Paliwal, 2017). In order to defend Pakistan's honor and integrity, Pakistan's state and its agencies supported those political and military forces in Afghanistan that will not raise the issue of Durand Line and will support Pakistan in conflicts against India.

The **Third** of this bilateral relationship is the popular mistrust of Pakistan among a majority of Afghans. Despite sharing the common history of fighting the Soviets and housing more Pashtuns on its soil than Afghanistan, Pakistan could not produce strong links with different Afghan factions and ethnic groups. Pakistan has failed to match itself with the changing realities toward Afghanistan and lost its connection with the Afghan people. Pakistan made its impression bad in Kabul by supporting of Mujahideen against Najibullah, then provoking the Taliban to snatch Kabul throne and finally stimulating the Afghan Taliban and armed Haqqani Network against the Karzai government and US-led NATO forces. Islamabad played an important role in undermining not only the Karzai government but also the NATO forces in bringing the Taliban to heel. Pakistan has badly affected Afghanistan's policy cycle, both internally and externally. This negative intrusion of Pakistan gave some Afghan policymakers to advocate a forward military approach of taking the war across the borders into Pakistan_(Jaffrelot C. , 2017).

Rise of Terrorism

Pakistan has been affected by terrorism very deeply and harshly for a long time. Being nuclear power, it is one of the riskiest residences in the world because of these terrorist activities. It is the era of the 1980s with which we can link the rise of terrorist violence

where some of the famous events in the transnational atmosphere placed lasting impacts in Pakistan's political fate. The taking of Kabul control by Daud Khan in 1973, the USSR entering the country in 1979, and the Islamic revolution of Iran in 1979 were serious events in making of the geopolitical setting of the 1980s in Pakistan, which along with defective national politics and security necessities, instigated the vehement disturbances on the political scenery of the state_(Saeed, 2018).

The deposition of the last King of Afghanistan ruled from 1933 to 1973, Zahir Shah, by his cousin Daud Khan made obvious the end of peacetime and permanency in Afghan soil and it led Pakistan to interfere in Kabul's domestic issues for security purposes. Daud Khan started claiming the Pashtun areas of Pakistan, while Pakistan had also lost some of its territory in the 1971 crisis in the shape of Bangladesh. This caused Pakistan to support secretly the Islamist antagonists against Afghanistan's government. The Communist coup was made in 1978. This led to the turmoil in Afghanistan because of the Islamist fighting against the communist faction. This political disturbance compelled the Soviet Union to send their military troops there in 1979. Pakistan felt the threat from USSR like that of another capitalist democratic world. At this scenario, Pakistan's domestic politics was also damaged by disputes. The takeover made by General Zia ul Haq in 1977 and the hanging of legitimate Prime Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto in 1979 had left the military dictator in loneliness. The security and political necessities are coupled to build a fruitful future strategy for Pakistan. The government of Zia was badly endeavoring for its legitimacy and making Pakistan a front-line state against the Russian forces, which was part of its Islamization project_(Ahsan, September 2019). Islam was a binding force for ethnic groups which were sent to Afghanistan for Jihad. The security necessities for Pakistan were stimulated by deep-seated terror to be territorially enclosed by India and its partners, while in the eyes of Islamabad, Kabul was more aligned to India. Therefore, the conflict in Afghanistan was of great matter to Pakistan. The terrorism in Pakistan during this decade was the influx of the Afghan conflict into its

territory. All the terrorist incidents in Pakistan were believed to be linked directly or indirectly with Russian agency KGB and Afghan Intelligence (KHAD). Most of these events happened in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA (now merged with KPK) bordering Afghanistan. Much of the violent happenings were done in KP because of its connectivity with Afghanistan, both culturally and area-wise. This area was the core of logistical and ideological backing of Afghanistan Mujahideen. 30% of terrorist attacks happened in Peshawar out of 45% in this province_(Saeed, 2018).

Ethnic and Sectarian Terrorism

In the form of Ethnic and Sectarian terrorism, Pakistan confronted new violence in the 1990s which was not only limited to northern parts of Pakistan, but the southern parts also became dominated by these evils, particularly Baluchistan and Karachi. Certain reasons are there behind the initiation of this kind of terrorism, in which one reason was Pakistan's participation of in the Kabul War. Fixing time bombs in in cities, political and military offices, and in the capitals of provinces was the main source of terrorists. Civilians were highly targeted in these attacks, and its major purpose was to humiliate the government and put the burden on to certain political and ambassadorial steps. There were also responses to Pakistan's brutal policies toward the Kabul war. Second reason was the lack of democracy in Pakistan. Due to the defects informal politics of Islamabad because of dictatorship and minimal democracy, a lot of societies felt insecure, neglected, underprivileged and troubled. There was the hold of certain political elites in the center which could not listen to the sorrows of oppressed ethnic groups and communities. Later on, these communities led to ethnic terrorism in some specified areas.

The third and the most highlighted reason of Ethnic and Sectarian terrorism is said of the Khomeini led revolution called the "Islamic Revolution" in Iran in 1979. After the revolution, the relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran became soared and Pakistan was very close to Saudi Arabia than Iran. Saudi Arabia started supporting Sunni and Wahabi Islam in the

region against Shia faction. Pakistan was a hot country in terms of Saudi aid to Sunni Muslims against the Shiite community (Jaffrelot c. , 2016). On the other hand, Iran was supporting Shiite Muslims. Thus, the political associations of Pakistan at the international level also became the motive of sectional terrorism. It led the 1990's to sectarian terrorism between Sunni and Shiite communities in Pakistan. It included the dumping of unidentified dead bodies near each other homes to transport horror. An operation was launched by security forces in 1992 to handle the situation, but this led to further escalation by militias. It is said that 200 terrorist occurrences on usual were led every year that comprises bombing, assassination, and target killing of ethnic and religious leaders (Khan, September 2019).

Terrorism in Pakistan Since 2001 (War on Terror)

It was the morning of September 11, 2001, nineteen hijackers hijacked the airplanes of four passengers and then collided the buildings of the pentagon and world trade center. There were about 3000 death estimated in the attacks, together with losses from about 80 states. These were the Arabs, affiliated with Al-Qaida, who were nineteen in number and were responsible for the attack (Rabbi, March 2015). This group was led by Osama bin Laden who was a Jihadist and was waging Jihad counter to the United States strategies against the Muslim world from Afghanistan soil. George Walker Bush, US president at that time, had made an announcement after this attack to wage war against terrorism and this was his top priority policy. Consequently, Bush altered his countrywide as well as foreign policy and set conditions for the states together with Pakistan to help with the United States in this fight or face US anger. The US-made a strong coalition against terrorism and set its objective as to battle against world terrorism, to eliminate terrorism from Afghanistan, crackdown against Al-Qaida and to stop other countries from backing fanatic organizations. The 9/11 attack became an opportunity for the US to invade Afghanistan. It was due to its geo-strategic location that Islamabad assistance was also necessary for the United States because of five main motives: First, it was due to the combined

efforts of Pakistan and the US that the USSR was defeated in the Afghan war. Thus, the US saw Pakistan's role in Afghanistan and expected its support of NATO against the Afghan government. Second, the United States was well attentive that the Taliban was the product of Pakistan and she feared that Islamabad might be sympathetic and support their government in Kabul. Third, Pakistan is in touch with a long boundary with Afghanistan of about 2460 km. Thus, it was easy for Pakistan to give easy flow for Al-Qaida and Taliban members. Fourth, Pakistan was in a position to send its military or Jihadists for the support of the Taliban which could create hurdles for the US to overthrow Jihadists. Fifth, the geopolitical and geostrategic location of Islamabad at the crossroad of southern, central and southwest Asia also made a crucial state and hence it was in a place to encourage US interest in the entire area (Rabbi, March 2015).

On September 13, the then Director-General of ISI, Lt. General Mahmoud, was given a list of US demands by Richard Armitage, Deputy Secretary of State. DG ISI was said to deliver on these demands to Musharraf and that these seven demands must be accepted by him (Singh, 2009). The seven demands were as:

1. The US should be free to land and flight for all essential martial and intelligence actions.
2. To halt Al-Qaida operators at its frontiers and close all logistic help for Bin Laden.
3. Providence of intelligence information to the United States.
4. To provide a land approach to the US and its associated army and agencies for conducting military and intelligence operation against Al-Qaida.
5. Condemnation of terrorist acts publicly.
6. To break relations with the Taliban government.
7. To censor all shipment of oils to Jihadists and close up training them both in Pakistan and Afghanistan camps.

The militancy entered Pakistan's soil because of the 9/11 event and its support to the United States against the War on Terror. The Kabul policy of Musharraf was greatly disapproved by religious aggressive groups, the

Pakistani Taliban, and their followers. Most of the Al-Qaida elements escaped into Pakistan's territory, especially to tribal areas before the Pakistani army took any action. After Pakistan's Army action against them, many of them were arrested and murdered while many of them were dispersed. These dispersed terrorists were later proved a great threat to the security of Islamabad (Rabbi, March 2015). Many public properties, foreign interests, and government institutions were spoiled by them. They also targeted high political and military officials by attacking on President and killing of thousands of security personnel in military operations.

Though Pakistan opted to fight the war on terror by supporting the US because it was of the fear that India was ready to do it, which is a big threat to its nuclear program, internal security, economic issues, and for Kashmir policies, hopeful of shielding Pakistan's interests at this time by assisting the US against the terrorism trend, Musharraf had ended its ties with the Afghan Taliban, which it had nurtured, equipped, and trained by years for securing its strategic objectives in Afghanistan. In the past era of friendship with Pakistan, the Taliban were succeeded to create their links and relationship in the Pashtun areas.

The start of the global war on terror by the United States compelled Pakistan to join it against the Taliban and their networks. This decision led Musharraf to meet the terrorist factions which were grown and nurtured by Pakistan in the previous decade to satisfy their strategic objectives in Afghanistan and Kashmir. The location of the Taliban, where they were making policies toward Afghanistan and against the US, was known by NATO and Afghan intelligence agencies, which was located in Quetta (Baluchistan). They fled there after defeating Afghanistan through NATO forces. NATO chief of staff, Col. Chris Vernon, stated that the brain of the Taliban is located in Quetta. This is the main center from which their policies against the United States in Afghanistan are emerging. Vernon stated that these network in Pakistan has four main shuras, which are located in Peshawar, Karachi, Quetta, and Miran Shah, which are controlling and coordinating the ongoing operations in the whole region of Afghanistan (Tellis, 2008). The technical and economic support to these

organizations was provided by the Islamic world.

A tactical change took place after the inauguration of military operations in 2003. By kidnapping security and state officials, the Taliban could negotiate with the government on their own terms. The army was part of the marginalization of the state and of the tribal political and administrative system when it signed peace deals with the militants in 2004 and 2005, sidelining the tribal elders and the political agent. The Taliban were legitimized and were given more power by signing the deals, and the huge sums paid as compensation for the destructions resulting from the military operations allowed them to strong themselves and to sustain patronage networks.

In December 2007, under the leadership of Baitullah Mehsud, the creation of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) was another turning point. This became an umbrella for dozens of local groups with local agendas and some elements of transnational militancy. The aim of TTP to unite the manpower and resources of the Pakistani Taliban and to wage war against the military forces and extend support to the Afghanistan Taliban waging Jihad against US and NATO armies. Its announced objectives were to enforce sharia, to do "self-protective jihad" against Pakistan's forces in a result of the attack on Islamabad's Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) in July 2007, and to deny upcoming peace talks with the regime. In fact, TTP was not as united as it claimed to be, there were intertribal and intratribal cleavages, and many clans and factions had not joined the TTP. It was not always a disciplined organization, as several recent events had shown. Moreover, the TTP had progressively transformed itself into a Mehsud dominated group (Zahab, 2017).

TP leading to Army Public School (APS) Attack

After Pakistan became an ally of the United States in War on Terror, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) started operating from their respective sites and performed every terror creating behaviors against every faction in a given community. Survey displays that more than 50 terrorist groups are operating on Pakistan's soil, and each group has its own

headship and ideology. But the mission of each and every group was to create terror in Pakistan by killing innocent people. They were trying to compel the Islamabad regime to perform some specific political actions. The attack on Marriot Hotel in Islamabad, in which 52 lives were destroyed, was a prominent attack done by these terrorists. This attack was a clear indication to the local politicians and policymakers to abandon alliance with the US or ready to bear more. The democratic government which came after the 2008 election, continued the same policy against terrorism which gave further escalation to the terrorist activities. There started a debate of "good and bad Taliban" in Pakistan. According to the perception of people and state, bad Taliban were damaging Pakistan while good Taliban were in favor of Pakistan and were striving to contain US and Indian ambitions toward Afghanistan and Pakistan. When sometimes good Taliban were involved in terrorist activities in Pakistan, people were thinking that this was because of drone attacks in which many civilians were killed, and it was Pakistan's government that allowed the US to conduct these drone fires. Some critics say that it was Islamabad who created the Taliban for its political and strategic objectives in Kashmir and Kabul, that is why there is a discussion of bad and good Taliban. Many energies are consumed by Pakistan to make negotiation with these terrorist factions, but it became fruitless, which compelled Pakistan's government to make clear its Northern area of Swat and South Waziristan from Jihadists that were dominant in these areas. Operation Rah-e-Nejat was done in 2009 with the consent of the democratic regime. All political parties and Army establishment set together for the first time and started such a big operation which resulted in 80000 refugees who lived for many years in refugee camps and sent back to their destroyed houses when their areas became clean. After many years, the security operations were in progress, but still certain political parties were desiring to talk with the Taliban, which was the only peaceful option for them. In the meantime, terrorists attacked airports, airbases, police headquarters, and military check posts with growing power. It was the

morning of December 16, 2014, that a group of terrorists invaded Army Public School (APS), which resulted in the death of 132 innocent children majority of whom were under 10-12 years in age. Approximately 150 people were slain in those attacks, and this event was considered the most terrifying national happening since December 16, 1971, which gave pain to every citizen. This occurrence led all political factions, military, and social headships to come on a one-point agenda that there will be no further discrimination between bad and good Jihadists, and all were to be eradicated. After this a more successful operation called Zarb-e-Azab (Sharp and Cutting Strike) was performed, whose goal was to abolish every single terrorist faction without distinction ([Ahsan, September 2019](#)). The arrested terrorists were quickly tried and punished through military courts. Many were hanged to death. Through the tactic of "Seek, Destroy, Clear and Hold," nearly 3500 terrorists had been slaughtered, as many became detained, 900 sanctuaries have been demolished, many no-go zones have been cleaned, and the roots of terrorism in Pakistan are almost eradicated.

Conclusion

Over the years, Pakistan has seen the worst kind of terrorism, causing serious damage to national life, economic activities, and the death of thousands of security forces and civilians. Today, the roots of these terrorists are deeper than ever. The reason is that they have a long history and mass support at the ground for a number of known reasons. Disturbance in Afghanistan has been perhaps the primary reason where terrorists find convenient sanctuaries and so launch attacks with comparative ease. Sectarianism and subsequent extremism is one other factor, giving way to terrorism in Pakistan that the government has failed to counter. However, the worst of all this was the APS massacre in which small children in uniform were targeted and killed. This was an eye-opener that caused all the political forces and the nation to join hands and hit back with resilience. Pakistan responded very hard to uproot and eliminate the menace of terrorism once for all.

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