

Terrorism/Religious Radicalism in Pakistan in 2010

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Pakistan, for some time now, has been facing fissiparous tendencies due to terrorism, religious radicalism, insurgency, sectarian clashes and ethnic conflict and these have posed a serious challenge to its security. In 2009, Pakistan witnessed a phenomenal rise in terrorist incidents, which continued into 2010. However, going by statistics, the number of violent incidents in Pakistan recorded an 11 per cent decline in 2010 compared to the previous year. The constant violence in Pakistan has had wide ramifications across society and reduces prospects of development, progress and prosperity. Across the land, security forces are involved in operations against terrorists, militants and insurgents to ensure security of the country.

Baluchistan, FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas) and Khyber Pakhtunkhawah were subject to the highest number of terrorist incidents in 2010. Besides, terrorist attacks rose in the provinces of Sindh, Punjab and Gilgit-Baltistan in 2010, compared to 2009. Despite its efforts, the writ of the state has only been partially restored in the FATA. Khyber Pakhtunkhawah are still facing security challenges and many parts remain lawless. The nature of conflict in Khyber Pakhtunkhawah is serious, and gets compounded with the problems of poverty, unemployment and poor governance.

Pakistan has been consistently and persistently facing a law and order problem. As a result internal security continues to remain fragile. Rule of law is a critical element of good governance, which is lacking not only in Khyber Pakhtunkhawah and FATA but across the country. According to World Justice Project (WJP) rule of law index 2010, Pakistan is among the countries where rule of law is primarily absent.

A total of 2,120 terrorist, insurgent and sectarian-related attacks took place

across the country in 2010, killing 2,939 and injuring 5,794. The worst affected region of the country was Baluchistan, where 737 terrorist attacks took place, followed by FATA where 700 attacks occurred. Khyber Pakhtunkhawah was the third most volatile region of the country with 481 attacks, while 111 attacks were recorded in Sindh, 63 in Punjab, 15 in Gilgit-Baltistan, seven in Islamabad and six in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) as Table 1 shows.

Table 1

Places of Terrorist/Insurgent Attacks 2010			
Place	Number of Attacks	Killed	Injured
Baluchistan	737	600	1117
Khyber Pakhtunkhawah	481	901	1832
FATA	700	863	1406
Punjab	63	309	897
Karachi	93	234	436
Sindh	18	5	30
Gilgit-Baltistan	15	7	13
Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK)	6	5	28
Islamabad	7	15	35
Total	2120	2939	5794

If casualties in terrorist attacks, operations by the security forces and their clashes with the terrorists/militants, inter-tribal clashes and cross-border attacks (including drone attacks and incursions by NATO/ISAF forces in FATA) in Pakistan are counted, the overall figure of 2010 is higher. Table 2 shows that 3,395 attacks took place in 2010 which left 9,986 dead and 10,255 injured.

Table 2

Numbers of Attacks and Casualties in 2010			
Months	Number of Attacks	Killed	Injured
January	314	757	759
February	251	692	912
March	327	1000	1075
April	310	1020	1062
May	286	1182	995
June	284	925	772
July	267	1077	1079
August	268	554	595
September	255	828	1058
October	302	667	643
November	275	666	638
December	256	618	667
Total	3395	9986	10255

However, Pakistan witnessed an overall decline in the number of violent incidents in 2010. A total of 3,395 attacks took place in 2010 compared to 3,816 in 2009, a decrease of 11 per cent. Similarly, the overall casualties also went down, from 12,623 fatalities in 2009 to 9986 in 2010 as Table 2 depicts. The number of people injured in these attacks also declined from 12,815 in 2009 to 10,255 in 2010. The number of suicide attacks across the country also went down by 22 per cent in 2010, compared to 2009. Sixty-eight suicide attacks took place in 2010, compared to 87 the previous year. It is noteworthy that nearly half the suicide attacks took place in Khyber Pakhtunkhawah. The US drone attacks in FATA witnessed a rise of 165 per cent in 2010, compared to 2009.

Effective military operations against terrorists in the tribal areas, increased surveillance by the security forces and killing of terrorists in US drone attacks in FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwah were among the main factors behind the decline in number of terrorist attacks. However, the pattern of decline was not uniform across the country. Violent incidents continued in the provinces of Sindh, Punjab and in Gilgit-Baltistan in 2010, compared to 2009. On the other hand, there was a considerable decline in the number of violent attacks in the settled areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwah.

The security situation in some parts of FATA remained volatile as militants displaced from their strongholds constantly relocated. Despite managing successful military operations against terrorists, sustainable peace has not been achieved in Khyber Pakhtunkhwah and FATA. With a weak political administration, the regions continue to face security challenges.

Social strife and its impact on internal security continue to pose serious challenges to Pakistan. The security scenario indicates that challenges have remained unaddressed in the last few years. It seems that coordination among intelligence agencies, capacity building of security forces, curbs on terrorism, adequate measures to prevent banned terrorist/militant groups from operating across the country have been lacking.

In the absence of a comprehensive long-term strategy, the government has been relying almost exclusively on military solutions to the militancy in FATA, Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhawah. The government's failure to address the growing ethno-political, terrorism, sectarian clashes and alienation and radicalisation of the young and poor people, have compounded the problem. The security forces are mainly relying on 'attack, dislodge and hold' strategy. The dislodging and holding parts of this strategy cannot succeed without the people's support, better coordination among federal and provincial governments and

availability of adequate resources. The strategy requires cooperation among the security forces, the political government and people.

The government is yet to evolve an effective and comprehensive counter-terrorism policy. It requires a two-pronged strategy: one that deals with the issues of economic deprivation, poverty, under-development, and alienation of people in the troubled areas of the country; and another that deals with linkages between terrorists/militants in Pakistan and Afghanistan, arms, funds, and cross-border movement of people. Terrorists/militants and insurgents activities have damaged Pakistan and will continue to do so unless causative factors are addressed.

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