

Pakistan's Counter-Terrorism Strategy (2001-2014): An Analysis

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Abstract

Pakistan joined global efforts to curb the terrorism right after 9/11 and kept on playing vital role as a frontline ally. The country's role in War on Terror was inevitable due to multiple factors such as geography, supply routes and intelligence sharing. With the passage of time, Pakistan carried out numerous operations to dislodge trans-national militants in its tribal areas. After constant terror attacks, it aimed at launching comprehensive operations against terrorists' hiding in every nook and corner of the country. Keeping counter terror policies of Pakistan, the paper is divided in three eras. First, Musharraf era (2001-2008), in which Pakistan relied on military operations, banned extremist organizations, reformed Madrasahs and drone strikes. Whereas, the second era, under Pakistan People's Party encompasses the overwhelming reliance on Drone Warfare and military operations in Swat and South Waziristan Agency. During third era, the Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif came up with the idea of peace talks with the militants, that went futile and operation Zarab-e-Azab was

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launched against militants. To map and analyze Pakistan's counter terror strategy, this paper is focused at reviewing the evolution of counter-terrorism strategy and its consequences.

Introduction

Terrorism has turned into a global threat in the contemporary world affecting the humanity. Thus, directing the states to come up with comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy to address this challenge, it is an open secret that the US and Pakistan mushroomed Jihadis during the Cold War and used them in Afghanistan against the then USSR. The left-over of Afghan Jihad along with some war lords and local anti-state elements were dwelling in the tribal belt of Pakistan near Afghan border. The circumstances were favourable and neither the US, nor Pakistan had any major problem with this mushroomed force till 9/11. Ultimately, Pakistan had to step in as a coalition partner in the war against terror. The geographic proximity was one key factor that diverted international community's attention towards Pakistan. Islamabad, in response, had to make a consequential decision. The decision resulted into strange and miscalculated situations, as pronounced by many scholars that 'friends turned into foes'. Pakistan's leadership devised a policy in support of the US-led alliance to dislodge Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Pakistan became instrumental in so many ways i.e. logistics, air bases and intelligence sharing. As per call, Pakistan promised the US with "over flight rights, access to Pakistani air, naval and land bases, destruction of the domestic elements that were in support of terrorism against Americans and its allies, end every logistic and diplomatic support to Taliban."¹ Though, it was a very bold decision on part of a country which was suffering from so many challenges *vis-à-vis* its security, economy and politics etc., it was also a golden opportunity for Pakistan to reconnect itself with the international community by offering

1 Hidayat Khan, "Pakistan's Contribution to Global War on Terror After 9/11", IPRI Journal, XIII, no. 1 (2013): 41.

services and land for global operation launched against terrorists. Therefore, Pakistan became the frontline ally in eliminating Al-Qaeda and its network in Afghanistan and tribal areas of Pakistan. The disturbing and miscalculated part of the consent to join war on terror was that after the US attack on Afghanistan, many militants linked with Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Al-Qaeda and Taliban moved to tribal areas of Pakistan and got refuge with the local tribes in FATA. In the meanwhile, the US pressure started mounting on Pakistan which resulted in back to back operations in FATA. Consequently, hundreds of militants linked with Al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations were captured and killed by Pakistani armed forces as part of the counterterrorism operations.

It is noteworthy that Pakistan is a signatory to the United Nations Anti-Terrorist Conventions on the containment of terrorist attacks.² At the same time, Pakistan has also signed the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's Convention on combating terrorism. Pakistan has supported the resolutions of the United Nations aimed at preventing global terrorism.³ Pakistan had to take extensive immigration control measures to intercept and destruct the mobility of militants based in and operating from Pakistan. By initiating sweeping measures, the security forces of Pakistan were able to kill and capture many key leaders of Al-Qaeda, Taliban, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, East Turkestan Islamic Movement and Punjabi Taliban⁴. These efforts backfired and militants carried out high profile terrorist attacks against civilian and military installations in Pakistan. Resultantly, Pakistan as leading the War on Terror from front has paid huge price for such cooperation, losing thousands of civilians and soldiers as well as economic loss since 2001. Despite huge amount

2 Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, *The Islamic World in the New Century: The Organization of the Islamic Conference* (London: Hurst, 2010), 260.

3 Nirode Mohanty, *America, Pakistan, and the India Factor* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 97.

4 Zahid Hussain, *Frontline Pakistan: The Path to Catastrophe and the Killing of Benazir Bhutto* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2008), 131.

of economic, social and infrastructural loss, Pakistan had been the only state during last fourteen years, which was showing its firm resolve and consistence in the war against terror. Keeping this factual context in view, this article would evaluate the Pakistan's Counter Terrorism Strategy from its inception.

Pakistan's Counter Terrorism Strategy

The evolution of Pakistan's Counter Terrorism Strategy dates back to the era of President Musharraf, right after the tragic incident of 9/11, when Pakistan was compelled to step forward, with stringent measures to fight against terrorism. Soon after the US attack on Afghanistan, the influx of militants linked with Taliban, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and Al-Qaeda entered in Pakistani tribal areas. Pakistan was left with no other choice but to operate against this bunch of terrorists trained for non-conventional attacks. To ensure the writ of the government, regular army was used in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) for the first time during 2001.⁵

Since 2001, Pakistan observed three different governments, hence different Counter Terrorism policies as well. The first era started with the Counter-Terrorism policies of General Musharraf and his political ally Pakistan Muslim League - Quaid-e-Azam (PML-Q). This point of time was marked with 9/11 and launching of global War on Terror and Pakistan as a partner carried out numerous military operations against militants hiding in FATA and adjacent areas. Following is the descriptive and perspective analysis of the Counter-Terrorism-Operations launched during 2001-2008.

Counter-Terrorism Strategy under Musharraf

Use of force and negotiations are the key instruments while resolving any conflict among the parties. Historic evidence suggests that parties go for negotiations or use of force as per their interests by carefully examining the prevailing

5 Syed Farooq Hasnat, *Global Security Watch—Pakistan* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2011), 143.

situations. Without deep understanding about the local people, culture, historic traditions and consequences of military operations, Musharraf sent troops in FATA. Initially, such military actions brought mixed results and Pakistan sacrificed hundreds of soldiers. Despite massive losses, both in human and material, Pakistan military could not subdue local tribes. Since the outcomes were not as per calculations, Pakistan revisited its Counter-Terrorism Strategy and decided to go for negotiations. As a result of negotiations, the first operation was ended and a peace agreement was signed between tribes, led by Nek Muhammad and Pakistan Army in 2004 at Shakai.

Later on, the peace accord was sabotaged by an American drone strike killing the tribal leader Nek Muhammad. The US was unhappy over this agreement because it believed the local tribes under Nek Muhammad were engaged in strikes against NATO forces in Afghanistan. Due to the drone strike, the relations between the locals and Pakistani security forces were deteriorated which ultimately turned into a battle in FATA.

Military Operations during Musharraf Era

After the 'Operation Enduring Freedom' in 2001, hundreds of militants linked with Al-Qaeda, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) Taliban, Arabs and Chechens moved to Pakistan's tribal areas for refuge. This was alarming situation for Pakistan. Musharraf ordered to launch a military operation code-named Al-Mizan against militants in tribal areas.⁶ As part of Counter Terror Strategy, 'Use of Force' would be considered as the primary strategy while operating in FATA. The aim of the said operation was to track, trace and target the militants hiding in South Waziristan Agency. Operation Al-Mizan was launched under the command of Lieutenant-General Muhammad Safdar Hussain by the Frontier Corps and XI

6 Scott Gates and Kaushik Roy, *Unconventional Warfare in South Asia: Shadow Warriors and Counterinsurgency* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2014), 122-28.

Corps. On March 26, 2003, General Hussain claimed victory against militants, as he said "We have accomplished the mission that was given to us".

However, after the death of Nek Mohammed, Baitullah Mehsud emerged as the leader of the militants in South Waziristan Agency. After intense fighting with Baitullah Mehsud group, in February 2005, the government of Pakistan signed a peace deal with Baitullah Mehsud at Sararogha. According to the deal, the army agreed to remove troops from Mehsud territory, compensate the militants for human and material losses, and deploy Frontier Corps personnel to the five forts in South Waziristan Agency. By the agreement, the control of the area was virtually handed over to Mehsud tribe. Like previous agreement, this peace deal was also short-lived. In early 2006, Mehsud began orchestrating a suicide-bombing campaign in Pakistan, which persisted until his death in August 2009.⁷ This operation lasted for four years and the Pakistan Army captured hundreds of foreign militants linked with Al-Qaeda, IMU and many other transnational groups. Al-Qaeda and their affiliates faced huge setbacks and their command and control structure was seriously disrupted.

One may assume that it was tactical victory for the Pakistan Army because after 2006 militants were regrouped and started terrorist activities against Pakistan. It is vivid that Musharraf's Counter-Terrorism Strategy was coercive and depended upon military operations. The regime did not pay attention towards development, reconstruction, rehabilitation or establishment of institutions in FATA after the successful military operations. The deteriorated socio-economic situation and sense of deprivation became the reasons that militants resurfaced again in 2007. In the meanwhile, a terrorists group with the name of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) emerged as the most dangerous group in FATA with its roots in Afghanistan. Alarmingly, around forty militant groups were merged together under the banner of Baitullah

7 Gates and Roy, *Unconventional Warfare in South Asia*, 122-28

Mehsud,⁸ and a new wave of terrorist attacks disrupted life in the country. Ultimately, in 2008 the government was compelled to start a new operation code-named as *Zalzala* [Urdu: Earthquake]⁹ in Spinkai, South Waziristan Agency. It was the first time that more than 10,000 army troops actively participated in the operation and proclaimed a tactical victory. According to published literature the stated goals of the operation were achieved and militants were disrupted but dispersion in other tribal agencies was unavoidable due to strange circumstances.¹⁰ Furthermore, the TTP earned time and space to establish its roots in other tribal agencies and restive urban areas as well. This was the time when the TTP started consolidating its position in Karachi, for two important reasons. Firstly, Karachi is the biggest city of Pakistan with jam-packed localities like Manghopir, Sultan Abad, Quaidabad, Orangi Town, Baldia Town, Saeed Abad, Site Area, Banaras Colony, Liyari etc. Militants linked with the TTP and other banned organizations moved to these localities as it was easy for them to hide in these overcrowded neighbourhoods. Secondly, the TTP was generating funds from Karachi and recruiting like-minded people for militancy. It has become an open secret now that the TTP linked militants were involved in many bank robberies, kidnapping for ransom and extortion in Karachi; which is something common among terrorists to generate illegal funds.

General Musharraf's focus was exclusively on tribal areas at that time, thus the government could not track the links between terrorists and the TTP which ultimately led to Talibanization of Karachi. The government was not prepared to deal with this situation which engulfed Karachi and there was no concrete strategy to overcome this challenge. As a matter of fact, the militants were getting

8 Alex Strick Van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn, *An Enemy We Created: The Myth of the Taliban-Al Qaeda Merger in Afghanistan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 281.

9 Hasnat, *Global Security Watch—Pakistan*, 195.

10 Hasnat, *Global Security Watch—Pakistan*, 195.

uninterrupted supply of funds and recruits which resulted in deterioration of security situation in FATA.

In 2008, security situation in Bajaur Agency worsened and the TTP militants allegedly started receiving huge support from their like-minded groups in Afghanistan. The situation recorded was very grave thus the policy-makers in government proposed the launching of military operation in Bajaur Agency in 2008, code-named as '*Operation-Sher-Dil*' to establish its writ in Bajaur.¹¹ Approximately, 8000 Frontier Corps¹² troops backed by Cobra Helicopters took part in the '*Operation-Sher-Dil*' but the Pakistan Army faced significant resistance. On the contrary, militants faced huge setbacks as compared to security forces of Pakistan, as per record, more than 1000 militants were killed.¹³ As a part of strategy, the command and control structure of the militants was targeted and dismantled. It was assumed that the commanders of TTP fled away to Afghanistan. Pakistan military established new check posts close to the Afghan border along with formulation of local Lashkars to quell any cross border attacks in Bajaur Agency. For the first time in Pakistan, thousands of people were internally displaced but after the operation, the government repatriated Bajaur tribesmen.

Moving down, in 2008 another operation was carried out in Khyber Agency with the codename *Daraghalam* [Pushto: Here I Come]. The continuous coercive strategy was vivid in the mind-set of policy makers under the military ruler. The operation was aimed at securing key supply routes of the NATO forces and dismantling the hideouts of the militant commander Mangal Bagh in Khyber Agency. The operation in Khyber Agency helped the Pakistan Army to open the

11 Moed Yusuf, *Pakistan's Counterterrorism Challenge* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2014), 75.

12 Rahmanullah, "The Battle for Pakistan: Militancy and Conflict in Bajaur", Counterterrorism Strategy Initiative Policy Paper, 2010, <<http://newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/bajaur.pdf>> Also see, Zahid Hussain, "8000 Pakistani Soldiers take on Al-Qaeda in volatile tribal region", *The Times*, September 27, 2008.

13 Hussain, "8000 Pakistani Soldiers take on Al-Qaeda in volatile tribal region".

supply route of the NATO forces in Afghanistan but no senior commander of the Mangal Bagh group was captured or killed. Since then Pakistan military has launched several airstrikes in strategically important Tirah Valley in which many militants were killed and their hideouts were destroyed. Continuous fighting between local militant groups and airstrikes by Pakistan military compelled local tribes to migrate to safer places. While analyzing the Counter-Terror policy one may highlight the fact that there was a missing link in the strategy which was "Political Strategy". After the operations, the gap was never filled by political leadership which resulted in further mayhem and chaos. Besides, the Pakistan Army was engaged in every tribal agency and no rehabilitation projects were launched to remove the sense of inferiority from the minds of tribesmen. Despite huge losses, Pakistan government could not establish peace in tribal areas. In fact militants earned external support and grew stronger and ferocious afterwards as the factor of revenge for killing their leadership/companions.

Banning the Militant Organizations in Pakistan

As part of Counter-Terrorism Strategy, Musharraf banned the militant organizations, which were promoting extremism and terrorism in Pakistan. Interestingly, this step was linked to some mounting international pressure in the aftermath of Indian Parliament attack in 2001. In reaction India turned hostile and brought more than 800,000 troops on its border with Pakistan.¹⁴ A military stand-off was ringing the bells for a new war involving nuclear weapons, but the pledge of Musharraf that he would order crackdown on militant organizations neutralized the situation. Hence, India finally pulled back its forces, so did Pakistan, and an imminent war was prevented sensibly. It was Musharraf's policy that use of force or coercive course of action would never bring Kashmir back. So, he was bold enough to ban the *Jihadi* organizations and persuade India for talks on Kashmir and

14 Saira Khan, *Nuclear Weapons and Conflict Transformation: The Case of India-Pakistan* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 111.

other unresolved issues. Due to these decisions Musharraf was targeted in two suicide attacks but remained safe.¹⁵

Role of Intelligence Agencies

Intelligence Agencies of Pakistan played a vital role in flushing out Al-Qaeda linked militants from tribal belt and elsewhere. By 2003, the Pakistan Army was able to capture more than 400 Al-Qaeda militants from FATA and numerous key leaders from settled areas of Pakistan.¹⁶ Likewise, the mastermind of 9/11, Khalid Sheikh Mohammad was held from Rawalpindi in 2003.¹⁷ His detention proved fruitful and based on information extracted from him, Pakistan security forces expertly hunted Al-Qaeda network in the country. Musharraf stated that "We have broken the back of al Qaeda and destroyed its vertical and horizontal communication links. We have captured more than 700 terror operatives." Furthermore, he said that, "I can challenge that no other country has done more than Pakistan in the counter-terror campaign."¹⁸ It was a loud and clear message to the international community that Pakistan's intelligence agencies played the most important role in the national and international efforts for counter terrorism, i.e. intelligence sharing with US and conducting joint operations.¹⁹

Reformation and Regulation of Madrasahs

It was revealed during the investigations that some of the Madrasahs were in link with terrorist organizations, supporting-promoting their agenda and also inculcating extremist thoughts in innocent minds. Therefore, Musharraf announced appropriate measures to regulate Madrasah system in Pakistan. According to records, many Madrasahs

15 James P. Farwell, *The Pakistan Cauldron: Conspiracy, Assassination & Instability* (Washington DC: Potomac Books, 2011), 269.

16 John W. Young and John Kent, *International Relations since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 564.

17 Peter L. Bergen, *The Osama Bin Laden I Know: An Oral History of Al-Qaeda's Leader* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006), 300.

18 Khan, "Pakistan's Contribution to Global War on Terror After 9/11", 45.

19 Khan, "Pakistan's Contribution to Global War on Terror After 9/11".

were used as a breeding ground for training, recruitment, brainwashing and fund raising for different militant outfits. As per design, the policy of check and balance on Madrasahs proved as blowback and brought severe response from religious zealots. The primary objective of reformation and screening of Madrasah system was to improve standards of religious education by introducing innovative tools and moderate literature, so that it may help to control growing extremism and terrorism in Pakistan.

The registration of Madrasah and No Objection Certificate (NOC) was made obligatory for opening a new Madrasah. Similarly, the curriculum and syllabus of Madrasahs was reviewed and modernized, for instance; science and information technology courses were incorporated, so that students of Madrasahs feel well connected to other students both in the job market as well as in social interaction. On the other hand, a few countries had reservations that their citizens get Islamic education in Pakistan and turn out to be radical. To change this approach, Pakistan banned many foreign students. Theoretically such steps were pretty fruitful for Pakistan but a large number of Madrasahs in Pakistan made it difficult for government to keep effective check on each and every Madrasah. As matter stands today, there are some Madrasahs which are not only providing shelter and recruits to militant groups but also collecting funds from extortion and other unlawful means on behalf of the militant organizations.²⁰ Therefore, it was imperative for the incumbent government to take appropriate measures to curb such Madrasahs with trans-national network with terrorist organizations. While analyzing, it is worthy to mention that General Musharraf's government was the first one to take strict actions against Madrasahs as a measure in his Counter-Terrorism Strategy. It might be the fact that Musharraf was a Military dictator that is why he was fearless and bold enough to take such actions. Had there been any

20 Munawer Azeem, "Seminaries Playing Courier for TTP in Fund-Raising Drive", Dawn, May 01, 2014.

political government, it was near to impossible to come up with such Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Reliance on Un-manned Aerial Vehicles

The use of un-manned aerial vehicle i.e. Drone strikes were considered as instrumental part of modern Counter-Terrorism Strategy by the US, therefore, Musharraf allowed limited drone strikes inside FATA. During his tenure, there were 35 drone strikes²¹ and the drones used to fly from Shamsi airbase to target militants in the tribal areas of Pakistan. These strikes brought collateral damage and many of Al-Qaeda linked militants along with innocent people were killed. Musharraf believed that drone warfare was more economical and risk free as compared to sending a team of Special Forces. Though the Drone attacks were counter-productive the government continuously relied on them. This policy was ultimately backfired and proved to be disastrous for Pakistan. Despite the fact, the US killed many Al-Qaeda, TTP, IMU and ETIM members along with innocents in Drone strikes. Hence, this counter terror strategy was also a failure, because killing of a figurehead or a leader did not hamper terrorist activities of these militant groups. In the case of TTP, soon after the killing of a commander, the militants would replace him with another and their militant activities continue. The troublesome element was that with the change in leadership, the lethality in acts of terrorism was also increased.

Counter-Terrorism Strategy during Pakistan Peoples' Party Government 2008-2012

The Pakistan Peoples' Party's Counter-Terrorism Strategy was based on 3D approach; Deterrence, Development and Dialogue.²² It was observed that the PPP government was pressurized by the US to launch decisive military operations

21 Masood Ur Rehman Khattak, "Pakistan's Efforts in the War Against Terror", Weekly Pulse, <<http://weeklypulse.org/details.aspx?contentID=3893&storylist=10>>

22 Monish Gulati, "Pakistan Looks for a National Policy to Fight Terror", *South Asia Monitor*, September 7, 2013, <<http://southasiamonitor.org/detail.php?type=sl&nid=5917>>

against TTP militants in tribal areas especially in South and North Waziristan Agency. Consequently, the PPP government carried out two critical operations in 2009—the Operation *Rah-i-Raast* was focused on Swat and Malakand regions, whereas Operation *Rah-i-Nijaat* was focused on South Waziristan Agency.²³ The, PPP government wanted to settle issues with peaceful negotiations. Subsequently, the government carried out a deal with militants in Swat Valley and accepted their demand for enforcement of Sharia in the region concerned. Nonetheless, militants in the area expanded their activities in surrounding areas too. Resultantly, Pakistan government was left with only option of military operation to clear Swat and Malakand regions.

The Operation *Rah-i-Raast* targeted militants in Swat, Buner, Lower Dir, and Shangla District. Pakistan Army deployed more than 30,000 to 45,000 soldiers and Airborne forces along with more than five hundred men from its Special Services Group.²⁴ It was a successful operation and Pakistan military gained control areas. Resultantly, the network base of TTP Swat chapter was destroyed and the remaining militants ran away to Afghanistan. Pakistan Army lost around 150 of its soldiers whereas more than 1,475 militants were killed and hundreds were arrested.²⁵ Although this operation was considered a success as Pakistan military recovered the lost ground and cleared Swat region, but the main leadership of the TTP Swat chapter moved to Afghanistan, consolidated their position and carried out hundreds of cross border raids against Pakistan security forces and civilians from there.²⁶ Approximately, two million people were displaced due to military operation and repatriated successfully afterward.

23 Niaz A Shah, *Islamic Law and the Law of Armed Conflict: The Conflict in Pakistan* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2011), 93.

24 Shah, *Islamic Law and the Law of Armed Conflict*.

25 Shah, *Islamic Law and the Law of Armed Conflict*.

26 Amir Mir, "Malala Targeted by Fazlullah-led Taliban", *The News*, October 11, 2012.

Meanwhile, government decided to target TTP's stronghold South Waziristan Agency. Initially Pak-Army cleared some areas but main leadership of TTP moved to other areas of FATA. Huge cache of arms and ammunition were captured and destroyed too. The operation closed all the options for militants in South Waziristan Agency. The TTP had no other option but to run for life. Ultimately they got refuge in North Waziristan Agency, from where they regrouped/reorganized and started new wave of terrorist attacks against Pakistan. It was failure of the PPP government to hand over decision making for operations in tribal areas to Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani. According to former Director General Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) Athar Abbas, in principle, the high command decided to launch operation in 2011 but due to General Kayani's indecisiveness and reluctance delayed this operation for four years.²⁷ Pakistan faced huge economic and human losses during this period. The civilian leadership had no choice but to launch operation in North Waziristan Agency.

Reliance on Drone Warfare

During the PPP government there was a record increase in drone strikes, a legacy of Musharraf. The government had an understanding with the US over drones but they criticized it publicly. This double policy was over when Wikileaks published a cable in which the PPP endorsed drone strikes in Pakistan.²⁸ During the PPP government, the US targeted and killed key leaders of the TTP and their affiliates from other foreign and local militant organizations. Drones were key component of the PPP's counter terrorism strategy. According to Bureau of Investigative Journalism, hundreds of

27 "Kayani Continued to Postpone NWA Operation: Gen Athar", The News, July 01, 2014.

28 "US Embassy Cables: Pakistan backs US Drone Attacks on Tribal Areas", The Guardian, November 30, 2010. <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/us-embassy-cables-documents/167125/print>>

innocent civilians were also killed in these strikes.²⁹ The UN and Amnesty International had also termed drone strikes against international law as these violate the fundamental rights of the people of tribal areas as well as sovereignty of Pakistan.³⁰ The ineffectiveness of the drone attacks was vivid in a way that killing of a key leader did not hamper operational capabilities of these groups. In short, drone warfare proved counter-productive in the Counter-Terrorism Strategy of the PPP government.

Counter Terrorism Strategy during PML (N) Government 2013-2014

The government of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) seemed more interested in talks with militants than use of force. Conversely, militants remained consistent in waging lethal terror attacks, so it was assumed that militants had no intention for peaceful dialogue with government. It is notable that the TTP has asked government to release their cronies from jails, enforce Shariah in Pakistan and pull back army from tribal areas before starting talks.³¹ Subsequently, these pre-negotiation demands were rejected by the government and military, keeping in view that TTP had attacked civilian and military installations after and during negotiations in past. At a certain point, the PML-N did believe that the use of force would not bring any anticipated results so State must rely on negotiations with all belligerent groups. The government set a committee to negotiate with the TTP but it went futile. In the meanwhile, Pakistan Army was asked to prepare its

29 "Pakistan 2004–2014: CIA Drone Strikes", <<http://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/category/projects/drones/drones-pakistan/>>

30 Owen Bowcott, "UN Rapporteur Christ of Heyns Condemns Use of Drone Strikes", The Guardian, October 17, 2013. <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/17/un-rapporteur-heyms-drone-strikes-yemen-pakistan/print>>

31 Zahir Shah Sherazi, "TTP Finalizes 15 Point Draft for Talks", Dawn, February 09, 2014.

line-of-action and soon after the failure of talks with the TTP, it launched air strikes followed by ground bellicose to root out militancy.

The operation code named as Zarb-e-Azb was launched in North Waziristan Agency on June 15, 2014; with 25,000 to 30,000 active troops.³² The air strikes proved very productive as hundreds of Uzbek, Al-Qaeda and TTP militants were killed. Pakistan Army secured Miranshah, Boya, Degan and Mirali towns from militants. Surprisingly, eleven factories of Improvised-Explosive-Devices (IED) were unearthed in Miranshah in which military recovered estimated 23 tons of explosives. Moreover, during search operation in Mir Ali Town the Pakistan Army discovered huge ammunition factories.³³ Similarly, Pakistan Army recovered 30 barrels filled with explosives and chemicals used for making IEDs, underground tunnels, torture cells, suicide bombing training centres, propaganda material from Miranshah and Mir Ali Towns. According to the DG ISPR, more than 570 militants were killed. Over 98 terrorist hideouts had been destroyed and their communication network, command and control structure was completely destroyed.³⁴

Another important feature of the PML-N's counter terror strategy is the Anti-Terrorism Law which was to strengthen the hands of the security forces.³⁵ There was huge hue and cry by the parliamentarians and human rights activists over this new anti-terror law. They were

32 "Pakistan Army Launches Operation 'Zarb-e-Azb' in North Waziristan", The News, June 15, 2014.

33 "Evidence of Al-Qaeda Presence Found in NWA: Army Officials", The News, July 10, 2014.

34 Mateen Haider, "Zarb-i-Azb: Army Claims 70% of Mirali Cleared" Dawn, July 27, 2014.

35 Raja Asghar, "Govt Forces Anti-Terror Bill through NA", Dawn, April 08, 2014.

of the view that this law would impede the basic fundamental rights of the citizens. Some people from the opposition benches regarded it as a draconian law.³⁶

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif took a principle position on drone strikes terming them against international law, counter-productive and has produced no results in the past.³⁷ This might be one of the reasons that there was less number of drone strikes during this government. The government's counter terrorism strategy might be successful because civilian and military leadership were on the same page. The PML-N government decided to continue operations in North Waziristan Agency and Karachi. The incumbent government and military leadership resolved to hunt the militants across Pakistan.

The Pakistan Army rendered huge sacrifices in these operations in FATA, since 2001. The Counter Terrorism Strategy devised against unconventional enemy proved as missing element in military doctrine of Pakistan. Now, its forces are qualified to fight conventional and guerrilla war with ample experience of operating against trans-national terrorist organizations. The lessons learnt in subsequent operations helped the Pakistan Army acquiring the desired results. Finally, it is imperative for the civilian leadership to fill the gap after operation Zarb-i-Azb for long term peace and stability in FATA.

Conclusion

It is suggested that Counter Terrorism Strategy would be incomplete without post-war reconstruction, rehabilitation, capacity building, employment and

36 Sarmad Ali, "PPO: Draconian or Not?", Daily Times, April 19, 2014.

37 Mariam Essa, "Drone Attacks Counterproductive to Peace Efforts: Nawaz", *Tribune*, November 4, 2013.

empowerment of the local tribes. It is fact that unemployed and deprived communities are vulnerable to the terrorist organizations, who can exploit them easily against the government. Therefore, political government should formulate a comprehensive line of action to address these grey areas which once have benefited the terrorists. Lastly, tribal areas should be integrated with mainstream of country and educational infrastructure must be ensured by the help of governmental and nongovernmental organizations.