

PAKISTAN'S DUAL ROLE IN THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM: CONTRIBUTIONS AND IMPACTS

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ABSTRACT

Pakistan's complex involvement in the Global War on Terror, examining its role as both a frontline ally in combating terrorism and a breeding ground for extremist elements. It analyzes the impacts of Pakistan's strategic decisions on its internal security dynamics, regional stability, and contributions to the global fight against terrorism. This study investigates Pakistan's complex engagement in the Global War on Terror, exploring its role as both a vital ally in counterterrorism efforts and a nation contending with internal security issues exacerbated by extremist factions. This qualitative research explores Pakistan's complex role in the Global War on Terror, analyzing its impacts and contributions through extensive data collection and analysis. Pakistan's role in the Global War on Terror underscores the complex interplay of geopolitical interests, national security concerns, and international diplomacy, with profound impacts on its security landscape. Pakistan should prioritize strengthening diplomatic ties, continuing counterterrorism efforts, and fostering socio-economic development to address extremism and terrorism effectively.

Keywords: Global War, terrorism, extremist, contributions, Pakistan's.

INTRODUCTION

The war on terror, initiated by the United States in response to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, has been one of the defining conflicts of the 21st century. Central to this campaign has been the complex relationship between the U.S. and Pakistan, which has played a pivotal role in the pursuit of American interests in the region, particularly in Afghanistan. This study delves into the multifaceted dynamics of this relationship, examining the motivations, strategies, and outcomes for both nations in the context of the war on terror. From the outset, the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan aimed to dismantle al-Qaeda and remove the Taliban from power, relying heavily on Pakistan's cooperation to achieve these objectives. However, Pakistan's involvement was not without its own set of interests and concerns, ranging from national security to economic imperatives and regional power dynamics. As such, the war on terror became a complex interplay of geopolitical strategies, military operations, and diplomatic maneuvering, with both

countries navigating a delicate balance of cooperation and contention. This paper explores the intricacies of U.S.-Pakistan relations within the framework of the war on terror, analyzing the evolving priorities, challenges, and outcomes for each nation. From Pakistan's strategic calculus in supporting the Taliban to America's reliance on Pakistani assistance in counterterrorism efforts, the dynamics of this partnership have shaped the course of the conflict and its broader implications for regional stability and global security.

The United States' invasion of Afghanistan in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks reshaped the security dynamics not only of Afghanistan but also of its neighboring countries, particularly Pakistan. Prior to 9/11, Pakistan faced occasional sectarian and religious conflicts, but extremism and terrorism were not widespread issues. However, the involvement in the Afghan conflict, both during the Soviet-Afghan War and later as a key ally in the U.S.-led War on Terror, significantly impacted Pakistan's internal

security landscape. Before 9/11, Pakistan found itself intertwined with the Afghan conflict due to various factors, including its support for Afghan Mujahideen during the Soviet-Afghan War and the rise of the Taliban, whose primary means of communication with the outside world was through Pakistan. However, following the 9/11 attacks, Pakistan shifted its stance and aligned itself with the United States in combating terrorism, which had significant implications for its internal security.

This study examines the impacts of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan on Pakistan's security dynamics. It discusses the rise of extremism and terrorism in Pakistan after 9/11, the challenges posed by the porous Pak-Afghan border, the controversial issue of drone attacks, and the price Pakistan paid in terms of human and economic costs while protecting its national interests. Additionally, it explores the emergence of new threats such as the Islamic State (IS) and the various terrorist assaults across different regions of Pakistan, including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, Islamabad, Baluchistan, and Sindh. Furthermore, the paper highlights Pakistan's military operations against terrorists, such as Operation Rah-e-Rast, Operation Zarb-e-Azb, and others, undertaken to suppress militant groups and restore peace in the country. Overall, it provides insights into how the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan fundamentally altered Pakistan's security landscape, leading to enduring challenges and complexities that continue to shape the country's security policies and priorities.

Literature Review

Following the September 11, 2001, attacks, Pakistan emerged as a crucial ally for the United States in the GWOT. Its geographical proximity to Afghanistan and historical ties with the Taliban positioned it as a pivotal player in regional security dynamics (Khan, 2009). The strategic importance of Pakistan is underscored by its location, acting as a bridge between South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East, which amplifies its influence on global counterterrorism efforts (Akram, 2011). Pakistan has significantly contributed to the GWOT through military operations and intelligence collaboration. Operations such as Rah-e-Rast in Swat, Rah-e-Nijat in South Waziristan, and Zarb-e-Azb in North Waziristan have targeted various militant groups, including the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Al-Qaeda operatives (Parveen et al., 2014). These operations have been pivotal in dismantling terrorist

networks and reducing militant activities within Pakistan's borders (Shahid, 2015). Moreover, Pakistan has provided critical logistical support to U.S. forces, facilitating key operations and the capture of high-value targets (Hilali, 2010). The collaboration between Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has been instrumental in counterterrorism efforts, although it has also been a source of controversy and tension (Riedel, 2011).

The consequences of Pakistan's involvement in the GWOT have been profound and multifaceted. Economically, the war has cost Pakistan approximately \$126 billion over the past two decades, affecting its development and stability (Jamal, 2021). Socially, the war has led to significant civilian casualties and widespread displacement, particularly in conflict-prone areas such as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) (Rooh ul Amin et al., 2020). The security landscape in Pakistan has been severely affected, with numerous terrorist attacks targeting civilians, military personnel, and infrastructure. Notable incidents include the attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar in 2014, which resulted in 150 deaths, mostly children, highlighting the brutal tactics employed by militant groups (Lewis, 2021). Pakistan's dual role as both an ally in the GWOT and a haven for militant groups presents a complex narrative. While Pakistan has taken significant steps to combat terrorism, it has also been accused of providing safe havens to the Taliban and other insurgent groups, which undermines global counterterrorism efforts (Khawaja & Mahmood, 2020). This dichotomy is partly rooted in Pakistan's strategic interests, balancing its relationship with the U.S. against its regional security concerns, particularly regarding India and Afghanistan (Karaca & Özkurt, 2015). The rise of sectarian violence and religious extremism in Pakistan is another critical aspect of its involvement in the GWOT. The presence of groups like the Islamic State (IS) in Pakistan, despite state crackdowns, underscores the persistent threat of sectarian militancy (Notezai, 2022).

Political instability has been exacerbated by high-profile assassinations and targeted killings, such as the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, which have further strained Pakistan's socio-political fabric (Saima et al., 2012). Pakistan's actions have significant regional and international implications.

The resurgence of Taliban influence in Afghanistan and the associated instability pose continuous threats to South Asian security dynamics. Additionally, Pakistan's dual role has impacted its international relations, particularly with the United States, leading to fluctuating levels of trust and cooperation (Hilali, 2010). While extensive research has been conducted on Pakistan's role in the GWOT, several gaps remain. First, there is a need for more nuanced analyses of the socio-economic impacts of the GWOT on different regions within Pakistan. Most studies focus on KP and FATA, leaving other affected areas less explored. Second, the long-term psychological impacts on the civilian population, particularly children and women, require further investigation. Third, the role of external factors, such as India and Iran, in influencing Pakistan's counterterrorism policies needs deeper exploration. Additionally, the effectiveness of Pakistan's counterterrorism strategies and their evolution over time remains under-researched. Comparative studies analyzing Pakistan's approach with other nations facing similar threats could provide valuable insights. Finally, the dual role of Pakistan in harboring insurgents while combating terrorism necessitates a more critical examination to understand the underlying strategic motivations and implications for global security. Pakistan's dual role in the GWOT has significantly shaped its domestic and regional landscape. While its contributions to counterterrorism are notable, the associated costs and the contradictory nature of its policies present ongoing challenges. Addressing the identified research gaps could provide a more comprehensive understanding of Pakistan's role and its broader implications in the GWOT.

Research Methodology

Using a qualitative research methodology, this study delves into Pakistan's multifaceted involvement in the Global War on Terror, aiming to comprehensively analyze its impacts and contributions. Through extensive data collected from books, scholarly articles, and official websites, the research seeks to unravel the complexities surrounding Pakistan's role, including its historical context, diplomatic engagements, military operations, and socio-political repercussions. By employing qualitative analysis techniques such as thematic coding and narrative synthesis, the study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of

Pakistan's dual role, shedding light on both the positive and negative dimensions of its participation in the war against terrorism. This in-depth exploration will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on counterterrorism efforts and inform policymakers, researchers, and practitioners about the intricate dynamics at play in the region.

America's Interests in War on Terror

The American invasion of Afghanistan following the events of 9/11 ostensibly aimed to dismantle al-Qaeda and remove the Taliban from power to deny them a safe haven. However, despite possessing significant military capabilities, the United States relied heavily on Pakistan's cooperation in combating Al Qaeda and Taliban militants in Afghanistan. This reliance prompted a multifaceted approach by the United States towards Pakistan, combining coercive measures with financial incentives and emphasizing the perceived threat to Pakistan's national security to maintain stability in the Indo-Pak region (Yusuf, 2009). The post-9/11 stance of "either be with us or against us" echoed historical assertions of American strength and resolve, emphasizing the absence of legal ambiguity in responding to challenges to its authority (Acheson, 1963; Chomsky & Barsamian, 2010).

Pakistan's acquiescence to American demands, outlined by Sattar (2007), included condemning terrorist acts, renouncing support for the Taliban, granting access to territory and airspace for US military and intelligence operations, and collaborating on intelligence activities along the Durand Line and within Afghanistan. This cooperation was driven by Washington's concerns over the potential catastrophic ramifications of a nuclear-armed state's collapse, as well as the evolving threat posed by Al Qaeda remnants and their Pakistani Taliban affiliates (Krause, 2004). In exchange for its cooperation, Pakistan was offered significant state-building assistance, diplomatic support in resolving Indo-Pak disputes, and reassurances regarding its interests in a post-Taliban Afghanistan (Krause, 2004). This complex interplay of strategic interests and diplomatic maneuvering underscored the intricate dynamics of the US-Pakistan relationship during the Global War on Terror.

Pakistan's National Interests & Policy Options

Pakistan was confronted with a complex dilemma when reluctantly acceding to partake in the US-led campaign against the Taliban, a faction it had previously supported in gaining power. Amidst internal exigencies and external pressures, Pakistan found itself compelled to maintain its backing of the Taliban, despite the unequivocal denouncement of terrorism by the UN Security Council. The imperative of safeguarding its own security, particularly in light of perceived threats from India and internal Taliban developments, motivated Pakistan to prioritize its national interests (Krause, 2004). The recalibration of Pakistan's security concerns presented an opportunity for the US to devise an incentive framework with escalating benefits, encouraging Pakistan to realign its priorities with US objectives. Pakistan's decision to align with the US was underpinned by its imperative to safeguard national interests, encompassing national security, economic prosperity, the preservation of strategic nuclear and missile assets, and the Kashmir cause (Gupta, 2002).

a. Historically, Pakistan has pursued the containment of Indian influence in Afghanistan as a paramount foreign policy objective, apprehensive of India's support for the Pakhtunistan movement and Baloch insurgency. Thus, Pakistan's participation in the US-led coalition against terrorism stemmed from a strategic imperative to avert potential marginalization vis-à-vis the US, while also mitigating Washington's burgeoning ties with India.

b. Pakistan's economic interests in Afghanistan, rooted in its trade dependence and strategic position bridging Central Asia with the wider world, underscored the significance of the security situation in Afghanistan. Given the prospective economic dividends associated with projects like the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Pakistan had a vested interest in fostering stability in Afghanistan.

c. Pakistan's support for the Taliban government in Kabul was motivated by strategic objectives aimed at securing a sympathetic ally in post-Taliban Afghanistan, capable of addressing Pakistan's concerns regarding Kashmir, facilitating regional connectivity, and providing strategic depth vis-à-vis India.

d. Active participation in the war on terrorism was anticipated to garner international recognition for Pakistan's characterization of the Kashmir conflict as

a self-determination issue, countering India's portrayal of Kashmir as a terrorism problem.

e. Resumption of international aid following Pakistan's engagement in the war on terrorism was anticipated to bolster the country's economic growth trajectory.

f. Pakistan's strategic nuclear and missile assets were expected to be safeguarded, with the cessation of nuclear and democracy sanctions imposed since the country's nuclear tests in 1998 and General Musharraf's military takeover in 1999.

g. On the political front, Pakistan envisaged gaining legitimacy for its regime, akin to previous instances where US administrations conferred legitimacy upon military regimes during times of conflict.

While Pakistan stood to realize several anticipated interests through its involvement in the war on terrorism, including potential participation in Afghanistan's democratic governance process, the aspiration for a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir issue remained elusive (Khawaja & Mahmood, 2020).

Pakistan and the War on Terrorism

Pakistan has been instrumental in aiding the United States in various capacities in the global counterterrorism effort. This assistance includes logistical support, intelligence sharing, and the apprehension and extradition of numerous al-Qaeda militants. Recognized by US officials as a pivotal partner in the Global Counterterrorism Force (GCTF), Pakistan's contributions have been lauded for surpassing those of any other nation (Fair, 2011). The extent of Pakistan's support is underscored by its provision of military access, closure of the western border, and utilization of naval and air force installations by US forces (Hussain, 2005). Acknowledging Pakistan's significant role, US President George W. Bush commended President Pervez Musharraf for the country's unwavering commitment to combating international terrorism. This collaboration has resulted in the capture and extradition of numerous high-profile al-Qaeda and Taliban figures, including Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, a suspected architect of the September 11, 2001, attacks (Press, 2003). Pakistan's commitment to the cause is further evidenced by its deployment of over seventy thousand troops to the Afghan border and the execution of numerous successful counterterrorism operations, despite incurring substantial casualties (Tariq, 2018).

Furthermore, Pakistan has actively engaged in global counterterrorism initiatives, participating in Coalition Maritime Interdiction Operations and contributing intelligence crucial to international anti-terrorism efforts. The country's efforts extend to the domestic front, with the apprehension of over 700 terror suspects, the proscription of numerous extremist organizations, and the implementation of anti-terrorism measures such as financial asset freezes (Tariq, 2020). In addition to its tangible contributions, Pakistan has undertaken strategic partnerships with the United States, receiving substantial financial assistance and military support, including arms sales and training programmes (Hussain, 2005).

Pakistan's Counterterrorism Record

The Pakistani military initiated its inaugural military campaign in July 2003, targeting the Wazir sub-tribe in North Waziristan, which was implicated in an al-Qaeda-led assault on a US military installation. Subsequently, following the refusal of the Zali Khel and Karri Khel tribes to acknowledge the state's authority and surrender Taliban and al-Qaeda elements, the military intensified its operations. Operation Wana in March 2004 resulted in the deaths of 63 militants from Chechnya and Uzbekistan, with 26 Pakistani army personnel also losing their lives. In September 2005, operations commenced against terrorist factions in North and South Waziristan, concluding in January 2008. Operation Sherdil (Lion Heart), spanning from August 2008 to February 2010, aimed to regain control of Bajaur Agency from the Taliban, achieving notable successes such as the dismantling of the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan Swat section and the apprehension of key militant figures. Additionally, Operation Rah-e-Nijat (Road of Redemption) in September 2009 effectively cleared significant areas of terrorist presence in Dera Ismail Khan, Frontier Region Tank, and Zhob. Subsequent operations, including Zarb-e-Azb in North Waziristan and Khyber-I and Khyber-II in the Khyber Agency, targeted militant groups such as the TTP and Lashkar-e-Islam. The National Action Plan (NAP) implemented in 2015 aimed to restore peace in Karachi, while Operation Raddul Fasaad, launched in February 2017, focused on eliminating residual terrorist elements in various regions, leading to a significant reduction in terrorist activities by 2018 (Mirza, 2021).

The 2019 U.S. Terrorism Report and Pakistan

Pakistan's counterterrorism efforts faced criticism in the 2019 Country Report on Terrorism by the US State Department, despite the government's acknowledgment of threats from groups like TTP and ISIS-K. Additionally, Pakistan's involvement in US-Taliban discussions was noted positively. The "Global Terrorism Index" (GTI) reported Pakistan's ranking rise from fifth to seventh in 2020, alongside a significant decrease in terror-related deaths since 2007. However, the toll of terrorism on Pakistan has been substantial, with approximately 80,000 lives lost and economic costs exceeding \$102.5 billion. Despite receiving \$33 billion in assistance from the US for its role in the GWOT, Pakistan's own expenditure, estimated at over \$200 billion, far exceeds this amount, according to a 2017 USAID report, with a significant portion allocated to coordination and aviation assistance (Mirza, 2021).

Pakistan has Facilitated Negotiations with the Taliban

The international community, notably the United States, has increasingly turned to political avenues to address the Afghan conflict's complexity, driven by heightened security concerns, escalating economic costs, social disruption, and human suffering. Consequently, efforts to accelerate reconciliation, reintegration, and peace initiatives, including peace discussions and agreements, have been prioritized. Despite attempts by the Afghan government, the international community, and regional actors to reintegrate insurgents into Afghan society, these endeavors have faltered due to the absence of a unified and comprehensive strategy for peace and stability. Initially, there was a lack of consensus on a coherent policy addressing reconciliation or peace-building processes. Pakistan has advocated for the inclusion of moderate Taliban factions in Afghanistan's political landscape, a stance initially endorsed by the Afghan government. Shortly after the US invasion of Afghanistan, President Musharraf underscored the importance of engaging with moderate elements within the Taliban (Rashid, 2008). While Pakistan's motives could be perceived as serving its own strategic interests, this approach, now acknowledged by the US, reflects a balanced strategy.

Pakistan's cautious approach stems from a history of mistrust toward the United States. Following the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in the 1990s,

Pakistan was left to grapple with numerous challenges, including a refugee influx, proliferation of weapons, and instability in neighboring Afghanistan. Moreover, US-imposed military and economic sanctions exacerbated regional challenges, widening the trust deficit between the two countries. Pakistan's role in Afghanistan has also raised suspicion in the US, particularly post-9/11, with accusations of engaging in a "double game" that undermines American interests (Millar, 2011; Tariq, 2020). Pakistani officials have long argued for engagement with the Taliban as the most pragmatic approach to achieving peace in Afghanistan, contrasting with the US preference for military intervention over diplomacy. Until 2010, the US showed reluctance to negotiate with the Taliban, despite European allies' advocacy for diplomatic solutions. However, post-2010, the US exhibited increased interest in engaging with both Kandahar and Haqqani Taliban factions. Effective resolution of the Afghan issue necessitates collaboration between the US, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, with Pakistan potentially wielding influence over Taliban peace talks. Negotiations with the Taliban require a cautious and strategic approach, with Pakistan's pivotal role acknowledged in facilitating consensus among the US, Kabul administration, and Taliban factions in a final peace agreement for Afghanistan (Khalil et al., 2015).

Since 2010, the Significant Advancements in Reconciliation and Peace Talks

In 2010, the Afghan government, with backing from Saudi Arabia, attempted direct communication with the Taliban as part of a peace initiative, deliberately excluding Pakistan from the process. Subsequently, Pakistan sought to reclaim its role and underscore its importance in the peace process, exemplified by the arrest of Mullah Abdul Ghani Bradar, a significant Taliban negotiator. Bradar, a co-founder of the Taliban movement, possessed extensive contacts with various stakeholders, including the UN, Afghan government, and intelligence agencies of Saudi Arabia and the United States. Concurrently, as military operations resumed in insurgent strongholds, the insurgency continued to escalate despite efforts to eliminate lower-level Taliban officials. These counter-insurgency endeavors, while partially successful in targeting Taliban operatives, failed to achieve substantial reductions in insurgency levels or improvements in overall law and order,

underscoring the imperative for a comprehensive peace process (Tariq et al., 2021). Meanwhile, the United States initiated peace talks with various insurgent factions and intensified efforts to engage with the Taliban. High-level meetings between American officials and Taliban representatives in Germany and Qatar, facilitated by Pakistan, aimed to foster confidence-building measures between Pakistan and the US on the peace process (Bew et al., 2013; Khalil et al., 2015).

Several negotiation rounds have occurred previously, with Pakistan's role as a neighboring state and key ally in the global counterterrorism effort crucial for facilitating dialogue between the United States and the Taliban to restore stability in Afghanistan. However, Pakistan's influence over the Taliban remains limited, relegating its role primarily to that of a mediator. Despite past futile negotiations in Qatar, future efforts are anticipated to renew, albeit with recognition of the Taliban's decisive role in determining the course of the peace process.

The Talks' Suspension: A Setback for the Afghan Peace Process

Amidst a climate marked by mutual distrust and misapprehension, the Taliban declared the suspension of discussions and peace negotiations with American counterparts (Clark, 2012). Various factors contributed to this impasse, rooted in the longstanding antagonism between the Afghan government and the Taliban, alongside regional dynamics. Notably, the release of Taliban officials and their establishment of representation in the Taliban office in Qatar emerged as a pivotal point of contention. Additionally, strained relations between the United States and Pakistan escalated following a US military operation that resulted in the deaths of 24 Pakistani soldiers at the Salala checkpoint. In response, Pakistan suspended all facilitation efforts for the US, halted NATO supplies, and revoked visas for US diplomats engaged in Taliban peace negotiations.

This development dealt a significant blow to the peace talks, given Pakistan's pivotal role as a facilitator, although the nation oscillated between facilitating and opposing negotiations, reflecting suspicions toward US intentions. Pakistan exerted pressure on the Taliban to engage in peace discussions with the Afghan government (Walsh & Schmitt, 2012; Tariq et al., 2021), yet concurrently rebuffed calls for direct involvement in encouraging

senior Taliban leadership to participate in negotiations, deeming such assertions "preposterous" and "ridiculous" in the aftermath of the Salala incident (Abbot, 2012).

Peace Talks in Doha: From Hope to Despair

The Doha Process encountered an impasse in 2013 primarily due to discord surrounding the "title of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan" and the "flag utilized by the Taliban for their office." The Afghan government viewed this initiative by the Taliban with skepticism, interpreting it as tantamount to establishing a Taliban government in exile (Hussain, 2013; Tariq et al., 2021). Following over a year of suspended discussions, the United States and other NATO nations initiated a series of diplomatic and covert endeavors, backed and supported by Pakistan, aimed at coaxing the Taliban back to the negotiating table. In 2015, permission was granted for the Taliban to reopen their political office in Qatar (Bakr & Ahmad, 2015; Khalil et al., 2015). Subsequently, Pakistan anticipates the preservation of its strategic and political interests by all stakeholders in Afghanistan, following its pivotal role in facilitating peace talks between the Taliban and the United States.

President Ashraf Ghani and Peace Initiatives

Following the inauguration of President Ashraf Ghani and the establishment of a new government, there was a revitalized effort towards peace talks and reconciliation. The Ghani administration swiftly prioritized reconciliation and peace discussions within its domestic agenda. Through a succession of diplomatic and political dialogues, as well as strategic efforts by the US, Afghan authorities, and Pakistan, negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taliban for a political resolution to the Afghan crisis are poised to commence (Mirza et al., 2020).

Murree Process: A Victim of Mullah Umer and Mullah Mansoor's Death

On July 7, 2015, a new initiative aimed at fostering peace and stability in Afghanistan commenced in Murree, located on the outskirts of Islamabad. Facilitated and hosted by Pakistan, this endeavor, commonly referred to as the "Murree Process," garnered broad support and participation. Participants and analysts regarded this process as pivotal, with significant implications. There were high expectations for the attainment of a

comprehensive agreement. However, the progress of the Process was severely hampered when it was revealed, on the eve of the second session of crucial deliberations, that Mullah Umer, the supreme leader of the Taliban, had passed away in 2013 (Khan, 2015; Tariq, 2020). It is believed that the Afghan government leaked news of Mullah Umer's death due to dissatisfaction with the handling of the process in Pakistan, fundamentally altering the dynamics. Subsequently, talks were suspended, and the struggle for succession within the Taliban leadership disrupted the peace endeavor (Khalil et al., 2015).

Mullah Mansoor met his demise in a drone strike near the Afghan border in Balochistan, Pakistan, on May 22, 2016. This event was deemed catastrophic as it halted the negotiation process that had commenced with Pakistan's support. It was perceived as an affront to the Afghan peace process and a violation of Pakistan's sovereignty. According to NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, this action "hindered the peace talks between the movement and the Afghan government, thus delaying the peace process" (Zia, 2016).

The Peace Process and the Quadrilateral Coordination Group

The process of reconciliation and peacebuilding involves a series of diplomatic and political initiatives undertaken by various stakeholders. Due to the complexities associated with engaging the Taliban in peace talks, a significant development was the establishment of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG). Comprising major global powers such as the United States and China, alongside key regional actors like the Afghan government and Pakistan, the QCG aimed to address Afghanistan's political challenges, particularly negotiations with the Taliban. Its inaugural meeting on January 11, 2016, underscored the Afghan government's firm commitment to pursuing peace and reconciliation with insurgent groups, including the Taliban and Hezbi Islami Hekmatyar. During subsequent discussions, Afghan Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani urged the Taliban to participate in the peace process and resolve differences through dialogue, emphasizing the interests of the Afghan populace (Tariq, 2021).

While the establishment and functioning of the QCG are acknowledged as pivotal for facilitating reconciliation efforts, the Taliban's refusal to engage with the group is evident. The Taliban stipulated a

condition for direct negotiations solely with the United States. Against this backdrop, President Trump's election in the United States signaled a shift towards seeking an agreement with the Taliban to diminish active US involvement in Afghanistan. Appointing Zalmay Khalilzad as a special adviser on Afghanistan, President Trump tasked him with the singular objective of brokering dialogue between the Afghan government and the Taliban, with the aim of resolving the Afghan conflict (AFP, 2018). Khalilzad promptly initiated contacts with both the Taliban and the Afghan government following his appointment, including a visit to Islamabad with a formal request from President Trump soliciting Pakistan's assistance in facilitating an end to the Afghan conflict (Constable, 2018).

In Trump Era, Pakistan's Role in the Afghan Peace Process

Pakistan's cooperation in facilitating US-Taliban talks has been consistently sought by the US government under President Donald Trump's administration. The release of Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar from detention in October 2018, orchestrated at the request of the US, and Pakistan's assistance in facilitating the passage of Taliban figures to Doha for negotiations have been lauded by the US special envoy for Afghanistan. Recognizing Pakistan's critical role in the peace process, US officials, including Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, have expressed appreciation for Pakistan's contributions, while also emphasizing the need for continued cooperation. Despite past challenges, Pakistan's evolving stance towards Afghanistan has been positively acknowledged, particularly its support for intra-Afghan discussions between the Taliban and the Afghan government. According to assessments by US Special Envoy Zalmay Khalilzad, Pakistan's efforts have been instrumental in advancing the peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan (Tariq et al., 2021).

Pre-9/11 Extremism and Terrorism in Pakistan: A Historical Overview

Pakistan experienced relative stability prior to the emergence of significant terrorism and extremism within its borders, primarily grappling with sporadic sectarian and religious conflicts. However, the transformative events such as the Iranian revolution, the rise of the Taliban regime, and the proliferation of Jihadist ideology in neighboring Afghanistan had

profound adverse effects on Pakistani society. In the 1980s, under the leadership of Zia Ul Haq, Pakistan underwent a process of Islamization, marked by the establishment of numerous Madrassas across the country. These institutions later served as training grounds for Afghan Mujahidin, fostering the proliferation of a jihadist ethos within Pakistan, which garnered support from various religious political entities. This Islamization agenda became a central tenet of Pakistan's domestic and foreign policy during the 1980s. Following the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, Pakistan aligned itself with the United States as a key ally in the Afghan resistance against communism. Subsequent to the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Taliban emerged as a significant power in the region, with Pakistan serving as a crucial conduit for their communication with the outside world. However, in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, Pakistan shifted its stance on the Taliban, assuming a frontline role in the global fight against terrorism. Pakistan pledged its support to the United States in combating terrorist organizations such as the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, who had taken refuge within its borders.

The invasion of Afghanistan by the United States in response to the 9/11 attacks triggered a surge in extremism and terrorism within Pakistan, with the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) emerging as hotbeds for such activities. Extremism, propagated in the guise of religious fervor, found fertile ground in these areas, fostering a climate conducive to the spread of terrorism throughout the country. The advent of globalization and technological advancements further empowered terrorist groups, providing them with enhanced resources and access to modern communication technologies. Pakistan's involvement in the Afghan conflict against terrorism precipitated various domestic challenges, exacerbating the spread of terrorism within its borders. The current wave of terrorism plaguing Pakistan is largely attributed to state policies implemented in the late 1970s, which sowed the seeds of extremist ideologies. This phenomenon persisted unabated until the 9/11 attacks, marking a critical turning point in Pakistan's approach to combating terrorism (Amir and Ayaz, 2010).

Post-9/11 Security Threats: The Impact of the War on Terrorism on Pakistan

Following the 9/11 attacks, the United States embarked on a mission to eradicate terrorism, particularly targeting Al Qaeda and the Taliban, who held power in Afghanistan at the time. Recognizing Pakistan's pivotal role in expelling these extremist forces from Afghanistan, the United States adopted a multifaceted approach in its engagement with Pakistan. Employing a stance of "either be with us or against us," the United States pressured Pakistan into aligning with its war on terror. However, Pakistan's decision to cooperate with the United States stemmed from its strategic interests (Rooh ul Amin, 2020). As an ally of the United States in the war on terrorism, Pakistan has faced significant challenges. While the 9/11 attacks constituted a single act of terrorism on U.S. soil, Pakistan has endured numerous similar attacks within its borders, resulting in a deterioration of its law and order situation. Terrorist bombings and suicide attacks have afflicted every region of the country. Pakistan, previously considered a safe haven for various armed Islamist insurgencies, hastily joined the global community in the fight against terrorism post-9/11. This policy shift toward Afghanistan has engendered bloodshed and political upheaval, particularly in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), and Balochistan.

The surge in political turmoil and extremism has been exacerbated by governance deficiencies and an over-reliance on military strategies. Al Qaeda and its affiliates persist in operating within Pakistan, with the nexus between the Pakistani Taliban and Al Qaeda posing a significant security threat. Pakistan faced its first direct military attack by external forces, other than India, on September 3, 2008, marking a critical juncture in its sovereignty and security (Saima et al., 2012). The repercussions of the war on terror have reverberated across Pakistan, resulting in a myriad of internal challenges that surpass external ones. The nation has become embroiled in internal conflict, with violence permeating from Karachi to Khyber. As articulated by former President Musharraf, the 9/11 attacks not only impacted the United States but also inflicted significant harm upon Pakistan, with enduring consequences. Pakistan has grappled with the proliferation of Talibanization, precipitating a culture of terrorism characterized by surprise attacks, targeted killings, bombings of civilian infrastructure, and suicide bombings. The

toll of the war on terror is staggering, with Pakistan having lost 83,000 lives and incurring economic losses amounting to nearly US \$126 billion over the past two decades (Jamal, 2021).

Security Concerns at the Pak-Afghan Border: Implications for Pakistan

The Durand Line, spanning 2,640 kilometers and delineating the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, originated from an agreement signed on November 12, 1893, in Kabul, Afghanistan, between Abdur Rahman Khan, the Afghan king, and Sir Mortimer Durand, a secretary of the British Indian administration (Schons, 2011). Despite its establishment during the British colonial era, Kabul presently does not recognize the Durand Line as a legitimate boundary, contributing to significant challenges within the region. Characterized by rugged, mountainous terrain and harsh environmental conditions, the border area poses difficulties in maintaining control and security. Moreover, its passage through the heart of the Pashtun community raises questions regarding its legitimacy, particularly considering that the number of Pashtuns residing in Pakistan surpasses that in Afghanistan. The Pashtun populace inhabiting both sides of the border historically disregards its significance, complicating efforts to curb cross-border movements. The lack of acknowledgment of the border among Pashtun groups in Pakistan and Afghanistan, coupled with geographical and climatic impediments, presents obstacles to effective border management (Karaca & Özkurt, 2011).

Pakistan's inability to enforce border control raises concerns, not only due to challenges such as human trafficking, arms, and drug smuggling but also in the context of its struggle against the Tehrik-e Taliban. The nation's internal security is compromised by the porous border, yet its primary focus remains on mitigating threats posed by India. External pressures, led by the United States, advocate for increased deployment of ground troops along the Afghan border, a demand Pakistan struggles to meet. Despite its capability to enhance border security, Pakistan fears that intensified control may exacerbate pressure on the Pashtun community, leading to internal instability. Additionally, Pakistan is wary of perceived influences from Afghan Taliban and Indian intelligence agencies on Pakistani Taliban activities (Karaca & Özkurt, 2015).

The 2,640-kilometer border shared by Pakistan and Afghanistan connects the latter to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan through approximately 300 passes. Since the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, Pakistan has been implicated as a sanctuary for terrorists fleeing Afghanistan post-U.S. invasion. The porous nature of the border has facilitated the infiltration of militants into Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Within FATA, the populace perceives the War on Terror through a political lens, viewing the Taliban as valiant adversaries against the perceived illegitimate U.S. occupation of Afghanistan. A significant portion of FATA residents regard the United States as antagonistic, attributing their hardships and disrupted livelihoods to the ongoing conflict. The insecurity along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border has catalyzed the emergence of the Afghan Taliban within Pakistan's tribal regions, subsequently fostering the rise of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan. Non-state actors have orchestrated numerous acts of violence, including killings, abductions, suicide bombings, and infrastructural damage, targeting civilians, military personnel, and political and religious figures alike (Akbar, 2015).

The impoverished conditions prevalent in FATA, compounded by deficient infrastructure and institutional support, have exacerbated the vulnerability of tribal communities. FATA stands as Pakistan's most economically deprived province, with 60% of its inhabitants living below the poverty line. Such dire socio-economic circumstances have fueled the proliferation of militancy in the region. Safeguarding Pakistan's borders has long been a cornerstone of its foreign policy, integral to preserving national sovereignty and territorial integrity. Securing FATA, the gateway to Pakistan's sovereignty, assumes paramount importance in the nation's overarching security strategy (Hilali, 2010).

The Issue of Drone Attacks

The United States initiated its inaugural reported drone strike in Pakistan on June 19, 2004, marking the commencement of a clandestine campaign that would claim the lives of numerous innocent civilians. The utilization of drones in Pakistan has remained veiled in secrecy since the initial strike in South Waziristan, which resulted in the demise of prominent Taliban figure Nek Muhammad. The Pakistani government has consistently denied the

occurrence of such strikes or the inadvertent loss of civilian lives (The Drone War in Pakistan, 2022). During President Barack Obama's tenure, the implementation of signature strikes led to a significant escalation in drone operations compared to the Bush administration. In 2013, President Obama revised the criteria for drone strikes, placing greater reliance on intelligence data to minimize civilian casualties. However, Pakistan was exempted from such regulations, contending that the "identified targets pose imminent threats to the US." The drone strike dilemma in Pakistan proved challenging to resolve due to divergent viewpoints within the country. Proponents argue that drone strikes are instrumental in curbing terrorism in the region, asserting that combating adversaries in rugged terrain necessitates the deployment of unmanned aerial vehicles. Conversely, opponents contend that the strikes violate international law as they constitute extrajudicial killings and result in a higher civilian casualty rate than that of terrorists. Despite the elimination of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) leaders such as Hakim Ullah Mehsud, Baitullah Mehsud, and Khawaray Mehsud in drone strikes, the civilian death toll is indisputably higher than that of militants. As articulated by Maan (2014): "The involuntary utilization of drones in FATA has engendered significant civilian casualties, predominantly targeting a few high-value targets (HVTs). Given the broader context in FATA, drone strikes possess the potential to fuel anti-US sentiments and foster instability in the foreseeable future" (Sultan, 2015, p. 70).

Protecting Pakistan's National Interests: The Costs and Consequences

Pakistan demonstrated genuine cooperation in the global endeavor against terrorism, contingent upon safeguarding its national interests. The campaign against terrorism in Afghanistan precipitated widespread terror, instability, and substantial human losses, the repercussions of which are anticipated to persist for decades. Pakistan incurred a disproportionately heavy toll as a non-NATO member engaged in this conflict, encompassing the proliferation of terrorism and enduring human and economic costs (Khawaja & Mahmood, 2020).

Terrorism Proliferation

The inception of the war on terror in Afghanistan aimed primarily to dismantle Al Qaeda and topple the Taliban regime in Kabul. However, its ramifications swiftly extended into Pakistan, inflicting widespread devastation upon the populace and exacerbating the nation's security and socioeconomic challenges. Terrorism not only engendered psychological trauma among Pakistanis but also fostered ethno-religious divides, polarizing society into factions supportive of and opposed to militants. Pakistan sustained significant losses of civilian lives and military personnel throughout the protracted asymmetric conflict, spanning from 2001. Initially, Pakistan lacked the requisite capacity, expertise, and political resolve to effectively counter such a formidable, battle-hardened insurgency (Rooh ul Amin et al., 2020).

The conciliatory approaches employed during Operations Al Mizan and Zalzalā (2002-2008) failed to yield the desired outcomes, resulting in a continued escalation of terrorist incidents and casualties. However, it was through Operations Rah-e Nijat in Swat, Rah-e Rast, and Zarb-e Azb that the menace of violence and terrorism was decisively quashed, with an indiscriminate targeting of all terrorist factions, regardless of their affiliations. The nationwide solidarity evoked by the tragic Army Public School incident in Peshawar on December 16, 2014, galvanized support behind the National Action Plan, resulting in the neutralization of 2763 insurgents. Following Rah-e-Nijat, there was a progressive degradation of the terrorist threat profile, with a marked decline observed from 2010 onward (Khattak, 2015).

The Emerging Islamic State (IS) Threat in Pakistan

Since assuming control of northern Iraq and eastern Syria in 2014, the Islamic State (IS) has been perceived as a looming threat to extend its influence into Pakistan. Decades of sectarianism and religious extremism in Pakistan have provided fertile ground for the proliferation of IS ideology. Despite government efforts to curb extremism, the pervasive presence of Islamic radicalism in Pakistan has facilitated the potential growth of IS within its borders, presenting a significant challenge to national security, particularly following the United States' withdrawal from Afghanistan. A recent attack perpetrated by IS on March 4 at a Shiite Mosque in

Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, serves as a poignant example. This assault resulted in the loss of at least 64 civilian lives and numerous injuries, marking Pakistan's deadliest attack in the past four years. Additionally, in Sibi town, Baluchistan, IS carried out another significant attack less than a week later, resulting in the deaths of six security personnel and injuries to 22 individuals, including 19 law enforcement officers. These incidents underscore the escalating threat posed by the Islamic State to the country.

Security analysts suggest that IS militants have traversed from Afghanistan into Pakistan, capitalizing on the deeply entrenched sectarianism and religious extremism prevalent in the region. The protracted history of sectarian violence in Pakistan has created an environment conducive to IS-led militancy. Particularly alarming is the heightened apprehension among Shia Muslims and other religious minorities, who have long been targets of Sunni extremism. Prior to the emergence of IS, thousands of Shia Muslims fell victim to sectarian violence in Pakistan. Despite facing setbacks in Afghanistan due to the Afghan Taliban's offensive against IS militants, the terrorist group appears to be regaining momentum in Pakistan. With the Afghan Taliban largely neutralizing the IS threat in Afghanistan, there are concerns that Pakistan could become the preferred operational base for IS militants seeking refuge. This dynamic underscores the urgent need for comprehensive strategies to counter the resurgence of IS activity within Pakistan's borders (Notezai, 2022).

The Major Terrorist Assaults in Pakistan

Following the events of 9/11, Pakistan's governance was characterized by inconsistent and ineffectual policies, marked by abrupt shifts in both internal and external strategies, which contributed to the proliferation of terrorism within its borders. Initially confined to the border districts of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), terrorist activities gradually expanded to encompass a wider geographical area, including much of FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), ultimately extending throughout the entire nation. The repercussions of Pakistan's involvement in the war on terror have been profound, exacting a substantial toll on innocent lives, property, and socio-political and economic stability (Yusufi & Islam, 2018). The strategic recalibration of Pakistan's policy towards

Afghanistan has presented a confluence of opportunities and challenges for the nation. In regions such as FATA, KP, and Baluchistan, these policy shifts have precipitated a surge in violence and political unrest. Over the first decade of the war on terror, Pakistan incurred significant losses, with over 35,000 individuals, including 5,000 armed personnel, succumbing to various terrorist attacks. Notably, the year 2010 alone witnessed 2,113 incidents of militant and sectarian violence, resulting in the deaths of 2,913 individuals and the injury of an additional 5,824 individuals (Rana, 2011).

In 2021, Pakistan witnessed a total of 207 terrorist attacks, including five instances of suicide bombings. Perpetrated by diverse religiously motivated militants, nationalist insurgents, and violent sectarian factions, these attacks claimed the lives of 335 individuals and left 555 others wounded (Pakistan Security Report 2021). The cumulative toll of Pakistan's participation in the war on terror amounts to the loss of 83,000 lives and an estimated expenditure of nearly US \$126 billion over the past two decades (Jamal, 2021).

Terrorist Assaults in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Prior to the events of 9/11, the phenomenon of suicide attacks was virtually nonexistent in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), or elsewhere within Pakistan. The emergence of suicide terrorism in KP and FATA ensued following the commencement of armed conflict in Waziristan in 2004. Exploiting these regions, the Taliban sought to maintain control and assert dominance, utilizing suicide attacks as a means to quell opposition and consolidate their authority. Initially, Taliban presence was minimal in adjacent districts such as Bannu, Kohat, Dera Ismael Khan, and Peshawar. However, over time, the Taliban strategically propagated a campaign of suicide terrorism, particularly targeting urbanized areas proximate to the FATA border. Their primary objectives included undermining governmental legitimacy, demoralizing the armed forces, and exacting retribution for military interventions in FATA. In response to military operations in FATA and Swat, the Taliban perpetrated retaliatory suicide assaults across Pakistan, with a particular focus on KP, Punjab, and Islamabad, with security forces being their primary targets (Chari, 2011).

One of the most tragic events in Pakistan's history, the Peshawar school massacre occurred on

December 16, 2014. In this act of terrorism, seven heavily armed Taliban assailants stormed an Army Public School, resulting in the martyrdom of 150 individuals, including at least 134 students, and causing injuries to over 100 others. The massacre elicited widespread condemnation globally and had profound implications, particularly within KP. Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed responsibility for the atrocity, citing it as retribution for government aggression against TTP operatives. Subsequently, Pakistan lifted a six-year moratorium on the death penalty and executed numerous accused members of the Taliban in response to the massacre (Lewis, 2021).

Terrorist Assaults in Punjab

Before 2004, the province of Punjab was primarily associated with sectarian violence. However, in the subsequent years, there was a notable surge in terrorist activities across the region. The year 2007, in particular, witnessed a significant escalation in violence, marking one of the most turbulent periods in Pakistan's history. Notably, the scheduled elections on January 8, 2008, were overshadowed by the unexpected assassination of Benazir Bhutto during her election campaign at Liaquat Bagh in Rawalpindi on December 27, 2007. Bhutto's assassination, characterized by a gunman opening fire and a bomb detonation, precipitated widespread societal unrest, including looting and arson of both public and private property. This event was deemed the most egregious instance of street terrorism in Pakistan's annals (Saima et al., 2012).

Throughout the first decade of the war on terror, Punjab witnessed a total of 20 terrorist attacks resulting in the deaths of 315 individuals, including 62 security personnel. Notably, Lahore's Moon Market was the site of two devastating suicide attacks, claiming the lives of over 85 individuals. Southern Punjab emerged as a significant recruitment ground for militant organizations such as Jaish-e-Mohammad and Lashkar-e-Taiba, serving as a source of both militants and suicide bombers, as well as supplying militants and commanders (Noor-ul-Haq, 2011). The high-profile attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore on March 3, 2009, further spotlighted the issue of terrorism in Punjab. This incident resulted in the deaths of six policemen and injuries to seven Sri Lankan players, significantly tarnishing Pakistan's international reputation and deterring international teams from

playing in the country. Another notable incident occurred at the Parade Lane Mosque near Rawalpindi's Pakistani army headquarters on December 4, 2010, where terrorist gunfire and two suicide bombings claimed the lives of at least 42 individuals, with 77 others sustaining injuries (Firdous, 2009).

Terrorist Assaults in Islamabad

Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan, did not remain immune to the scourge of terrorist attacks. Among the notable incidents was a suicide attack targeting the United Nations World Food Program office, constituting one of the catastrophic terrorist assaults. Additionally, the Lal Masjid siege, which resulted in the deaths of 150 individuals, triggered a demonstration by female students from religious Madrassas against the government, marking the first such protest in the capital (Khan, 2009). On September 20, 2008, a dump truck laden with explosives detonated in front of the Islamabad Marriott Hotel, resulting in the loss of at least 54 lives and causing injuries to 266 others. Notably, this attack claimed the lives of five foreign nationals and inflicted injuries upon fifteen others (Masood, 2008). Subsequently, on October 28, 2010, two suicide bombers targeted the International Islamic University Islamabad's new campus, resulting in the deaths of at least six staff members and students, with over 29 others sustaining injuries (Ahmed, 2012). Such incidents underscore the significant security challenges faced by Islamabad, the nation's seat of governance.

Terrorist Assaults in Baluchistan

Baluchistan has undergone a significant transformation, particularly in the aftermath of the Gwadar development. The assassination of Akbar Bugti and the exploitation of mineral resources, including coal and natural gas reserves, have emerged as focal points, exacerbating tensions among the region's inhabitants. External influences from nations such as Iran and India, along with the presence of insurgent groups like the Baluch Liberation Front (BLF) and the Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA), have further compounded the situation. Given its strategic position as a nexus linking West, South, and Central Asia, Baluchistan holds considerable geopolitical importance. The involvement of China in the Gwadar deep-water port adds another layer to Baluchistan's strategic

significance, particularly in the context of United States' interests. These multifaceted factors collectively contribute to the region's instability and the proliferation of terrorist activities (Akram, 2011).

Terrorist Assaults in Sindh

Sindh, Pakistan's second-largest province, has not been immune to the spread of terrorism. On May 31, 2006, a high-intensity bomb exploded at a Shia Mosque on M A Jinnah Road in Karachi, resulting in the deaths of at least twenty-four worshippers and injuring thirty-four others. In July 2007, former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto returned to Pakistan as part of an agreement with then-President Musharraf. Her arrival was met with a massive gathering in Karachi, which unfortunately became the target of one of the deadliest terrorist attacks, claiming the lives of 140 people and injuring over 500 more. The province, particularly Karachi, has also been plagued by targeted assassinations driven by political maneuverings, ethnic tensions, and religious differences, marking a disturbing trend (Saima et al., 2012).

Pakistan Military Operation Against Terrorist

Several military operations have been conducted to suppress insurgent activities in Pakistan, as peaceful dialogue repeatedly failed to resolve hostilities. Efforts to negotiate with the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) yielded no significant results. Consequently, the Pakistani government launched multiple military operations to target and dismantle militant groups. On April 26, 2009, Operation Rah-e-Rast targeted the TTP and their associates in the Swat Valley. Similarly, on September 9, 2008, Operation Sher-Dil (Lion Heart) was initiated in the Bajaur Agency, targeting approximately 2,000 militants in the area. Aerial strikes by the Pakistan Air Force were conducted to destroy militant safe havens in the Orakzai Agency. In response to the indiscriminate killings of minorities by militants, Operation Sirat-e-Mustaqeem was launched in the Bara Tehsil area of the Khyber Agency. Between May 2, 2011, and August 17, 2011, Operation Koh-i-Sufaid (White Mountain) targeted insurgents in the Kurram Agency (Parveen et al., 2014).

On June 24, 2014, Operation Zarb-e-Azb was launched in North Waziristan, a region historically plagued by violence. The Director General of Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) stated, "On the directions of the Government,

Pakistan's Armed Forces have launched a comprehensive operation against local and foreign terrorists hiding in sanctuaries in North Waziristan Agency." The militants had paralyzed life within the agency, continuously torturing and killing the local population. In retaliation for Operation Zarb-e-Azb, militants perpetrated one of the most heinous acts in Pakistani history on December 16, 2014, when they killed 135 students at a military-run school in Peshawar, igniting national outrage. Pakistan's Prime Minister described the incident as a "national tragedy unleashed by savages." The nation's collective grief and anger demanded a decisive response from the government, leading to the establishment of military courts under the 21st Amendment, aimed at enforcing the death penalty on terrorists. Operation Zarb-e-Azb gained significant momentum, and after a year, 2,763 terrorists had been killed and over 9,000 had surrendered (Shahid, 2015).

Conclusion

The intricate dynamics of Pakistan's role in the Global War on Terror (GWOT) highlight the complex interplay of geopolitical interests, national security concerns, and international diplomacy. Despite initial reluctance, Pakistan's involvement in the GWOT was driven by a combination of coercive pressures and strategic incentives offered by the United States. These included promises of substantial economic aid, security assistance, and diplomatic support aimed at countering Indian influence and ensuring regional stability. Pakistan's dual role in the GWOT has had significant impacts. On one hand, Pakistan has been instrumental in providing logistical support, sharing intelligence, and capturing key Al-Qaeda operatives, thus contributing to the global counterterrorism efforts. On the other hand, its strategic interests, particularly in maintaining influence in Afghanistan and countering India, have led to accusations of playing a "double game," supporting certain militant groups while fighting others. The involvement in the GWOT has also had profound internal repercussions for Pakistan. The country has faced severe economic, social, and human costs, with thousands of lives lost and significant financial expenditures. Despite these sacrifices, Pakistan has managed to secure some of its strategic interests, such as maintaining its nuclear assets and receiving international aid, but the broader goal of resolving the Kashmir issue remains elusive. In the context of peace negotiations with the Taliban,

Pakistan has played a facilitative role, leveraging its influence to bring various parties to the negotiating table. However, the peace process has been fraught with challenges, including the deaths of key Taliban leaders and suspensions of talks, reflecting the complexities of achieving a sustainable resolution to the Afghan conflict. The impacts of the US invasion of Afghanistan on the security dynamics of Pakistan have been profound and multifaceted. The following conclusions can be drawn from the analysis.

Before 9/11, Pakistan experienced sporadic sectarian and religious conflicts but was largely free from the widespread terrorism and extremism seen in later years. However, the country's involvement in the Afghan-Soviet war in the 1980s, its subsequent support of the Mujahideen, and the rise of the Taliban had already begun to plant the seeds of extremism. The aftermath of the US invasion of Afghanistan and Pakistan's alignment with the US in the War on Terror led to a significant increase in terrorism and extremism within Pakistan. The Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) became a hub for terrorist activities, exacerbating internal security issues and leading to a surge in militant violence across the country. Pakistan's initial military operations, such as Operation Al Mizan and Operation Zalzala, were largely ineffective in curbing terrorism. It was only with later operations like Rah-e-Nijat and Zarb-e-Azb that Pakistan managed to make significant strides in reducing militant strongholds, though at a considerable human and economic cost. The use of US drone strikes in Pakistan, intended to target high-value terrorist leaders, also resulted in substantial civilian casualties and widespread anti-US sentiment. This further complicated Pakistan's internal security landscape and fueled local support for militant groups. The porous Pakistan-Afghanistan border has been a persistent security challenge, facilitating the movement of militants and complicating efforts to control extremism. The Pashtun population's disregard for the border, coupled with harsh terrain and climatic conditions, made effective border management difficult.

The War on Terror significantly strained Pakistan's socio-economic fabric. It not only led to substantial loss of life and property but also hindered economic development and exacerbated political instability. The long-term socio-economic repercussions have been detrimental, affecting national growth and development. The rise of the Islamic State (IS) in

Pakistan has added a new dimension to the security challenges. Sectarian violence and religious extremism, which had already been prevalent, have provided fertile ground for IS to gain a foothold, posing a serious threat to internal stability. Military operations against terrorist strongholds, though ultimately successful in many respects, triggered severe retaliatory attacks. The most notable of these was the Peshawar school massacre in 2014, which galvanized national resolve against terrorism but also highlighted the ongoing threat. Different provinces in Pakistan have faced varying levels of terrorism and violence. While KP and FATA have been the epicenters, other regions like Punjab, Baluchistan, Sindh, and Islamabad have also experienced significant terrorist activities, each with unique local dynamics. Pakistan's involvement in the War on Terror, driven by the need to align with international efforts while protecting national interests, has led to a complex security scenario. The country has borne a disproportionate share of the human and economic costs, facing more internal than external security challenges as a result. The US invasion of Afghanistan and the ensuing War on Terror have deeply impacted Pakistan's security dynamics. While military operations have achieved some success in curbing terrorism, the overall toll on Pakistan in terms of human lives, economic costs, and socio-political stability has been immense. The interplay of internal policies, regional dynamics, and international pressures continues to shape Pakistan's security landscape in profound ways.

Recommendations

Pakistan should continue to strengthen its diplomatic relations with both the United States and Afghanistan. This involves maintaining open channels of communication and fostering trust through consistent and transparent actions. Engaging more actively with regional and international stakeholders, including China and Russia, can help create a broader consensus on the way forward in Afghanistan. Pakistan needs to continue its robust counterterrorism operations while also addressing the root causes of extremism, such as poverty, lack of education, and political disenfranchisement. Strengthening border security and enhancing cooperation with Afghan security forces can help mitigate cross-border terrorism. Leveraging international aid and investments, Pakistan should focus on comprehensive economic development

plans that include infrastructure development, job creation, and educational reforms. Pakistan should reassess its strategic priorities in Afghanistan, focusing on achieving a stable and peaceful neighbor rather than pursuing narrow geopolitical gains. Promoting and supporting a broad-based, inclusive political settlement in Afghanistan that includes moderate Taliban factions and other ethnic groups can help ensure long-term stability. Focused efforts on socio-economic development in impoverished regions like FATA and Baluchistan are necessary. Providing education, healthcare, and employment opportunities can reduce the allure of extremist ideologies among the local populace.

In conclusion, while Pakistan's role in the GWOT has been significant, the path forward requires a balanced approach that integrates security measures with diplomatic, economic, and social strategies to achieve lasting peace and stability both within Pakistan and in the broader region. By addressing these recommendations, Pakistan can better manage the security challenges posed by extremism and terrorism, fostering a more stable and secure environment for its citizens.

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