

Theoretical Analysis of Socio-Economic and Political Causes of Terrorism in Pakistan

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Abstract

Terrorism, on the one side, it is a matter of serious concern for the developed world while on the other hand it is becoming a colossal menace for the developing countries like Pakistan and Afghanistan. The current paper—though theoretical in nature—argues that absolute poverty, income disparity, social injustice, scarce job opportunities, lop-sided foreign policy, lack of dedicated leadership and system—in Pakistan are the main causes of terrorism. The paper recommends education and economic reforms, social justice, and stable political and democratic government as a salvation from terrorism.

Keywords

Militancy, Terrorism, Poverty, Jihad, Radicalization, Politics, Capitalism, Globalization.

Introduction

Although terrorism is not a new phenomenon (Jaspal, 2008), still the term terrorism has neither specific nor widely accepted definition. According to *Encyclopedia Britannica* terrorism is “the systematic use of terror as a means of forcing some political objective” (p.3). Terrorism, in addition, is 'a violence or threat of violence following the purpose for the achievement of some political goals' (Jenkins, 2001, p.10), that include gaining hold over the power structure, creation of panic, kidnapping, killing of hostages and distress among the public. Similarly, Oberschall, (2004:24) defines terrorism as “the use of covert violence by a group for political ends”. In this connection, Collins (2002) observes the notion of terrorism as 'Radicalism' as the faction who supports revolutionary change in society believes in radical ideology. It is not a new trend or phenomena and can be traced back to thousands of years (Hoffman, 1999). Causational factors and motives of terrorism or radicalization tend to alter over time. However its use and techniques are growing towards sophistication (Loza, 2009).

Obviously, terrorism is multivariate and multidimensional phenomenon, existing throughout the globe. Many international organizations have gained popularity in past owing to their “terrorist actions” and motivation through support and auspiciousness from each other such as, *The Italian Brigade Rosse, Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the German Rote Armee Fraktion, the Irish Republican Army (IRA), the Armenians, the Ustasha, the Basque ETA, the Neo-Fascist Ordine Nuove, the French Action Direct* etc., (Pasquino, 1989). The

scholars, Intellectuals and philosophers observe such kind of stimulation among these organizations, their prevalence and solidarity is due to political and economic injustice and suppression, external aggression and imbalance of power (Thomes, 2004). The developed states also suppress the less developed or developing states economically which leads to militancy in the form of suicide bombing for achieving their desired goals (Kazmi and Parvez, 2011).

Similarly the escalation of terrorism in the world is also considered as the end of war between the gigantic economic systems of the world. Victoroff and Kruglanski (2009) observe, as many as the occurrence of interstate hostilities declined with the end of the World War-II, appalling violence against innocent masses has augmented by anti-state group(s) with heinous agendas and their gruesome materialization—recurrently. Besides that Taliban are also considered responsible for the growing wave of terrorism in the region. Mann (2001) states that, Taliban not only waged war against Russia in Central Asian Republics but also took part in the Islamic opposition movements in Kyrghyzstan, Tajikstan, and Uzbekistan. Such connections shaped religious extremism, a potential cause of destabilization in the region. Islamic militancy grew up in Pakistan and Bangladesh in the same period as well (Ahmad, 2009; Gupta, 2002). Regarding the role of Madrassa in spreading radicalism and terrorism, Butt, (2012) concludes that although Madrassas are playing an important role in spreading religious education to the children and transmitting religious values to the coming generations, but generally it is believed that these Madrassas are responsible for spreading militancy and terrorism in the world (Singer, 2001). In addition, these Madrassas are also used for training the militants (Stern, 2004). Limited data also confirms that a Madrassa student takes greater interest in Jihad than those of public schools (Hussain, Hussain, Bangash & Khalid, 2010). A few studies, such as Fasihuddin & Sajid (2013) and Pape & Feldman (2010), however finds no link of Madrassah education and terrorism.

Statement of the Problem

The wave of terrorism in Pakistan gained significant local and global attention due to the use of newest and sophisticated weapons with varying motives of claiming more lives and confiscating a wider area (Hussain, 2010). Radicalization and militancy has acquired central point in debates on media (both print and electronic) in Pakistan and became an obvious challenge for government at the national and international levels (Azam 2009). This research primarily aims at highlighting the various causes and reasons of militancy and terrorism in Pakistan. In this regard, the dynamics of social change in Pakistan indicates four types of resultant conflicts—as a forthcoming ending of militancy: (a) between sub-cultures and national culture (b) between economic development and cultural preservation

(c) between Islamization and westernization; and, (d) between culture and ideology (Ahmed, 2009). Evidences show that such challenges and issues are not new in their nature—manifestations may vary and differ—over time and place. Politics and religion have been intertwined since the inception of Islamic history, according to the dictum that Islam is in its essence both “religion and state” (Bechar, Bar & Machtiger, 2006).

Regarding the role of Pakistan in supporting terrorist activities Asal, Fair and Shellman, (2008) are of the opinion that this news, around the world, has gained momentum that Pakistan has been a center of anti-social and terrorist activities owing to its religio-political organization as well as geographical connections (Looney, 2004). Wide range of literature, pertaining to the foregoing issue, has been published and circulated to symbolize Pakistan as a terrorist country which led to the hypothetical proposition that the militancy's root cause is laid in Pakistan (Tellis, 2008). As a result the determinants of radicalization are here in the economic, political and social structure of the region that has been forced without addressing all those factors through grave errors in the so called war on terrorism (Kazmi and Parvez, 2011).

The above discussion concludes that problem of radicalization and terrorism is deeply rooted in the social structure of Pakistani society. The socio-economic fabric of Pakistani society has been badly shaken by the war on Terror. Such a condition leads to social stigma both for the government and its people throughout the world.

Causes of Terrorism

Although attention to terrorism has increased sharply in recent years; accessing their underneath factors is a compound and complex task. Several futile efforts to dig out one definition of terrorism have been irritated by the reality that the tag 'terrorism' is used to wrap a broad range of rather various phenomena (Bjorgo, 2005).

Following are the fundamental and essential factors and causes held responsible for the creation of terrorism and its irreparable aftermaths—that unequivocally illustrate what terrorism is and what are its major trigger points.

1. Socio-economic Causes

History reveals that economic stability has been a source of prestige, power and sustenance. On the one hand economic strength ensures social security and channelizes the socio-political dimensions, while on the other hand, it is used for exploitation and discrimination. Such discrimination and disparity give rise to various types of conflicts and leads society in an inert manner (Engels, 2004).

Globalization is considered one of the reasons of terrorism as some countries have lagged behind in socio-economic and political competition and to avoid this shame on their face they pursue terrorist activities. Secondly, modern means of communications and transportations are added as additional sources to carry out terrorist activities rather easily (Lutz and Lutz 2013). In addition, the use of modern technology has enabled the terrorist to plan and coordinate their activities worldwide while remaining in shadow (Bush, 2001). Furthermore globalization has also facilitated the flow of money to the terrorist organization, movement of terrorists across the border (Gurr, 2006). Lutz and Lutz (2013) argue that changes brought about by globalization have resulted in outbreaks of political turmoil, including terrorist acts, from a variety of groups.

Hussain (2010) is of the opinion that Capitalism is more relevant factor in the promotion of terrorism in Pakistan because the American incursion on Afghanistan entails three major objectives: to fight against and eradicate *Al-Qaida*, access to the oil reserves in Central Asia, and encircling China. The war between Capitalist and Communist blocks that was fought in this territory caused mushrooming of *Mullahs*, Drugs and Kalashnikov culture that discolored and distorted the social fabric of Pakistani society.

Continuing with the causes of terrorism, Gurr (2006) and Michael (2007) concludes that a person more likely tends to be a terrorist in an oppressive society where exposure to political disempowerment, poverty and inequality are common occurrences than in a comparatively open society in which plenty of opportunities are available for prosperous and sustainable living particularly in socio-economic and political terms (Kenrick, 2009).

Pakistan is a poor country with sixty percent of Pakistan's population living below poverty line. The international poverty line is two dollars a day or an income of Rs 200 per day. Twenty one percent of Pakistan's population lives below \$1.25 per day. (Business Recorder, May 19, 2013). Due to bad economic governance the economy of the country is worsening day by day as inflation in the last three years has significantly been high at double digits for the last three consecutive years (Human Development Report, 2012). This ground reality cannot be overlooked that the potential for militancy and extremism already did exist in Pakistan due to its fragile social structure since independence in terms of, unemployment, ignorance, economic stagnation (Amhar, 2011), radical ideologies, bad governance, injustice and rigid culture (Hashmi, 2009)

Furthermore due to scarcity of resources and bad economic governance, the people have been deprived of basic needs and facilities like good food, education, health, and communication. Due to these deprivations and imparity they are suffering from inferiority complex which leads them to frustration and aggression

(Nasir & Hyder, 1988, p. 474). Hence, Tocqueville, (cited in Brynjar & Katja, 2000) stated that this social disparity is a major cause of terrorism in society. Similarly research studies confirm that (Mesoy, 2013) there is casual link between poverty and radicalism/terrorism especially in countries like Pakistan where due to poverty the young men join militant groups for earning handsome money. In addition, another research project in Swat Valley concludes that 63 percent household agreed that youth joined militant organization to improve their socio-economic condition (Aziz, 2010).

Contrary to this Hussain, Khalid and Hussain (2012), states that poverty may not be identified as the only reason of terrorism as terrorist do not exclusively belong to the poor states and strata, rather the well-off and educated people are drawn in terrorist activities as well, like Osama Bin Laden, who belonged to a prosperous and affluent family of Saudi Arabia. In addition Kreuger (2007) and Berrebi (2007) concludes that there is no link between poverty and terrorism nonetheless they recognize it as contributive factors in the causation of terrorist activities in the society. Similarly Sageman (2004) conducted an empirical study on the Al- Qaeda network in 2004 and concluded that most of the terrorist he studied belonged to middle class and they did not belong to poor socio-economic backgrounds.

It can be safely said that due to economic debacle and disparity, unemployment, social ostracism, and political indifference—all inclusively—have led to the birth and growth of terrorism and militancy. Rather the said problems have been feeding and nurturing the menace quite recurrently.

2. Political Causes

Although, terrorism has a long standing past but its methodical analysis is young enough with a short history. Analytical and investigative literature on the roots of terrorism has flourished in a short period of time (Feierabend, 1969). Ground reality suggests (Gupta et al. 1993) the association between political violence and Government coercion, is basically formed like an inverted U. Coercion at lower level only insert fuel to the circumstances, while non-conformist activities can be curbed beyond a level of coercion and violence by pursuit of excessive forces of oppression and brutality (Moore, 1998). Terrorism and militancy has been an issue of greater concern and anxiety across the world but its disastrous impacts has adversely affected the developing countries especially like Pakistan and Afghanistan.

In such state of affairs and matter of precariousness, Pakistan has become a pivotal point in the current war which has eroded the socio-economic fabric of society (Ali, 2010). Various notable factors are at play behind the prevailing situation of anti-state activities, i.e., economic, social and dominantly the political dynamics. Regarding role of state in sponsoring terrorism, Byman (2005) concludes that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia both allies of USA sponsor more terrorism than any other state in the world. The association between terrorist activities and state may be seen in connection to the use of terrorism as a tool of foreign policy rather than the loaded expression 'state sponsorship' (Richardson, 2005).

Research studies also confirm that states have used terrorism as instrument of foreign policies by giving terrorists a far greater capacity and lethality. These states have used the terrorists as “guns for hire” (Borum, nd). There is a huge body of literature on the use of terror of state by the Communist Eastern European regimes of the 20th century, the 'fragile state' of Africa and Asia in the post independence era, the Nazis and the terror of southern Cone and Central American Right Wing regimes of the 1960 and 1970 (Valentino, 2004).

Duvall and Stohl (1983) is of the opinion that an expected utility model provides an insight into why a government prefers terrorism as a tactic while Richardson (1986) argues that any government's choice of terrorism as a policy could be understood with the help of expected utility models. The model could also be applied to a state's international behavior. The approach suggests that any government choosing terrorism as a strategy keeps three things in mind: preferred upshot, their intended action and expected favorable results and the expenses of the action for the preferred outcomes. The agents who use this plan may not be termed as extremist but they should be called rationalist because they use terrorism for positive outcomes. Coercive diplomacy is distinct from both diplomacy and traditional military activity as it uses coercive methods to persuade the rival for an agreeable solution of the conflict (George, 1994). Violent traditional conflicts can also be the cause of terrorism as is the case between Pakistan and India over the issues of Kashmir and water distribution (Kreamer, 2012). Similarly, Israel-Palestinian conflict is the cause of radicalism in both the countries and to some extent the major source of Al-Qaeda's hatred for the United States. In the same manner the Iraq war harbors opposition for the US policies (Jalata 2011).

Regarding relationship between democracy and terrorism, it is generally agreed that lack of democracy and rule of law are also contributing factors in the causation of domestic violence and terrorism. Furthermore, failed or weak states also leave space to the terrorists to plan and execute terrorist activities (Crenshaw, 2005, Club de Madrid, 2005, p. 14).

Thus, anti state and anti social activities are the direct outcome of the poor governance and weak law enforcement. Furthermore, weak democracy, political instability and somehow the absolute rule in the state cause such kinds of dangerous consequences.

Recommendations

Prosperous, tolerant and healthy society can only be thought of and seen if the dissemination of quality education becomes the top priority of a nation. In this respect, attractive and accessible educational facilities must be made possible to the people that will, surely, cause a healthy change in the people's mind-set and similarly the socio-economic indicators will improve. Unquestionably, stable economy plays a significant and central role in the development and growth of a nation. Some people due to low standard of living and inadequate job opportunities tend to fulfill their daily needs through illegitimate anti-social ways and means.

Looking into the present turbulent scenario in Pakistan, abundant employment opportunities ought to be generated for the needy and deserving people that would prove helpful to encourage young generation and pull them out of deprivation and anti-social and anti-state engagements. Regrettably, most of the democratic governments failed miserably to ensure the provision of basic needs and rights to the general masses. Therefore the government or state should fulfill the needs and rights of masses on priority basis.

Conclusion

Terrorism is the illegitimate and illegal use of force by a person or a group of persons against people with the intent of pressurizing, intimidating government or societies commonly for political and ideological purposes. The main objective of terrorism is to gain power. Brutality and violence, in order to achieve its malign goal, play a vital role. Such devices are used for creating terror in the minds of masses. The terrorist, at the same time, have malign intention to damage the image of the government by giving reflection to the people that it has failed to provide peace and security and thus has no right to be in power.

The recent wave of violence and terrorism has compelled people to leave their habitats that ultimately create unrest in the society at large. These are not exclusive acts of violence and terrorism in Pakistan alone but USA, UK, Egypt, Iran and Afghanistan have suffered from such acts since 1965. The igniting reasons of current terrorism are the lack of democratic culture, rise of capitalism, social injustice, hegemonic policies and practices, extremist ideologies and violent political conflicts.

This article reveals that Pakistan is encountered with this menace due to the defective and non-pragmatic foreign policy (which is the part of National Policy and Ideology) and nexus with US on war on terror. This issue needs to be re-addressed with well-thought-out and far-and-hind-sighted policy and practices. The curse of terrorism might not be wiped out from the country over night, however, can be alleviated through determined and sustained efforts at national and international forums.

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