

Why Pakistan Can't Fight Terrorism?

Note from Editor-in-Chief

With every terrorist incident in Pakistan, such as an attack on its Naval Base, an explosive laden strike against a 5-star hotel, a target killing by shooters in its Army Headquarters (GHQ), a suicide bombing in its markets and mosques, or a remote controlled blast in front of its intelligence offices or police training centres, there is only one stereotypical response from the government, the media and the general public. Law enforcement and government officials have a prepared, one-size-fits-all statement that includes: “a report has been requested; an enquiry has been ordered; foreign hands can not be ruled out; sacrifices of the nation should not go to waste; our morale can not be deterred by such tragic acts of terrorism; the victims will be duly compensated; the attacker seemed to be a Pashtoon or Afghani of age 15-18; and the terrorist net will soon be dismantled.” The most interesting and astonishing aspect is the statement from senior government officials that the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has claimed responsibility for the attack. This happens within hours of a terrorist incident as if the TTP media wing is in direct contact with the government officials and other national and local media groups. The response from the general public and mass media routinely goes like this: “The nation should be told about the real causes; the war on terror is not our war; this battle should be fought with tooth and nail; the government has failed to prevent terrorist attacks and should therefore resign immediately; and the Indo-Israeli nexus is actively involved in destabilizing Pakistan.” Unfortunately, the portrayed perspectives of both sides lack reasoned judgment and credible assessment. There is an absence of rational, value-free, impassionate and consistent investigation and evaluation of what has been going on and why. At first, there should be a rational and unbiased identification of the problem, followed by an honest look for its causes and effects. Situation-analysis or a proper problem-tree assessment with stakeholder analysis is conspicuously absent from the whole discussion after any single incident. Some emotional statements and reactionary demands are made from both sides, the government and the public, and no sooner has the atmosphere subsided than all have forgotten to ask for the results of the promised enquiry reports or an analysis of the effectiveness of those high alert security measures taken and ordered in the aftermath of these devastating attacks. Let me briefly describe why the situation in Pakistan is showing no signs of improvement in counter-terrorism strategies, despite her being a chronic victim of the worst kind of terrorist attacks after joining the war on terror in 2001.

1. Even after a decade since 9/11/01, Pakistan has failed to produce, debate and implement a consensus based national policy for countering terrorism. The causes of this failure may be many, but chief amongst them are the multiplicity of players in the arena of counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism struggle, both in the tribal and settled districts; the

ideological differences on the very concept of the war on terror in the decision-making circles; and the minimal role of the civil administration in formulating and shaping the foreign and national security policies. The National Crisis Management Cell (NCMC) and The National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) have yet to produce a workable plan, impressive document or accurate data to date; in fact, their role in this respect is too limited.

2. Pakistan's intelligence agencies, like the two dozen US intelligence units before 9/11/01, work independently and single handedly. A Pakistan homeland security department or at least an inter-agency task force, having a joint command and a strategic and operational wing, has not yet been created in Pakistan. Causes may again be traced back to the multi-layered policy making apparatus which continues to portray unbalanced and unequal powers and be plagued by resources from a variety of players and actors. Competition and trust deficit amongst the actors of the Pakistan intelligence sector need to be considered in case of intelligence failure. The 9/11 Commission Report is a serious and open critique on the role and functions of the US security sector and a fair situational analysis of the 9/11/01 event. Never has a nation put her government agencies under so serious accountability as has happened in the USA after 9/11/01.
3. Pakistan's legislative and decision making elites have badly failed to learn from the best practices of the USA after 9/11, of the UK after the 7/7 bombings, mostly proactive and offensive in nature, and also from the experiences of Indonesia and some Arab states who mostly worked in the sphere of de-radicalization and de-indoctrination as a method of “soft” policing. Even the Policies of Australia, Norway and Canada were not consulted and searched for any insight to improve the national and local law enforcement agencies within Pakistan. This is a failure of the Pakistani intellectuals who never discussed the counter-terrorism initiatives of the western world, or even that of Turkey and Indonesia, who after a wave of terrorism incidents launched exhaustive programmes for prevention as well as investigation and prosecution of terrorism incidents. Absence of any indigenous and empirical research is a serious failure of the Pakistani think-tanks. There is copious literature now available in the western world on the plethora of subjects involving terrorism, surveillance, and early recognition and early warning of potential terrorist events. Sadly, Pakistan has not learned anything of substance from the many available sources of knowledge that would enable the country to improve law-enforcement skills and training. On the contrary, the literature that has been produced by Pakistan is mostly political and narrative in nature and not based on empirical studies and best practices.
4. Pakistan possesses a weak and compromised law enforcement sector, particularly the police, the Frontier Constabulary and the Frontier Corps, who were not ready to fight a serious,

organized and transnational crime like terrorism, and with limited legal and financial cover and support. Pakistani police, in particular, were not provided with any sophisticated weapons or surveillance equipments and were never trained in the methods and techniques of both “intelligence-led” and “community” policing, which many consider to be the current approaches to counter extremism and violent incidents, and may actually subdue radical feelings in any society. Pakistani police officers and its top leadership have overwhelmingly failed to take proactive steps to combat attacks and associated criminal conduct. Unfortunately, some of the senior police leaders have been involved in corrupt practices and the embezzlement of foreign aid funding, and others have kept quiet due to an ideological ambivalence or lack of any international exposure and interaction. The unfulfilled and controversial police reforms of 2002 and the division of the prosecution from the police has also created schisms, disconnections and dichotomies at a time when the nation direly needs a unity of command and vision with single-mindedness and commitment. The argument proposed was for specialization and division of labour, which eventually proved to be counter-productive.

5. The demands and actions of the international community can be said to be based on the “instant-coffee” approach. Over-reaction is a peculiar characteristic of the actions of those who are enormously powerful. Dealing with the corrupt elites of Pakistan, singular actions and operations, secret drone attacks, unreasonable criticism placed upon Pakistani peace dialogue with the regional Taliban, and provocative statements from the US, UK and NATO offices further confuse the public about the veracity and authenticity of the war on terror, as if this endeavor is not based on the goal of making the world a safe place to live, but rather exhibit arrogance and power, grab resources, destroy the local religion, kill innocent people, and test weapons that the people of Pakistan often perceive as an attempt at an extended virtual imperialism. Here, the conspiracy theories, of which even US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton counter terrorism, the investigation of terrorism, intelligence gathering, recently raised, creep in and further cloud the minds of the Pakistani people, which may have been better achieved by winning the people through outreach and community engagement programmes. In order to prevent future generations from slipping into the hands of extremists and radicals, the international community should slow down and show patience and respect, and acknowledge the feelings and sacrifices of the Pakistani people and the members of the security sectors. The international community should also work at improving relations between Pakistan and the countries who are often blamed for involvement in conspiracies against Pakistan's sovereignty and her nuclear capabilities. Terrorism is not only a crime in the streets of Pakistan, but also highly linked with many national and international issues. A

research oriented policy for countering this violence and its related phenomena has to be jointly devised by Pakistan and her international allies, while keeping in mind the local aspirations and demands of the people of Pakistan for progress, fairplay, mutual respect, and a share of the dividends of modern human civilization.

In addition to my above note, I regret the delay of not publishing the April issue in time which due to some unavoidable reasons has now become a part of this joint issue, the theme of which is enhancing the effectiveness of law-enforcement and criminal justice. This issue is reviewed and edited by Prof. James F. Albrecht who has been very kind to and supportive of the humble initiatives of Pakistan Society of Criminology and its official journal. We are extremely thankful to our learned Guest-Editor, and we hope that this issue will receive greater attention from academics, practitioners and policy-makers.

Fasihuddin (PSP)