

Pakistan's Counterterrorism Strategy during the 4th Regime of Pakistan Peoples Party (2008-2013): A Historical Overview



Dr. Shaista Gohar	Lecturer, Department of Pakistan Studies, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, KP, Pakistan. shaistagohar@awkum.edu.pk
Sumayya	Visiting Lecturer, Department of Pakistan Studies, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, KP, Pakistan. Summaykhan1995@gmail.com
Usman Ullah	Visiting Lecturer, Department of Pakistan Studies, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, KP, Pakistan. usmanusafzai6@gmail.com

Abstract: Pakistan has faced significant challenges due to terrorism during the past twenty years. Pakistan needed to implement a successful counterterrorism strategy in order to confront the terrorist threat. Since 9/11 incident, different governments in Pakistan adopted various strategies to combat terrorism in Pakistan. In 2008, Pakistan was middle of war against Al-Qaeda and Taliban. The Musharraf regime adopted mixed policies of operation and peace negotiations for countering terrorism which terribly failed. This paper focuses on the counterterrorism policies of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), one of the major and oldest political parties of Pakistan. PPP emerged on the political scene as governing party for 4th time as a result of General Elections, 2008 after assassination of its charismatic leader, Benazir Bhutto on November 27, 2007 at terrorism activity during a political rally. This paper presented an overview of counterterrorism strategy for Pakistan that adopted by the PPP government during 2008-2013. The main objective of this paper is to review military actions carried out by the Pakistani military and to develop measures and strategies to reduce terrorism in Pakistan during the PPP government (2008-2013). For this paper data is mostly collected from books, journal articles, reports and reliable newspapers articles. Qualitative method is applied.

Keywords: Counterterrorism Strategy, Pakistan Peoples Party, Military Options, Non-Military Options, Military Operations, Peace deals, Anti-Terrorism legislations

Background

Pakistan has been experiencing an ongoing wave of anti-state terrorism since the 9/11 attacks. For many years, Pakistan has served as the home base for many Jihadi and extremist militant organizations (Khan & etal, 2023). Pakistan was required by its commitment to the US-led "war on terror" to develop a counterterrorism policy at the time of the 9/11 tragedy in order to cope with these militant groups (Musharraf, 2006). Pakistan has utilized both military and non-military measures in its counterterrorism policy thus far to address the terrorist threat. High-stakes security operations against terrorists in the tribal areas and swift, low-intensity operations in the settled areas, particularly in the big cities, to apprehend important Taliban and Al-Qaeda commanders

were two of the military options. Non-military alternatives also include legislative and engagement components. Regarding engagement policy, Pakistan inked a number of peace agreements with terrorist groups (Ahmed, 2014). Under legislative aspect, Pakistani governments have passed a number of anti-terrorism laws since 9/11, both through parliamentary and presidential acts, as well as by outlawing certain militant organizations at different points in time. Pakistan's security forces have carried out several small- and large-scale military operations against militant groups operating in the tribal areas since 9/11, under the leadership of the Musharraf dictatorship. Although Pakistan's security forces conducted the first major military operation in South Waziristan, known as *Al-Mizan* (Justice), against Al-Qaeda and Taliban militants in June

2002 with the intention of driving out militants from the area, the country was still required by the US-led Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan to keep militants from infiltrating its tribal areas. But when militants assaulted the Army post in *Wana* in January 2004, the security situation in South Waziristan worsened (Warraich, Khan, & Alam, 2021). In order to eradicate the foreign militants from the area, Pakistan's security forces conducted a significant "search and destroy" operation in March 2004 under the code name Operation *Kalosha*. Pervez Musharraf's leadership abandoned military operations and chose to pursue an appeasement strategy by striking peace accords with the local terrorists as the security situation in South Waziristan grew worse and the number of military casualties increased (Ziring, 2005). The *Shakai* Agreement, which was signed on April 24, 2004, between the military and a militant commander, was one of these agreements. The *Sararogha* Agreement, which was signed by the military in February 2005, was another peace agreement with the insurgents in the area. The peace agreement, however, was just temporary, and it terminated in early August 2007. In the PATA, the Swat Valley of the Malakand Division was another area where the military conducted security operations. During the Musharraf administration, the military initiated operation "*Rah-e-Haq-I*" (True Path) in November 2007 with the goal of ousting the Swat Taliban (Ahmed, 2014).

Among Non-Military options Pakistan has amended its anti-terrorism legal frameworks multiple times since 9/11, including the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) of 1997.¹⁴ The country has also established new laws to strengthen the current anti-terrorism laws. The government implemented the 'Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Ordinance 2002' in January 2002, mandating that the entire terrorist network be targeted and that those who assist and abet in terrorism face harsh penalties, up to and including the death penalty. To ensure prompt trials, the Ordinance designated military people as one of the three members of the Anti-Terrorist Court (ATC) bench, not to be lower than the rank of

Lieutenant Colonel (Ahmed, 2014). A further amendment to the Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Ordinance 2002 was introduced in November 2002, allowing the police to detain a suspect for up to 12 months without bringing any criminal charges against them (Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Ordinance 2002', 16 November 2002). If the accused could show one or more sureties that he was innocent, he could only be freed; if not, he had to appear in court within twenty-four hours. In November 2004, the ATA 1997 underwent another revision that granted victims or their legal heirs the ability to challenge the ATC's decision in the High Court within 30 days of the ATC's decision (Anti-terrorism (Amendment) Act, 2004, Gazette of Pakistan, Extraordinary, Part I, 30th November, 2004). Additional changes to the ATA 1997 were also included in the Anti-Terrorism (Second Amendment) Act 2004, which was enacted in January 2005. It states that, in terms of the maximum sentence for the militants, "imprisonment for life" has taken the place of the statement "14 years." The Act additionally mandated the creation of "Special Benches" of High Courts, with a minimum of two judges, to hear appeals from victims or their heirs. The Act additionally strengthened the authority of the ATCs to try cases involving kidnapping or kidnapping for ransom, as well as the use of firearms or explosives by any means, including bomb blasts, in courtrooms or places of worship (Ahmed, 2014).

Pakistan has, in various stages, prohibited 45 militant organizations in relation to the outlawing of terrorist groups since 9/11. First, under pressure from both domestic and foreign sources following the terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament in December 2001, the Musharraf dictatorship outlawed JeM, LeT, SSP, *Tehrik-e-Ja'afaria* Pakistan (TJP), TNSM, and *Tehrik-e-Islami* on January 14, 2002. On March 17, 2003, Al-Qaeda was declared illegal. On November 15, 2003, *Millat-i-Islamia* Pakistan (formerly known as SSP), *Khuddam-ul-Islam* (previously known as JeM), and *Islami Tehrik-e-Pakistan* (previously known as TJP) were made extinct (Roy & Rehman, 2019). In this backdrop the counter terrorism strategy

during Musharraf regime continued in the succeeding 4th regime of PPP. The main purpose of this paper is to highlight all those military and non-military options which are taken in context of counter terrorism strategy during the PPP government (2008-2013). However before going to discuss the PPP government strategy during this period, it is necessary to understand the concept of counterterrorism.

Definition and Meaning of Counterterrorism

Like terrorism, counterterrorism is a highly complicated topic that is difficult to describe. According to Paul Wilkinson, "every conflict involving terrorism has its own unique characteristics," hence there is no one-size-fits-all counterterrorism policy (Wilkinson, 2006). However, it is possible to define counterterrorism strategy as "a set of measures that states apply in response to acts of terrorism" (Kelman, 2012). "Political or military actions or measures intended to combat, prevent, or deter terrorism, sometimes (in early use) with the implication that the methods utilized resemble those of the terrorists" is how the Oxford English Dictionary defines counterterrorism. The Council of Europe claims that terrorism poses a severe threat to democracy, the rule of law, and the enjoyment of human rights. As a result, the Council of Europe's member nations must use suppression and prevention to resist it. On the other hand, counterterrorism efforts may be undermined by badly executed or unduly strict measures. Although targeting terrorists with law enforcement is legitimate and essential, Counterterrorism measures should neither sacrifice democracy and the rule of law in the name of attempting to maintain peace and security, nor should they go beyond what is necessary to do so. The definition of counterterrorism according to the Britannica dictionary is that measures taken by an organization, army, etc. to stop terrorist attacks and dismantle terrorist networks (Rineheart, 2010).

As for Pakistan's counterterrorism strategy, it was previously mentioned that, in order to combat the threat of terrorism, both military and non-military measures have been used.

Counterterrorism Strategy during 4th Regime of PPP

The Pakistan People Party (PPP) gained power in the 2008 general election following the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, the party's charismatic leader, on November 27, 2007, during a campaign event at Liaquat Bagh in Rawalpindi, openly attacked President Pervez Musharraf's counterterrorism strategies for failing after the killing of the democratic political leader. Pakistan was already engaged in combat with the Taliban and Al-Qaeda in 2008. In trying to combat the threat posed by terrorism, President Musharraf's combination of peace negotiations and operational tactics failed miserably. The government lacked a well-defined strategy to address the threat. After winning the February 2008 election, the Pakistan Peoples Party formed a coalition government with the Awami National Party (ANP). Regarding the nation's terrorism and militancy as well as relations with the US, these two sides were in agreement (Khan et al., 2023). The PPP government, like its predecessor, used a combination of non-military and military tactics to counter the danger posed by terrorism. Heavy-handed and low-intensity quick operations in tribal territory and large cities in settled areas, respectively, were among the military options. Engagement activities, such as peace agreements with militants, and legislative measures, such as anti-terrorism laws, were examples of non-military alternatives (Ahmed, 2014). Following are the military and non-military options that were taken by PPP government during 2008-2013.

Military Options

Pakistan's military has participated in numerous large-scale and small-scale "War on Terror" actions since 9/11. In order to completely eradicate the threat of terrorism in Pakistan, the PPP Government reexamined its military plans before launching military operations (Khan & etal, 2023). In an effort to reduce militancy, peace deals were negotiated with terrorists under the Musharraf dictatorship. Pakistan adhered to the peace agreements made in the tribal regions. While controlling tribal areas, kidnapping, killings, and growing in power in North

Waziristan, militants did not fully adhere to the peace agreements made with Pakistan. In the first year of the PPP government's rule, the security situation in Baitullah Mehsud's South Waziristan was made worse by the same unpredictability (Musharraf, 2006). Operation *Zalzala* was one of the Tri-Star (three operations) that the Pakistani army initiated in South Waziristan in 2008 with the goal of restricting the insurgents' geographical control. This operation began when Bait-ullah Mehsud and his supporters attacked security troops, taking control of *Sararogha* in South Waziristan. Following the kidnapping of 200 security personnel in South Waziristan by militants, Pakistani troops increased their operational efforts. In retaliation, Pakistan backed Mullah Nazir, the Taliban chief, who was viewed as the militants in South Waziristan who were hostile to Uzbekistan. Pakistan persisted in secretly aiding Mullah Nazir in his efforts to weaken Baitullah Mehsud's powerful hold over South Waziristan. The objectives of this operation were to seize the state's writ and evacuate the territories under Bait Ullah Mehsud's control. Many towns and villages were under the hands of the security forces' resistant stance, including Bait Ullah Mehsud's stronghold of *Spinkai*. When Pakistani security forces engaged in direct combat with militants, they presumed that they had a robust network and communication system. However, by May 2008, most of the territory had been cleared out after this operation had a significant impact on dismantling the militants' network in South Waziristan (Jones & Fair, 2010). In June 2008, the Khyber Agency saw the start of the military operation known as "*Sirat-e-Mustaqeem*" (Right Path). Despite being a center of militancy, the Directorate was a hotbed of sectarianism in this place. A settlement between the two groups followed the investigation's conclusion in July 2008, but it fell through a year later (IRIN News, 2011, May 30). An operation named as "*Sher Dil*" (Lion Heart) was launched against insurgents in Bajaur in September 2008. The Kunar Province of Afghanistan, which borders Bajaur District, is said to be a hotbed for both domestic and international terrorist organizations. Baitullah Mehsud's TTP helped

terrorists infiltrate Pakistan's cities in order to carry out acts of terrorism. Qari Zia Rehman led militant groups that committed suicide assaults on government buildings, stole from banks and stores, abducted government workers, and plundered government buildings (Roy & Rehman, 2019). Operation *Sher Dil* was initiated by the Pakistani military in Bajaur with the aim of eliminating militants who were a threat to both security personnel and civilian residents. More than a thousand insurgents and sixty-three security personnel have been slain by December 2008. Tunnel enclosures utilized for storing supplies and concealing persons were discovered by Pakistani military. In order to counteract the growing number of militants who were migrating from Bajaur to North Waziristan to carry out anti-state actions, Operation *Sher Dil* was conducted to weaken the terrorist stronghold in Bajaur. NATO expressed gratitude for Operation *Sher Dil*'s continued success in North Waziristan in destroying extremist strongholds (Warraich, Khan, & Alam, 2021).

The next region in which military operations were launched was the Swat valley under PATA's Malakand division. Sufi Muhammad and Maulvi Fazlullah managed to turn the area into a Taliban stronghold. "*Rah-e-Haq*" I (the True Path) was introduced by the military in November 2007; "*Rah-e-Haq*" II followed in July 2008; and "*Rah-e-Haq*" III debuted in January 2009. However, the disputed *Nizam-e-Adl* Agreement, which the TNSM signed in February 2009, gave them authority over the area and permitted them to impose Shariah through the Qazi Court at their request. As a result, the activities were stopped (International Crisis Group, 2013). The severe laws and cruel actions of the TNSM Shariah Government demoralized the Swat population, and TNSM militants stormed into Buner, a nearby town. Pakistan's democracy and constitution have also been questioned by the TNSM (Roy & Rehman, 2019). As a result, the PPP administration convened the All Parties Conference (APC) on May 18, 2009, and a unanimous vote was passed endorsing a Swat operation to expel rebel Swat members. This resulted in the conduct of a large-scale, impactful security operation known as

"*Rah-e-Rast*" (Just Path) (The News International, 2009, May 19). Clearing territory in Swat and apprehending or eliminating important militants was the goal. The Operation *Rah-e-Rast* was divided into three distinct parts. It was the initial operation carried out in Mingora Street. The conflict between the militants and Pakistan's Special Forces was a real street combat. They battled in various alleys and corners of the city of Mingora. Therefore, since the 1994 Rwanda genocide, it has resulted in the greatest number of Internally Displaced People (IDPs). The public's support was the second element of the operation (Roy & Rehman, 2019). The government was able to reveal the true motivation of the Taliban, which was to seize power rather than find a solution to the problems faced by the people of Malakand, when they declined to uphold the terms of the Malakand agreement instead of launching harsh criticism on the PPP government. The plan's implementation constituted the third element. In order to provide people freedom to migrate against the Taliban in Mingora, the army first permitted residents to relocate. Following the Taliban's defeat and expulsion from the city, all internally displaced individuals were effectively rehabilitated without posing a serious humanitarian threat (Jones & Fair, 2010). Mullah Fazalullah escaped to Afghanistan during this military action. Pakistan persisted in hitting militants in an effort to eliminate their bases of support. The army used heavy artillery, aircraft, and helicopters to bombard Taliban locations. The military deployed with ground forces to conduct a search operation after undermining their positions. In July 2009, the Pakistan Army announced victory after driving out militants from Swat. As far as operations against terrorists go, *Rah-e-Rast* was the most successful since it successfully drove them out of Swat and ensured that the displaced people could return to their homes. As a result, security forces killed 2635 insurgents and detained 254 others during this operation. In this operation, Pakistan lost 168 security officers (Khan, & etal, 2023). Following the triumph of the Swat operation, a decisive operation against TTP insurgents in South Waziristan and other FATA areas was also launched in October 2009 under

the name "*Rah-e-Nijat*" (Path of Salvation). The security forces finished their military operation in just two months because they encountered no significant opposition from the TTP as a result of a later strategy change that reserved their material and manpower for guerilla warfare once the government established control over the region, making it exceedingly costly for the government to hold the territory. The TTP top command largely retreated to the Afghan region of *Paktia*, while other groups such as Khurram, Orakzai, and North Waziristan also took refuge there (International Crisis Group, 2009). The TTP's strongholds were destroyed and the militant-occupied regions of Ladha, Makin, and Sararogha in South Waziristan were effectively retaken by the military. The territory was totally under control by June 2013. Approximately eleven thousand families were internally relocated to various camps during this operation (Khan, et al., 2023). The Taliban insurgents who were in charge of the Thal-Parachinar began "Operation Koh-e-Sufaid (White Mountain)" in Kurram Agency in July 2011 with the intention of besieging the Shia people living there. The district was taken aback by the troops in June 2013. Furthermore, a successful operation to remove TTP members from the Tirah Valley was launched in the Khyber Agency in April 2013 (Daily Times, 2013, June 21). In addition to military operations in FATA and PATA, other operations were conducted in major Pakistani cities, including Karachi, with the aim of apprehending commanders of *Al-Qaida* and the Taliban. These operations were conducted by Pakistan's intelligence services with police and Rangers support. During the PPP regime, the army took control of Mohmand, Orakzai, Swat, Bajaur, and South Waziristan (Warraich, Khan, & Alam, 2021). The militant network was somewhat controlled but not entirely eliminated in spite of these efforts. The different operations persisted during the Nawaz regime (2013-2018).

Non-Military Options

The PPP government employed non-military tactics in addition to the military operations against terrorists mentioned above to combat terrorism within the nation. The anti-terrorism regime has been reinforced since the September

11, 2001 terrorist attacks by the introduction of new laws and the passing of several amendments pertaining to the issue. After several security measures were implemented in the Swat region in the middle of 2009, the Pakistani government reevaluated and updated both its counterterrorism strategy and its infrastructure. The terrorists carried out sustained attacks against law enforcement, civilians, and security personnel, finding the security forces' activities to be extremely detrimental. Thus, harsh laws were needed in Pakistan due to the country's delicate security situation in order to prosecute the terrorists. The PPP government made changes to the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) in 1997. To combat terrorism, the PPP government passed "the Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Ordinance, 2009". This recently enacted legislation permitted confessions in front of ATC investigators. Furthermore, the 30-day remand period was extended to 90 days. Additionally, the Pakistani government introduced a significant regulation that resulted in the establishment of new ATCs in the Malakand region and in the capital of KPK (Yusuf, 2014). In June 2011, the PPP government responded to the worsening security situation by enforcing the Regulation Actions in Aid of Civil Powers 2011 for PATA and FATA. The Pakistani armed forces were permitted by the regulation act to detain the suspect while the civil power's support continued. Along with the seizure of property, this act also defined a list of infractions that might result in a fine, life in jail, up to ten years in prison, or even the death penalty (Dawn, 2011, July12). A board was established over a period of four months to evaluate each detainee's case. The board was composed of two military personnel and two citizens. Under these statutes, the administration was required to construct notified detention camps. Consequently, detention cells have been set up at Landi Kotal, close to the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan (Dawn, 2013, March 26). The 'Investigation for Fair Trial Bill, 2012' was passed by the National Assembly on December 20, 2012. It granted law enforcement authorities the ability to use the new technology against terrorists and granted the government the right to listen in on anyone suspected or

implicated in a crime or act of terrorism. (The Business Recorder, 2012, December 21). The Pakistani parliament also passed the "Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Bill, 2013" in March 2013 in an effort to counteract the evil that is national terrorism. This amended measure from 2013 gave the authorities the right to seize the personal belongings, both mobile and non-mobile, of anyone suspected of providing funding for terrorism in the nation. The ATA of 1997's section VI redefined terrorism as a result of this anti-terrorist bill. It will be an outright act of terrorism if someone or any organization is discovered to be endangering, frightening, or frightening members of the public, government representatives, security personnel, or any other public sector authority (Kakakhel & Ahmed, 2013). The altered edict allowed the suspect to be detained for three months by the official authorities and agencies without facing legal challenges. Additionally, it prohibited foreign travel by employees of prohibited organizations, groups, and their leaders, as well as the issuing of passports, credit cards, weapons licenses, and other permits (The News International, 2013, March13). Additionally, the revision broadened the definition of terrorism, which was formerly largely associated with separatist movements. According to the current definition, it includes intimidating and terrorizing the general public, social sectors, and business community in addition to preparing or attacking people, media personnel, government officials, infrastructure, security forces, or law enforcement agencies (Pakistan Today, 2013, March14). A new autonomous entity called the National Counter-Terrorism entity (NACTA) was established under a statute passed by the PPP administration in March 2013. Administratively, NACTA was established in 2009. There was debate over the NACTA Ordinance between military and civilian authorities. The PPP's Rehman Malik, who was the interior minister at the time, wanted to take control of the Authority, but the military hierarchy was unwilling to work under civilians. But the body's mission and authority were clearly defined by the NACTA Act of 2013, which also set up the organization's structure. Its duties included obtaining, distributing, and coordinating information with all pertinent

parties in order to create comprehensive counterterrorism and neutralization plans that addressed short-, medium-, and long-term objectives. It also included creating plans for these plans to be carried out with international cooperation (The Express Tribune, 2013, March 16). The Prime Minister would lead the Authority, which would be composed of the following: the Minister for Law and Justice; the Chief Ministers of all provinces, including Gilgit-Baltistan; the Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir; the Secretary of the Ministry of Interior; the Director General of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI); the Director General Intelligence Bureau (IB); the Director General Military Intelligence (MI); the National Coordinator; the Director General Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and the Inspector Generals of Police of all provinces, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan (The Business Recorder, 2012 December 21).

Conclusion

It is concluded that the 9/11 incident altered the Pakistan's strategic landscape. There was dire need to craft an effective counterterrorism strategy. The Musharraf regime being an ally of US in 'War on Terror' compelled on coercive counterterrorism strategy. The same strategy was followed by the succeeding government of PPP during 2008-2013. As terrorism started during Musharraf regime but reached to its peak during the 4th regime of PPP. Pakistan's counterterrorism strategy of the 4th regime of PPP demonstrates that it relied on both Military and non-military options of battling militancy and terrorism. Pakistan initiated significant military actions against President Pervez Musharraf and the Pakistan Peoples Party. This string of military actions has guaranteed national peace and concord while strengthening the state's sovereignty and restoring its writ. Pakistan sustained damages to its infrastructure, economy, and people. The PPP Government's anti-terrorism laws were, in reality, audacious and brave measures that took a somewhat different tack from Pakistan's normal legal system in the non-military sense. However the PPP government's actions were insufficient to address Pakistan's pervasive terrorism and

militancy. The necessity for an efficient and goal-oriented counterterrorism strategy meant that the military's definition of national security policy needed to be significantly revised.

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