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US War against Terror in Afghanistan: Insurgency in FATA and Implications for the Security of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Irfan Ullah^{1*}, Ashfaq U. Rehman², Sajjad Ali³, Azra Yasmin⁴

¹PhD Candidate at the Department of Political Science, University of Peshawar, Pakistan. ²PhD, Department of Political Science, University of Peshawar, Pakistan. ³PhD Candidate at the Department of Political Science, Qurtuba University of Science and Information Technology Peshawar, Pakistan. ⁴Principal Girls Degree College Sarai Salih. Haripur

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the security situation of the tribal belt in Pakistan across the Durand Line. The study has stressed that militancy and insurgency has grown mainly due the Jihadi and sectarian organizations established during Soviet War in Afghanistan. The bordering areas of Pakistan are considered as safe havens for both Afghan Taliban and other foreign militant groups. Since, the US and Pakistan policy towards these jihadi groups changed after 9/11, they turned towards Pakistan with a retaliatory response. The insurgency in FATA has either directly or indirectly affected the security and livelihood of the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Since the military operations started in FATA, the insurgents had made their way to the nearest province Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Due to the same culture and language the militants found it easy to mingle with local people. Gradually, they started their militant activities within the busy cities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and had been killing security personnel and civilians. The existing policies did not deal with the menace of extremism and insurgency in an effective and productive way. Therefore, counter insurgency strategies have been applied by the federal government to counter militant groups in these areas. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has also taken some concrete measure to tackle the menace of terrorism. However, it has been assessed from the study that Pakhtoon people across the Durand Line and especially in FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have suffered a lot with sacrifices of their men and material as compared to other areas of Pakistan.

KEYWORDS: Terrorism, Extremism, Militancy, Security, Insurgency, Pakhtoons, FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

INTRODUCTION

Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) lies on western border of Pakistan and covers an area of 27,220 square kilometres and inhabited by a population of more than 5 million people (according to 2017 census). FATA is traditional and tribal society where literacy rate is low, development is at infancy and employment opportunities are rare. Besides, Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR), the society in FATA is mostly governed by customs and traditions. Arms and weapons are considered as part of the dress of males and in some parts of the area every house works like an ordinance factory. Despite these facts, FATA was considered as one of the most peaceful area in the country. Similarly, Pakistan's western border was safe since the independence of Pakistan. However, the situation changed at the dawn of the 21st century (Hidayat, 2013).

The term insurgency is not new to the people of Pakistan. There is a long history of insurgency in Pakistan. Insurgency and militancy have times and again posed a vital threat to provincial and national authority of the state. While looking deep into the situation of Baluchistan, it resembles with the situation of East Pakistan. There are several militant groups which are confronting and battling with the security forces of the country. Moreover, the situation in FATA is similar. The roots of insurgency erupted from FATA and spread across the country. Behind insurgency there are a number of factors involved; underdevelopment, unemployment and poor governance, the judicial system and many more (Weinbaum, 2017). This paper specifically emphasizes on the security situation of tribal belt. Moreover, it has stressed that militancy and insurgency has grown from Jihadi and sectarian organizations. The Counter Insurgency (COIN) strategies have been applied to counter militant groups in these areas.

The scenario of Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is different from Baluchistan. In Baluchistan the people had picked up arms against the state. Whereas in other parts of the country, it seems that people are satisfied from the state institutions but questions the dominant position of Punjab province. However, their demand is more for provincial autonomy rather separation from the main land. On the other hand, the armed resistance in FATA is different in scope and substance. They want to impose their own style of political and administrative system, which is based on their own ideology. For this purpose, about 13 militant groups have been operating under the banner of Tahreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)(Rumi, 2015). TTP initially had bases in North and South Waziristan. Now they are in every nook and corner of the country. It is the product of Afghan war and influenced by the Afghan Taliban who were defeated in 2001 by US and NATO forces.

The bordering areas of Pakistan are considered as safe havens for both TTP and foreign militant groups. The Al-Qaeda has provided these militant groups some financial and material support. They openly supported the groups which tried to overthrow the government of Islamabad. Furthermore, there were foreign militant groups like the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM). They enjoyed full support of Pakistani Taliban groups. Along with these domestic and foreign groups, another player had emerged on the scene which is knows as Islamic State-Khurasan or Daesh. It had control over several provinces of Afghanistan close to the border of Pakistan. It was presumed that they had less presence in FATA, but the members of this group have been increasing rapidly. Those dissatisfied from their parent groups are entering in Daesh. According to a rough estimate, there are 8000 members of Daesh in Afghanistan, and about 2000-3000 in Pakistan (Giustozzi, 2016). It is believed that Daesh is working in collaboration with the militant groups of either side. They have launched attacks on the army border check posts. They are working independently from the leadership of Iraq and Syria. They follow the same ruthless tactics to create fear among the people as it was practice by the former militant groups(Ali, 2016).

Insurgency in FATA: Underlying Causes

There are several underlying causes of ongoing insurgency in FATA. They provided a fertile ground for the rise of militancy which several internal and external factors accelerated with the passage of time. Shattering of various myths and misperceptions vis-à-vis FATA as "hot bed of terrorism", "most dangerous place on earth".

1. FATA was the Great Britain's Buffer Zone against Czarist Russia

A political and diplomatic confrontation existed for most of the nineteenth century between Britain and USSR over Afghanistan and neighbouring territories. There was an atmosphere of distrust and the constant threat of war between the two colonial empires. However, Afghanistan had been playing a key role as a buffer state between the two super powers.



2. The Soviet Empire's Ambitious Outreach to Warm Water and FATA

The Soviet troops' invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 aroused American suspicions of a grand strategy aimed at seizing a warm-water port on the Indian Ocean and the oil of the Persian Gulf. The Western Border territory and people of Pakistan were used in that time against the USSR in the war in Afghanistan. This war strategy established the foundation of Taliban and Al-Qaeda in this region who after 9/11 became insurgents against Pakistan.



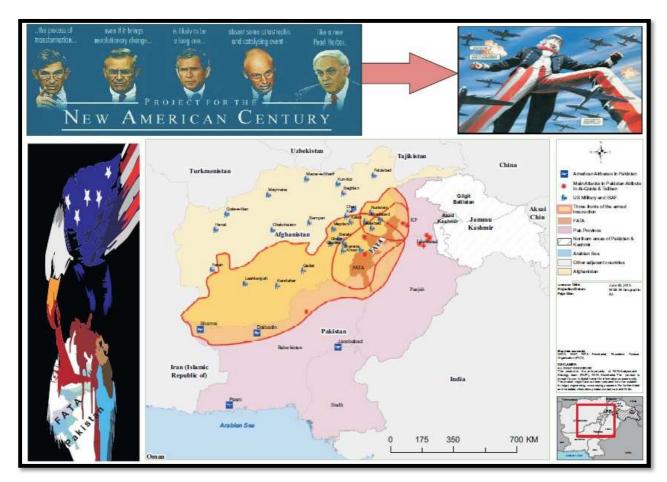
3. Ideological Proxies Specifically between Saudi Arabia and Iran

The Iran-Saudi Arabia proxy conflict is the ongoing struggle for regional influence between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Both countries have provided varying degrees of support to opposing sides in nearby conflicts, including the civil wars in Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, and Iraq, as well as conflicts in Central Asia and Pakistan.



4. Uncle Sam-Project for the New American Century (PNAC)

The Project for the New American Century (PNAC) was a neo-conservative think tank based in Washington D.C. This think tank focused on United States foreign policy. PNAC's stated goal was "to promote American global leadership." The organization stated that "American leadership is good both for America and for the world," and sought to build support for "a re-ignite policy of military strength and moral clarity".



5. A Historical Perspective as Movement of Pakistan

Aziz (2005) has comprehensively explained the role of institutions of Pakistan. He says that the institutions had used the religion as a tool to legitimize the actions of state. From the emergence of Pakistan, one way or other way, Islam has been used. The institutions have not been calculating the consequences of their acts. Still the religion plays a vital role in state policy manifestations. Several events have been examined below, which prove that Islamization of the society was inevitable in state's policy:

- a) The struggle for Pakistan Movement, started in the name of religion. The fight was portrayed as a religious fight to get an Islamic state. Which were against the principles of Quaid-e-Azam, that he categorical expressed in his speeches, even before and after the independence(Aziz, 2005)
- b) Prime Minister Liaqat Ali Khan, on 25th March 1949, moved a resolution in the constituent assembly. It was named as the "Objective Resolution", which was also contradicting the principles and teachings of Quaid-e-Azam. It is believed, if Quaid-e-Azam was alive, the resolution would have never passed. This was the fact known to the then prime minister as well(Munir, 1980).
- c) After the downfall of Bhutto and Zia-ul-Haq's coming into power, the latter introduced the process of Islamization. The reforms were at large appreciated by the people and clergy. It was not the first time when religion was used as tool to legitimize certain extremist acts. In 1953, a movement was launched as Anti-Ahmedi movement. The main purpose was to annihilate the minority of Pakistan. Moreover, it was aimed to remove the first foreign minister Sir Zafar Ullah Khan from his office, because he was from Ismaili sect of Islam. Similarly, the participation of Pakistan in Afghan War 1979-89 was mainly due to the belief established by the armed forces to fight against infidels on the soil of Afghanistan(Aziz, 2005). This doctrine was like the "Trotskyite Idea" of permanent socialist revolution.
- d) The mujahideen fought well against USSR forces in Afghanistan. After the disintegration of USSR, they didn't adhere to their Pakhtoon nationalism, but compromised their cultural identity for the sake of

Islamic solidarity. They preferred Islam over their sub-nationalism. They were made to believe that Islam was in danger and they sacrificed their Pakhtoon identification(Roy, 1986). However, this is a fact that the issue of Pakhtoonistan has not died and it is still alive. It is a matter of fact that this issue will be raised time and again(Harrison, 2007).

- e) Aziz (2005) explains that the foreign assistance has been provided to the powerful military and intelligence institutions. These assistances have made these institutions more powerful. Moreover, it enhanced the value of the Islamic forces of the country. A visible alliance was created by the powerful military and intelligence intuitions and the clergy. These two institutions not only dominated the social field of life but also filled the political vacuum left over by the politicians.
- f) Another factor is the growth of autonomous Jihadist organizations for pressurizing India on Kashmir. These extra-legal coercive organizations began to have their own agendas leading them to join Islamist forces including the Al-Qaeda and the Taliban, operating in Afghanistan and other parts of the Islamic world. They are now together in Swat and Waziristan(Aziz, 2005).
- g) The insurgency in either FATA or settled areas, which predominantly include Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is not a result of an immediate happenings. The autonomous jihadist organizations were established and strengthened to counter the aggressive attitude of India in Kashmir. These organizations grew in power and strength. Afterwards they joined Al-Qaeda and Taliban; and started militant operations in Afghanistan. Many people joined them, mostly from the north-west of Pakistan. These organizations then expanded to other parts of the world. However, in Pakistan they created sanctuaries. One of the best examples is the presence of insurgents found in Swat and Waziristan(Aziz, 2005). With the passage of time, the so-called jihadi organizations were to be found more in settled areas than FATA.
- h) Pakistan's support for the US and NATO forces in Afghanistan after 9/11 invited a strong negative reaction from a sizable percentage of Pakistanis. This had seriously eroded the legitimacy of President General Parvez Musharraf. His critics believed that they will see the flag of Islam unfurl once again over the Kabul(Scheuer, 2004).
- i) There is a common belief among the people of Pakistan that the decision taken by the President General Parvez Musharraf after 9/11 to support USA in Afghanistan for identifying and fighting Taliban was not a wise decision. It had reduced the peoples' faith in the military backed civilian government(Scheuer, 2004). Further his decision instigated those who were in favour of Pakistan. Now they are fighting against security agencies of Pakistan. Thus, the decision taken by the military led government made the people to face the music in shape of insurgency and violent terrorism in the aftermath.

6. The Role of Madrassah

A conference was conducted by FATA Research Centre (FRC) in 2004. The role of madrassah was discussed with reference to spreading of extremism and terrorism in FATA. According the report of 9/11 commission in 2004, the madrassahs in Pakistan have served as "incubators for violent extremism(CR, 2004). Moreover, they have argued that institutional flaws have provided space to the madrassahs to allure the youth. These madrassahs provide a literature to the vulnerable students, through which they pursued them to attempt for violent acts. The problem is not in the curriculum of the madrassahs because the curriculum contains the teachings from the Holy Quran and Hadiths. The problem is that these teachings are mis-interpreted for spreading extremism and terrorism, by propagating a certain kind of extremist ideology especially in FATA. Furthermore, the education provided in madrassahs is outdated and, any other education, expect religious education is cited as un-Islamic by the extremist scholars.

There is a common belief among the madrassah students and teachers that only Islamic teaching can be vanguard for protecting Islam and Muslims states. Thus, they condemn any kind of modernization of education. They refuse to embrace any idea that does not appear well-matched with their rationale and intellect (Wahid, 2014). There are about 24,000 registered madrassahs in Pakistan. An interesting fact is that the number of madrassahs has doubled since 1988 due internal as well as external factors. Apart from the registered madrassahs there are many unregistered madrassahs in Pakistan. Majority among them are not under the control of the government (The News, 2012).

7. Illiteracy, Unemployment and Underdevelopment

Illiteracy, unemployment and underdevelopment are the core factors, which have kept the people of FATA away from progress and growth. They are backward in every walk of life. The means of communication and infrastructure in FATA is miserable. In 21stcentury, the world has changed a lot, but FATA is still lacking basic human necessities. People of FATA live on means of cultivation. Most of the young generation is uneducated; therefore, they are easy to be convinced for wrong actions. Due to lack of importance to FATA by the government, the investors are reluctant to invest in FATA that can change the fate of the people over there. All these factors has results in the rise of militancy and extremism(FATA-Secretariat). Once, the militant

activities were started in FATA, people were attracted to it. The militants provided them handsome salaries. Furthermore, there was an ideological purpose to fight against the state institutions (Khan, 2013).

8. The Afghanistan-Pakistan Border Problem

Cappelli (2007) says that the Afghanistan bordering areas has produced more militants. These are Uighurs, Tajiks, Uzbeks and many others, who are trained in guerrilla fight. From Pakistan's side infiltration and influence is used from the western side, the areas are mainly Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Baluchistan and FATA. Pakistan has tried to create "strategic depth" on its western border to protect its nukes, in case of fight with India

The federal governments in Islamabad has frequently used Islam to subdue the ethnic struggles of Pashtuns and Baluch. The enthusiasm of Jihad had been continuously used by the state to complete its agendas and vested interest of civil-military leadership. The source of livelihood in FATA is mainly drugs(James, 2005). The afghan refugee camps in Pakistan have provided young boys to militant organizations.

However, Afghanistan is constantly in row with Pakistan. It is believed that behind this aggressive attitude is India's backing. India is trying to engage Pakistan on the western border. It will reduce Pakistan's attention from the Indian Occupied Kashmir(Rashid, 2015). The camps already operational in Afghanistan were created during the Afghan War, now these are used against Pakistan.

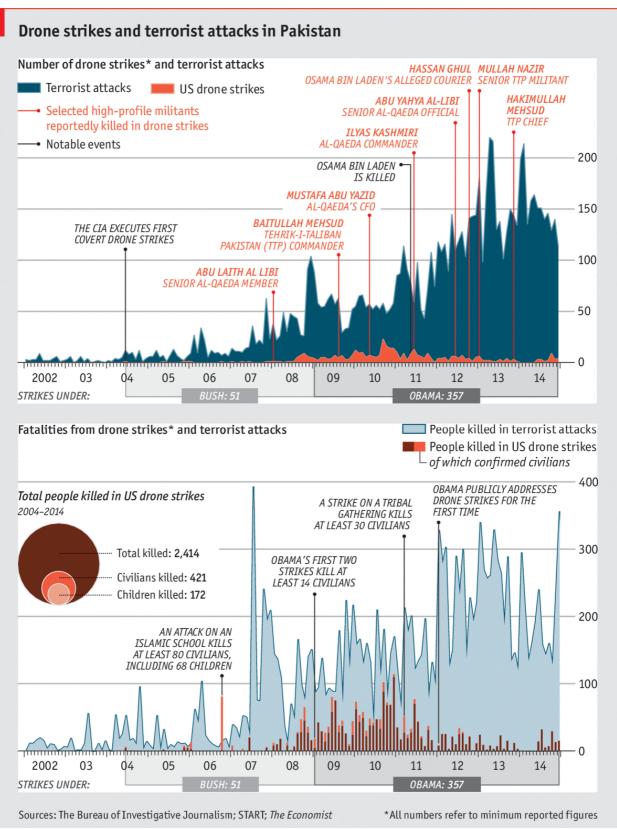
9. Military Operations in FATA

After the 9/11 incidence, it was obvious that USA was to strike back with full vigour and zeal especially for the show of its military might. The prediction came true when USA and allied NATO force attacked Afghanistan. The attack was on the pretext that the Taliban in Afghanistan refused to hand over Osama Bin Laden. Initially the attack was through aerial bombardment during which Pakistan also joined in the war against terror. The forces targeted some high-profile Taliban and Al-Qaeda leaders in Afghanistan with the assistance of Pakistan's security and intelligence agencies. It resulted in great success for the USA and NATO forces. However, the militants which somehow escaped the attacks moved into the border areas of Pakistan. Later on, they re-organized themselves and created problems for the NATO and Pakistani forces, due to which the pressure from the USA increased with a constant demand of "Do More".(Leghari, 2008)

The Pakistan's army launched its first military campaign in 2002. The military campaign was against Al-Qaeda and other foreign militant groups in that area. On the other hand, it was also against the local militant groups which were posing threat to the security of Pakistan. This military campaign was in 3 phases. In the first phase, it was to dislodge and dismantle the militant groups in the FATA region. In the second phase, it was the selective scouting of Taliban groups. In the third phase, it was the military operations from 2005 to 2008. Hence due to the military operations it became important to guard the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan to check the infiltration of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. Therefore, as a result about 100,000 soldiers were deployed on the border area. Specifically, there were two divisions of soldiers in Waziristan. Furthermore, many check posts have been established to withhold the free movement of militants in the cross-border region and to halt the movement to the settled areas as well. The North and South Waziristan, Bajaur and Mohmand have been the most troubled areas among the seven agencies of FATA.

10. The Drone Attacks and Repercussions

The central command in Afghanistan has targeted high profile targets on border areas of Afghanistan and in the FATA region. The report of 'The Economist' shows that the number and frequency of the drone attacks had drastically increased under the Obama administration. Even though, after a mass assassination of Taliban and Al-Qaeda members, the militants had been successful in reorganizing their cadres. They have learned to deceive the attacks and had managed to relocate. The former president of USA had stated that drone attacks will not help in weakening the terrorists but will create more terrorist. The following chart shows that despite hundreds of drone attacks, the militants had been making strong footholds in Afghanistan and FATA(Drone Strikes: Cause or Effect). The implications of increase in their strength can be gauged by the attacks they had been launching in the adjacent province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The terrorist had successfully launched number of attacks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and had killed security personnel and civilians also.



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The Impacts of Insurgency on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa:

The insurgency in FATA has either directly or indirectly affected the security and livelihood of the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Since the military operations started in FATA, the insurgents had made their way to the nearest province Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Due to the same culture and language the militants found it

easy to mingle with local people. Gradually they started their militant activities within the busy cities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The most effected cities from last five years were Peshawar, Mardan, Charsadda, Swat and Malakand division (*Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assessment-2016*). The Army Public School in Peshawar was attacked by the terrorists. In the attack, about 140 students along with teachers lost their lives. This was a great tragedy for the people of Pakistan and particularly Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The attack united the people across the country and government introduced National Action Plan (NAP) to counter the hard and soft-core terrorists. The NAP was divided on 20 points which was to eradicate extremism and terrorism from the country. Moreover, a military operation "Zarb-i-Azab" was started in FATA to eliminate all terrorist organizations without any discrimination. Meanwhile another attack was launched on Bacha Khan University in Charsadda district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The attack on the University left 21 killed and 35 injured. The responsibility was claimed by Khalifa Mansoor of Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan(TTP). However, the spokesperson of TTP denounced any responsibility of the attack. The TTP is the parent organization of Jamat-ul-Aharar, Geedar faction and Sajna faction (also known as Mehsud faction).

When the "War on Terror" started in the region, the militants were fighting against US and NATO forces in Afghanistan. However, they turned their attentions towards Pakistan's state institutions and civilians when a Madrassah was attacked with aerial bombing on 30thOctober 2006 in Damadola, Bajaur Agency. According to ISPR (amedia wing of military), the attack was launched by Pakistan's military, in which 82 people were killed, including 12 teenagers. The spokesperson added that it was against the militants and was not against civilians. However, it was believed by the local people that the attack was launched by US and NATO forces from across the border in Afghanistan. The military backed government repeatedly claimed that the attack was launched by the Pakistan's military to dismantle the training centres of militants. The incident created resentment among the people and it paved way to violent extremism and militancy in Pakistan generally and FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa specifically. An immediate reaction was seen when an attack was launched in November 2006 of the same year on the Punjab regiment Centrein Karkai. Hence then, the terrorists have constantly targeted civilians and the military personnel.

The nearest agency of FATA with Peshawar city is the Khyber Agency. It is easy for the terrorists to cross the agency area and enter the Peshawar city. In January 2016, a suicide bomber targeted Khasadar (security) check post and in the attack 12 persons were killed. In the same month, another terrorist attack was reported in Rasheed Garhi area of Peshawar in which two elite police personnel were killed and assailants succeeded in escape. (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assessment-2016).

There has been an evident increase in terrorist activities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, if compared with the rest of the country. The main reason for such an increase has been that terrorists found it easy to attack the adjacent cities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa rather than any other province of Pakistan because FATA has proximity with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The terrorism increased with the passage of time especially in 2015. In the first six month 119 were martyred, and in next half year 149 further were martyred due to terrorism. The most threatening incident of 2015 was when the terrorists attacked the NADRA office in Mardan, in which 26 people were killed and 50 injured reported in South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP) database.(*Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assessment-2016*)

The terrorists had always been quick to regroup and resume their network. They have been involved in multi tasks, i.e., target killing, armed attacks on security personal, suicide attacks, kidnapping for ransom and extortion. The extortion became a great challenge for the police and law enforcing agencies in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The centre of the militants to collect extortion has been mainly the Peshawar city. Peshawar had become second extortion capital after Karachi. The militants collected huge amount in the name of extortion and the money has been used in facilitating their evil activities. According to Peshawar police, the data released on 14thNovember 2015 shows that 58 cases have been registered in 10 months only. These cases were registered under separate police stations of Peshawar falling under police circle. In one of the interview given by a police official with condition anonymity said that more extortion cases have happened, but the people are reluctant to file cases in police stations. They don't want to create further problems for themselves mainly because a few have been shot when the money was not provided.

Mohanty (2015) observed that during the year 2014, the terrorist attacks have decreased as compared to the attacks happened in 2013. Despite decrease, the Peshawar city was the most affected area by terrorist attacks. In 2014 only, 438 attacks were launched, while in 2013 there were 468 attacks. In the year 2013, 18 suicide attacks were recorded as compared 10 attacks in 2012. But on the other hand, there was an increase noted in 2013 as 210 militant incidents happened and in 2014, 358 incidents were recorded. The most epic attack also happened in this year which was the APS school incident. It was one of the most "barbaric act of terror" ever witnessed in Pakistan. The decrease in major attacks may be because the terrorists have been diverting the range of their attacks. They were employing other techniques and methods to spread fear among the people. They were now targeting soft areas, such as; schools, colleges and unarmed people.

After the 16 December 2015 incident of APS, the central government introduced National Action Plan (NAP), and the provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa introduced three important bills in the

provincial assembly to monitor and counter the activities of the militants in the province. The first act was "Rented Buildings Act (2014)", which was introduced to check the business of renting buildings, whether these are used for terrorist activities or not. The residents were bound to register themselves with the police station concerned. The second bill was "Hotel Businesses Act (2014)", which was to reassure that hotel rooms shall not be given to guests without proper verification. The third bill was the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sensitive and Vulnerable Establishments and Places (security) Bill (2014), with an aim to protect sensitive areas and other vulnerable establishments and places (Mohanty, 2015). These bills were presented in the provincial legislature and were accepted by majority to be made a law. The prime aim behind these bills was to ensure security and checking through more legal ways.

The Jamat-ul-Ahrar has provided the detail of previous operation "Saut-al-Raad" (the sound of thunder). The militant group claimed that the militant operation was successful and claimed that huge number of people were killed. Moreover, the leaders of the group urged upon other groups to merge under the TTP. Jamat-al-Ahrar also started another operation with the name of "Ghazi Operation" (Pakistan Today, 2017). Thus, to counter the new wave of terrorism, the military also launched "Operation Raad-ul-Fasaad", the aim of which has been to eliminate all kind of terrorists without any discrimination. It aims even to arrest and apprehend the facilitators and any kind of linked people to the menace of terrorism (Dawn news, 2017).

Salman (2012) describes that there were major flaws in the security policies of Pakistan. The exiting policies have not dealt with the menace of extremism and insurgency in an effective and productive way. Therefore, it has created sever security problems for Pakistan's security agencies, and particularly for the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He argues that the Pakhtoon people have been the most affected by the war on terror because they have sacrificed more lives than any other region. Further he highlighted the issues which are linked with Pakhtoon people and tried to correct the perception of the writers who only criticize the Pakhtoon people. This is because they never appreciated the qualities of Pakhtoon people. Moreover, he has referred the attention of intellectuals to the social and economic disparity faced by Pakhtoon people. Not only in FATA but also in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, they have been facing security, social and economic problems that needs to be addressed. He has blamed the "War on Terror" for the worse condition of FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. These people have been suffering from sacrifices of lives and material due to this war. Moreover, he had criticized the role of leadership as they are not ready to take the responsibly. He believes that the militancy is derogating the image of Pakhtoon. The Pakhtoon people and their identity has been tarnished by extremism and violence. The insurgency in FATA is causing damage to security and social life of Pakhtoons in FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

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