



The Unseen War: Socio-Economic Roots of Terrorism in Pakistan's Troubled History

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Keywords	Abstract
Terrorism, Socio-Economic Factors, Radicalization, Political Instability, Governance Reforms.	<i>Pakistan has been facing a persistent challenge of terrorism for more than two decades at the cost of a huge number of lives, infrastructure, and economic loss. The issue has deeply entrenched roots in the geopolitical history of Pakistan, as the country had been serving as a strategic base during the Afghan War in 1979 and then became a central player against the war on terror after the incident of 9/11. Being at the heart of conflicts in the country and region, this has fuelled extremism in the society, leading to terror attacks, violence, and extremist activities, causing devastation to the society, people, and economy. This paper establishes a link between socioeconomic factors, i.e., illiteracy, unemployment, social exclusion, and terrorism in Pakistan. The argument states that the aforementioned situations, along with bad governance, corruption, injustice, and political instability, pave the way for radicalisation and act as catalysts for violence. In this context, with a severe lack of opportunities, development, and justice, the underdeveloped areas are extremely exposed to extremist factors and ultimate recruitment. Utilising a case study approach, the research emphasises that, along with political factors, the foundational grounds for terrorism also include socio-economic factors. The paper suggests inclusive development, reforms in governance, and accountability as comprehensive counterstrategies to address the long-standing issue of terrorism.</i>

INTRODUCTION

Terrorism is a long-standing issue for Pakistan, which has been dealing with it for several decades. This fight is an essential part of the country’s socio-political life. This difficulty in locating the origin of the problem arises from its complex history within the region and the broader context of geopolitics. From the Afghan jihad against the Soviet invasion in 1979, using Pakistan as a base for mujahedin, up to the formation of the Taliban group and the U.S. War on Terror, the nation situated in South Asia has remained a theatre of internecine conflicts that breed terrorism (Rashid, 2001).

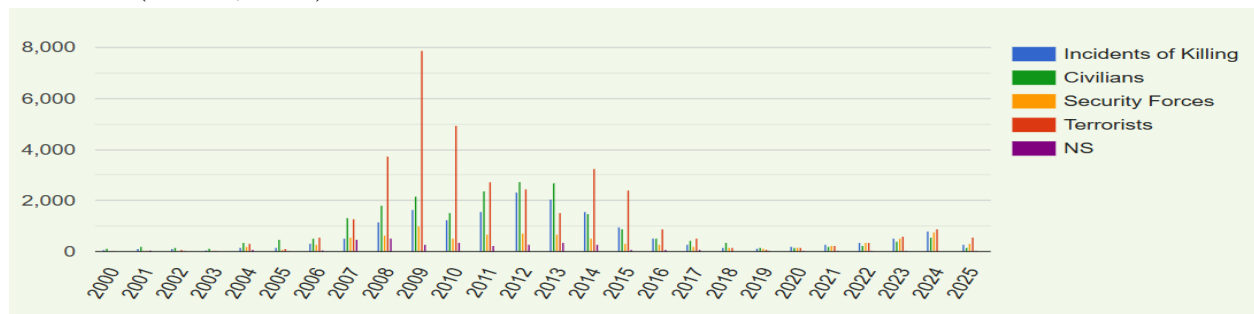


Figure 1: Number of Terrorism Incidents, (Source: South Asia Terrorism Portal)

The country has continued to receive endless strikes from terrorist organisations that have attacked civilians as well as military personnel, causing casualties, instilling fear, and raising huge sums of money. Since 9/11, Pakistan has lost approximately 72,000 lives and suffered a financial loss of more than 35 trillion rupees (SATP, 2025). This constant menace has not only socio-politically alienated the nation but also stunted its socio-economic growth.

Hence, socio-economic issues lie at the nucleus of Pakistan's terrorism conundrum. Extremist groups exploit the conditions of poverty, unemployment, education, and social inequality. Many young Pakistanis, especially in rural and developing areas of this country, lack economic opportunities and social representation (PIPS, 2019). This is what causes them to become easy subjects of the radicals and terrorist groups because they have something to chase, brotherhood, and financial security that the state fails to provide (Abbas, 2004). Furthermore, governance, political unrest, and graft, as well as other problems, have effects on these socio-economic factors and so serve to promote the cycle of violence and terrorism.

However, it asserts that poverty and failure of the political leadership are not the only outcomes that may arise. But they are one of the causes that are breeding this vice (Lieven, 2012). As a result, terrorism includes social-economic factors that work towards the denial of terrorism and especially dealing with factors contributing to it, such as poverty, unemployment, education, etc., besides good governance and political sanity in Pakistan. Thus, there is a necessity to comprehend the structure of the socio-economic conditions that have a principal impact on terrorism; this is the best way to develop effective counter-terrorism policies in Pakistan. If these causes are addressed, then the policymakers are put in a position to come up with better and sound solutions other than the use of force, that is, through diplomacy and other viable ways.

Theoretical Framework

The Relative Deprivation Theory by Robert Ted Gurr explains political violence as an outcome of the perceived mismatch between these two types of values: expectations of what people think they are entitled to and what they can actually achieve, which come in the form of value expectations and value capabilities, respectively. This mismatch results in frustration and resentment that has the potential to build up and rise to aggression, rebellion, or systematic violence. Importantly, the distinction that Gurr makes is critical to understanding because relative deprivation is not absolute, and grievance is what generates conflict, and thus it is relational and comparative (Gurr, 2012).

relative deprivation → frustration → radicalisation → terrorism

This can be applied when analyzing the same situation in Pakistan, where terrorism has been ongoing for two decades. Historically, its participation in the Afghan War of 1979 and post-9/11 War on Terror saw a paradigm of a security-first state, which in many instances and situations disregarded socio-economic development in such conflict-vulnerable zones (Rashid et al., 2012). This geopolitical location increased domestic instability as there emerged growing expectations by the marginalised populations to participate first in the political process, secondly, to receive favourable economic opportunities, and thirdly, to be accorded justice, which has largely not been achieved because of weaknesses in the structures of governance.

This disparity between the expectations and the realistic achievement levels of citizens has been increased by socio-economic status issues like illiteracy, unemployment, and lack of access to various things. Weak urban centers and underdeveloped areas, especially in the former FATA, Balochistan, and much of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, continue to lack the basic facilities, access to resources, and political representation (Yusuf, 2012). The failure of good governance, corruption and injustice, and political instability serve to support a feeling of system negligence. Gurr prescribes that with such perceptions, the state of relative deprivation among individuals increases, thus making them more vulnerable to recruitment by extremists who offer them a way to gain dignity, recognition, and socio-economic stability.

The disjuncture between the expectations and the capabilities to fulfil the expectations has been utilised by militant groups in Pakistan, who acted as alternative givers of justice, employment, and community identity (Abbas, 2004). This conforms with the position taken by Gurr that in instances where channels through which the grievance can be addressed are blocked or rendered ineffective, violence is seen as an option that is available. The self-sustaining aspect of the process, which involves deprivation breeding terrorism. In turn, perpetuating deprivation makes it easy to comprehend the fact that extremist networks thrive even after being crushed by force.

Thus, as per the Relative Deprivation Theory, in the case of Pakistan, inclusive development, institutional reforms, and an effective system of accountability are essential to bridge the expectations-capabilities gap to uproot terror. The socio-psychological causes of terrorism could be reduced by undermining, through expansion of equitable access to education, employment, and justice, the foundation pillars of extremist activities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study aims to understand the socio-economic causes of terrorism in Pakistan using a qualitative case study method. Secondary data is collected in the form of scholarly books, journal articles, government publications, and respectable policy think-tank publications. Through content analysis, the connection between illiteracy, unemployment, social exclusion, and radicalisation is considered in addition to the failure of governance and political instability. In the study, the Relative Deprivation Theory is used to analyze the findings. To that end, historical analysis is merged towards tracking the geopolitical origins of terrorism, and thematic organization is employed to find common socio-economic patterns that facilitate extremist recruitment and violence.

RELEVANT LITERATURE AND DISCUSSION

ii. Poverty's Poisonous Grasp

The relationship between poverty and terrorism is one of the most hotly debated topics in the context of terrorism research. Analyzing the Pakistani context, it is possible to understand that poverty is tightly connected with terrorism, with the help of socio-economic marginalisation of the population, which becomes the ground for increasing the role of extremists. Extremely poor individuals generally feel that they have no stake in society and no reason to live; that is why the hate groups come in with incentives, even economic ones, to 'recruit' such individuals (Krueger & Malečková, 2003). Terrorism is attributed to factors such as unequal access to resources, such as land and capital, as well as substantial disparities in living standards, which create a breeding ground for conflict, marginalisation, and discrimination (Zeb & Ahmed, 2019).

Table 1: Inter-Provincial Comparison of Socio-Economic Indicators

Indicators	Sindh	Punjab	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	Balochistan
Multidimensional poverty ²⁵	49%	31%	43%	85%
Maternal mortality rate (Maternal deaths by 100,000 live births, 2019)	224	157	165	298
Doctors per thousand	39.67	44.39	12.99	2.95
Literacy	55%	62%	53%	41%
Schools	6,040	1,738	161	683
Universities	266	356	195	8
Public sector development funding (PKR millions, 2015–2016)	2,082,333	3,068,653	1,283,447	223,354
Size of economy KR (Percentage of national economy)	3,192.50 (30.0%)	5,757.00 (54.1%)	1,380.90 (13.0%)	313.70 (2.90%)
Distribution of National Assembly seats	75	183	43	17
Senate	23	23	23	23
Judges in the Supreme Court of Pakistan	5	7	3	1

Source: Compiled by the authors from multiple sources.

Scientific research can pinpoint that the areas with a higher level of poverty suffer from frequent and severe terror attacks. For instance, economic marginalisation is one of the key indicators that brings people to militant groups (Fair, 2014). Similarly, the absence of equal opportunities not only fuels conflict but also hinders the establishment of a cohesive national identity and weakens state–society relations (Gurr, 2012).

Furthermore, theoretical analysis has supported this fact, pointing out that poverty and terrorism breed each other, as the latter hampers development through destruction, discouraging investors through coerced insurance and resource diversion towards security measures (Berrebi, 2007). This, in turn, prolongs the socio-economic environment that allows the growth of terrorism. This proves that poverty and terrorism are cyclic; hence, efforts to combat poverty should form the core of counter-terrorism.

Unemployment is one more socio-economic factor influencing personality radicalisation processes in the territory of Pakistan. High unemployment levels, especially amongst the youth, increase the vulnerability of the society to radicalisation as assailants have numerous people to recruit (Nawaz, 2024). When people are jobless, they easily get frustrated and feel useless; hence, the militant groups provide them with an alternative source of income, security, and the ultimate purpose of living. Jobless youth are vulnerable to radicalisation because they look for other ways to get those things that a job can provide (Stern, 2004). Thus, the world becomes vulnerable to terrorist activities carried out by these groups, who offer financial support along with a definite roadmap to what these groups portray as a ‘just’ struggle.

It can also start with relatively minor incentives in terms of money to attend madrasas or take part in community services sponsored by the radical groups. Many of these people are gradually imbued with extreme outlooks, and they can be promoted to more senior positions within the given organisation, which will involve them in terrorists’ actions (Khwaja, 2025). This lack of employable activities, therefore, leads to a fostering of violence, thus creating more armed groups which people join out of sheer necessity and need to ‘economically graduate’. Similarly, the informal economy in Pakistan, which involves other activities and sectors like smuggling and the drug business, also helps to radicalise the youths (Yusuf, 2008). Such illegal economic activities are run by these extremities and make them financially strong and economically make up the unemployed in their folds (Rashid, 2009). This not only cements the financial foundation for these groups but also increases the capacity of these groups to induce more radicalism in jobless people.

iii. Education's Absence and Extremism's Presence

Education is therefore one of the most significant aspects that is lacking, and as a result, the gaps are comfortably filled by radical groups. The polarised communities, especially the illiterate ones, can be easily influenced by radical movements because of their inability to analyze the situation and lack of sufficient knowledge about the world (Zaidi et al., 2025). The low literacy rate in Pakistan is ideal for the development of militant ideas (Singer, 2001). Lack of literacy and critical analysis of information coming from different sources creates gaps in the population that are filled with radical ideas (Markey, 2013). Lack of education keeps people abandoned to their illiteracy and confined to rumour, and even the most slanted news, opinions, or even street leaflets might circulate under the authority of a chosen few who are driven by radical propositions.

Also, illiteracy deepens socio-economic inequality, and thus people feel more neglected and resentful, and this gives extremists a chance. These groups provide a social structure in the demographics' daily life, which education and employment do not: the organisations give the people roles in their lives (Bergen & Pandey, 2006). This condition makes the community a fertile ground for extreme acts, while illiterate and radical people fuel each other in a halting cycle.

Pakistan contains a large number of madrassas, or religious schools, that play multiple roles in the education system of the country. In 2024, the Ministry of Education of Pakistan disclosed that there are 17,738 registered madrassas with 2,249,520 students enrolled (Asghar, 2024). Most madrassas offer appropriate religious knowledge and charity works; however, some are associated with the promotion of terrorism (Sajjad, 2014). These institutions operate to provide education where the state is unable or unwilling to meet the people's educational needs, enrolling students with the hope of offering free education, food, and shelter to the learners (Singer, 2001). It is not that all madrassas are militant, but those that are militant teach a stringent version of the religion, giving importance to jihad and martyrdom (Lieven, 2012). If they are filled with teachers having exclusive and extreme views and impart knowledge according to the target set by their organisation, it can lead to focusing on religious learning at the expense of critical thinking or even modern subjects, leading to a completely different view of the world that is not tolerated, and radical views dominate instead of tolerance.

Those people believe that the weakness of legislation in those education sectors creates conditions where different radical organisations exploit madrassas as training grounds for their militants. The students are usually from poor backgrounds; the camp offers them a direction and a group, and they can easily be manipulated into joining a group of extremists (Stern & Berger, 2016). Some of the madrassas are being funded as subsidiaries and sponsored by foreign governments and private benefactors whose interests are anchored in the proliferation of extreme ideologies (Pakistan, 2002). These linkages supply madrassas with the required logistics for their functionality and the enlargement of their scope, thereby embedding more extreme thought processes amongst students.

iv. Governance's Gaping Wound

The current internal political situation in Pakistan is characterised by instability and change; thus, it can be stated that the country is favourable to the existence of terrorist organisations. The change of government that has frequently taken place, coups d'état, and other

political instability have most affected the capability of this country in countering terrorism. It destabilises the political leadership, undermines the state institutions, and distracts the leadership from attending to the socio-economic concerns in a given society, thus providing room for the emergence and growth of extreme groups.

The matters of political instability in some of these civilisations, with constant power struggles between the civilian government and the military, hinder counter-terrorism activities and create power voids that radical groups are quick to occupy (Constable, 2011). They capitalise on the situations to mobilise and organise and undertake their actions with little hindrance from the state power structures. Furthermore, political instability results in the creation of poor governance, which entails inefficient policy measures as well as poor law implementation (Hassan, 2002). This absence of a coordinated and long-term plan against terrorism enables the militant groups to work with some measure of freedom. Successive military interventions in politics have worsened the political landscape and caused fragmentation of the approach used to fight terrorism for the benefit of the terrorist organizations (Shah, 2014).

Corruption also remains another major factor that hampers governance and contributes to discontent and disillusionment among the people, hence providing suitable conditions for the growth of terrorism. Corruption undermines the legitimacy of governmental authority and provides the preconditions for the population's discontent, due to which people turn to extremism. Corruption in the police and other affairs also hampers strong counter-terrorism measures, as the militants manage to escape punishment due to bribery.

In Pakistan, the government as well as security forces plundered the country's wealth and cowed the civilian political leadership by corruption, which forced the civilian society to seek justice and support from non-state actors such as terrorists (Chayes, 2016). This leaves people disillusioned with the state and thus ready to join the extreme groups who are willing to fight the corrupt state.

Corruption that has deeply rooted itself in both political and administrative establishments of Pakistan widens socio-economic disparities and pushes people to the edge, which leads them to embrace extremism. According to the Corruption Perceptions Index by Transparency International, Pakistan remains one of the leaders in corruption indicators, which means that the issue is systemic in nature (Transparency International, 2024). What could be seen is that there is a great level of corruption, and what it entails is the depletion of the financial capital that can be used for development and the eroding of the formal structures of the state. Corruption also affects international aid and development; most of the aid and development money is diverted by corrupt officials for their own selfish gains and not for the intended purpose. A major reason contributing to this state of underdevelopment influencing extremism is the fact that, to this date, poverty and underdevelopment remain prevalent due to such squandering of resources. Terror and acts of terrorism have been discouraged by the use of sights and acts such as wellness, poverty, and illiteracy, among other causes, which could not be attained in Pakistan because of the issue of corruption in the government (Jones, 2003).

Undoubtedly, some of the things that have occurred after political upheaval have facilitated corruption that has given rise to and allowed terrorism to thrive in Pakistan. The resolution of these issues implies not only collective measures to provide peaceful functioning of the working machine of the state apparatus but also the struggle against corruption within the state and at all its layers. This is what is helping Pakistan, once more instilling in the people the trust in the

government and ensuring proper and working governance, a government that would not easily be influenced by the ideology of extremism.

v. The External Chessboard: Geopolitics and Terrorism

It is imperative that, as Pakistan is a geo-strategically important nation, it has ended up at the forefront of extending the battle against proxy wars and superpowers' battle to dominate in this part of the world. Thus, external players not only intensified internal crises but also created conditions in which terrorist groups can successfully operate. The Soviet interference in Afghanistan in December 1979 and the subsequent American endeavour to challenge Soviet might also signify the start of many proxy wars in Pakistan.

The arrival of the foreign volunteers and America's and Saudi Arabia's backing of the Afghan mujahedin in the early 1980s turned Pakistan into a factory for producing militants. During this period, a network of training camps was set up, and arms and funds were provided that helped in the emergence of wholly fascist groups that are active in Pakistan to this day (Rashid, 2001).

Thus, the end of the Cold War in the region did not receive a decisive outcome. However, longing for an end to the conflict, the international community retreated from Pakistan, and as a result, Pakistan faced the problematic years of conflict. The Afghan civil war and the emergence of the Taliban added to the problem, and Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence, or ISI, was accused of aiding the Taliban to counteract India's influence in Afghanistan while seeking to extend its clout in the region (Coll, 2004). These actions have had long-term consequences for Pakistan's internal security; terrorists were able to consolidate their positions by using the example of geopolitical strife.

In the same regard, Pakistan has relied on international funding to support terrorism. Different countries and organisations have channelled money into the country to fund militants of their preference. Such funds have not only provided support to terrorist activities but, at the same time, have harmed the sovereignty of Pakistan and have made it difficult to counter terrorism.

Kuwait and, above all, Saudi Arabia have been partly funding the spread of terrorism (Fair, 2014). This support is mostly in the form of financial support for the madrassas, which preach and teach extreme forms of Islamic sharia and which feed into other subgroups of the militant network. Foreign sources of funding have also been associated with charitable organisations that are organisational fronts for terrorism. These organisations tap into the absence of state functioning to deliver social services, together with the necessity produced by emergencies, to build ties within society to gain acolytes. They try to introduce the audience to the techniques of transferring money to terrorists using the methods of ostensibly legal charitable organizations (Stern & Berger, 2016). Similarly, India is also involved in terror financing, harbouring and protecting terrorists in Pakistan (MoFA, 2022). The Samjhauta Express blast and Indian Naval Commander Kulbhushan Yadav are undeniable proof of India's direct involvement in sabotage and terror.

A major component of this is the attempt made by the global society to prevent terrorism financing from foreign sources. Measures applied to prevent and rein in the financing of terrorism have met some degree of success, but the process is complicated and fraught due to the multifarious and secretive structure of the funding mechanisms of the terrorist outfits. Despite pressure from the outside, the foreign funding remains the stronghold of militancy (Jones, 2003).

The international relations of the region and the availability of foreign money have greatly affected the emergence and sustenance of terrorism in Pakistan.

vi. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan: Illuminating the Shadows

This paper seeks to establish how socioeconomic factors can be used to understand the connection between poverty and terrorism through analyzing known terrorist events. In this, according to the Global Terrorism Index, Tehrik-e-Taliban (TTP) emerged as the fastest-growing terrorist group, with a 90% increase in attributed deaths (Global Terrorism Index, 2020).

Table 2: Reported casualty totals in KP (2025)

Date	District/City	Incident Description	Attack Type	Fatalities	Injuries	Claimed by/ Suspected
Feb 2025	KP Province (multiple districts)	A series of coordinated terrorist attacks occurred across the province, including bombings and armed ambushes targeting civilians and security forces.	Multiple (bombings, shootings)	45	58	TTP (suspected)
Mar 4, 2025	Bannu (Military Base)	Twin suicide bombings targeted a major military installation; attackers attempted to breach security before being neutralized.	Suicide bombing	12	30	ISKP (suspected)
Mar 2025	KP Province (aggregate)	Province-wide violence during the first quarter of 2025 involving numerous bombings, shootings, and ambushes.	Multiple	152	302	TTP & ISKP (suspected)
Jun 28, 2025	Mir Ali, North Waziristan	Suicide car bombing targeted an armed forces convoy, causing mass casualties.	Suicide VBIED (vehicle-borne IED)	17 (incl. bomber)	29	TTP (suspected)
Late Jun 2025	North Waziristan	Roadside suicide car bomb killed several soldiers and wounded civilians in nearby areas.	Suicide VBIED	13–14 soldiers	25 civilians	TTP (suspected)
By Aug 2025	KP Province (cumulative)	Total reported terror incidents and casualties across the province by August 2025.	Multiple	138 civilians	352 civilians	TTP, ISKP, others

The table highlights a series of devastating attacks in 2025, reflecting the region’s fragile security environment and limited state presence in certain areas. Persistent violence underscores the province’s vulnerability, rooted in socio-economic disparities, cross-border militancy, and inadequate governance structures. An incident of such horrific nature is the Army Public School (APS) in Peshawar, 16 December 2014. This gruesome attack was executed by Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and led to the killing of 145 people, of whom 132 were children. The TTP justified this attack, as it targeted the group after the Pakistan military continued attacking them in North Waziristan (Saifi & Botelho, 2014). The areas involved in militant activities, like FATA, are a picture of backwardness in terms of lack of education, no employment opportunities, and very low income levels. Such conditions are likely to make humans feel lonely and harbour resentment that is fertile ground for the TTP and other radical organisations to brainwash people (Lieven, 2012). The APS attack can therefore be regarded as an outcome of

these socio-economic processes, when the militants, being deprived of their bases, seized on attacking the softer targets to prove that they were still capable of doing so in retaliation for the perceived wrongs.

Another event is the suicide bombing of the well-known Marriott Hotel on September 20, 2008, in Islamabad. This very attack, also claimed in the TTP's line of fire, took the lives of at least 55 others while also leaving many injured (Al Jazeera, 2008). The choice of target is indicative of the terrorists' intention to strike wealth and power, and the target of a capitalist, Western icon signifying protection is symbolic. The attack was aimed both at the government and at demonstrating the militants' ability to attack the very core of the capital, which intensified people's feeling of insecurity (Constable, 2011).

Some areas in Pakistan have turned into centers of terrorism and sheer poverty. The anti-state elements in the tribal areas of Pakistan, especially North and South Waziristan, stand as an example. These regions have always been laid back, having virtually little or no contact with the state and social amenities. The socio-economic status of these areas is very low, and thus, it becomes easy for extremist ideologies to fester there.

The people have no opportunities for formal education, no jobs, and no access to minimal healthcare and other necessities that have made them poor and powerless (Sou, 2009). That is why the native population, who expect nothing but degradation for themselves in the near future, are ready to enlist in the militant organisations that pay money for that, provide social services for their members, and give the people a sense of direction in life.

Table 3: Data of Prominent Insurgent/Terrorist Attacks in Balochistan (January 2018–September 2022)

S.No	Target	Type of attack	Location	Year	Impact
1.	Bus carrying Chinese engineers	Suicide attack	Dalbadin, Balochistan	August 2018	Five people, including three Chinese
2.	Chinese Consulate	BLA attacked	Karachi, Sindh	November 2018	Four local staff killed
3.	Pearl Continental Hotel	BLA militants	Gwadar, Balochistan	June 2019	Five people killed and six injured
4.	Pakistan Stock Exchange (three Chinese companies at the time owned 40% of the stakes)	BLA	Karachi, Sindh	June 2020	Two security guards and a police officer killed; Four BLA militants also killed
5.	Serena Hotel	Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)	Quetta, Balochistan	April 2021	Five people killed and 12 wounded
6.	Check post	Baloch Liberation Front (BLF)	Kech, Balochistan	January 2022	17 soldiers and a BLF militant killed
7.	A roadside IED bomb blast	BLA	Mat area of Dera Bugti, Balochistan		Four people killed and 10 injured
	A grenade attack	BLA	Dera Allahyar town of Jaffarabad district, Balochistan	January 2022	17 people, including two police officers, injured
8.	Bomb blast	Baloch Nationalist Army (BNA)	Lahore, Punjab	January 2022	Three people, including a child, killed and over 25 injured: Six BNA militants killed
9.	Suicide attack	BLA	Confucius Institute, the Karachi University	April 2022	Four people, including three Chinese teachers and a Pakistani driver, killed

Balochistan is another area that is also affected by acts of terrorism, similar to the above-described region. It is resource-endowed, though it is still one of the most impoverished and

backward provinces in Pakistan. The issue of Baloch nationalism with socio-economic grievances that has existed for several decades has also led to insurgency and created an environment for different terrorist groups. The Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), Baloch Republican Army (BRA), and Baloch Students Organisation (BSO) frequently attack state infrastructure, innocent civilians, and law enforcement agencies. A report from an Islamabad-based think tank, the Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), reveals an alarming trend of growing attacks on the CPEC. Almost 74 attacks throughout Pakistan were carried out in 2021 (Dangwal, 2022). BLA, BRA, and the Baloch Liberation Front (BLF) were mainly responsible for those attacks.

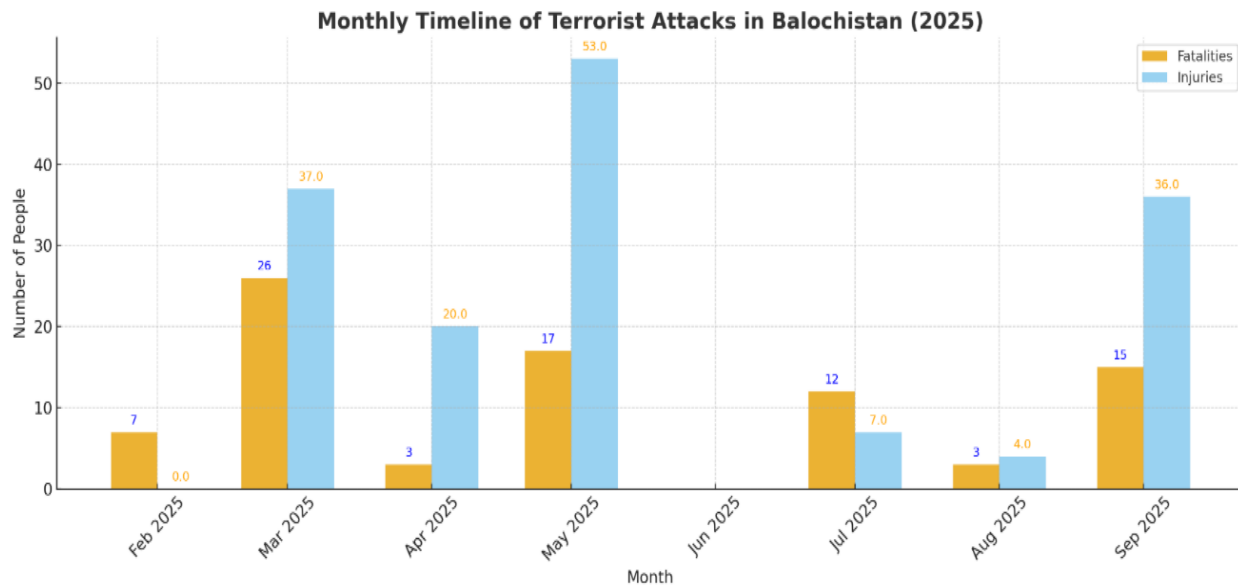


Figure 2: Timeline of Terrorist Attacks in Balochistan During 2025, (Source: author)

It shows the terror perpetration cycle of 2025 in Balochistan. A very small number of high-casualty incidents contribute to drastic increases in the number of deaths and injuries. The next upsurge indicates fluctuations in the environment and continuous alteration of the security situation in the province. The hijacking of the Jaffar Express train incident and the Khuzdar school bus bombing are the most recent incidents conducted by the BLA. However, they became discontented with the absence of meaningful change in their financial status and the lack of job opportunities. This has resulted in a situation that is a violation, because militant groups use the frustrations of the locals to gain their objectives.

vii. Crafting the Shield: Counterterrorism Strategies

The country has gone through some ups and downs trying to combat this vice, using/not using force. Pakistan has made a commendable contribution in the counter, no, wait a moment, in the military effort with the aim of fighting terrorism over the years, with the signature being Operation Zarb-e-Azb, Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad, Azm-e-Istehkam, and now the Hard State. All these actions have targeted the regions and towns where militant groups are working within the tribal regions, and they have drastically reduced the wings of these terrorist groups in the towns.

The military actions have been supported by intelligence-focused operations and improvements of security on the Afghan-Pak border to hinder cross-border movement of militants (Lieven,

2012). However, even once all these have been secured, there are still some missing links in the counterterrorism weaponry of Pakistan. One striking attribute in many of them has been how the military solutions usually dominate the action of reform of the social-economic and political framework. Although they are required, they are unable to ensure a sustainable peace, despite counter-terrorism activities being in demand (Fair, 2014). The lack of civil-military connections and the inefficient governance of the areas cleared of militants permit the expansion of radical ideas.

Also, there is a second pitfall in which counterterrorism fails to successfully charge and put on trial terrorists, as is characteristic of the justice system. It is due to the faulty ways of enquiry and the absence of enough evidence, as well as this being topped off by witness cases.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that terrorism in Pakistan cannot be seen as a process that solely results from political or geopolitical processes; however, it is greatly interconnected with the socio-economic factors. The factors of illiteracy, unemployment, social exclusion, and underdevelopment prove to be productive bases of radicalism, particularly in the marginal areas. The provenance of such weaknesses is compounded by bad governance, corruption, injustice, and political instability that serve to undermine people in having faith in state institutions. The case study methodology has shown that poor access to education, economic opportunities, and social justice makes individuals more prone to extremist recruitment. These internal weaknesses have been enhanced by the history of Pakistan carrying out the Afghanistan War as well as the post 9/11 war on terror, which ingrains extremism into its social life.

Recommendations

Therefore, the COIN strategy that was to be promoted in Pakistan had to be improved and combined with socio-economic development. In a bid to end terrorism, it is relevant to end the conditions and factors under which the poor, illiterate, and those people who do not have a say in the political systems are the root of terrorism. Some recommendations regarding the development of a socio-economic armour against terrorism are as follows:

- a.** Supporting the local economy, especially around militancy-stricken areas, can create potential job opportunities, and this will prevent any thought of taking the opportunity to join a militant group. It is responsive by creating jobs, and more importantly, for the youth, it responds powerfully to the processes of terrorist militants' recruitment.
- b.** There exist slumbering extremities, so the educative frame of the country must be altered, and further relevant schemes and agility of the cure must be introduced in the cog. This would help prevent radicalisation from getting embedded in society. The right to free education that will automatically illuminate and all but conscript the societies into tolerance.
- c.** Due to loss of trust in the state, there is a need to reform the government system and also fight corruption within institutions. This includes the process of reforming the judicial system so that it should become possible to guarantee an effective and acceptable criminal offence prosecution regarding crimes committed by people who act as terror agents and to implement measures to make the governmental institutions more responsible and transparent.

d. The local communities should be involved in counterterrorism activities to assist in the identification and later work with the released militants for their integration into society. Such programmes should aim at vocational training and psychological rehabilitation, as well as damping.

e. Cooperation with other countries is also essential due to the global nature of terrorism. This includes action and intelligence sharing, combined military operations, and action to counter the financing of terrorism. This underscores the need for a worldwide strategy against terrorism and the interplay between security and governance concerns at the international level.

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