



# The Genesis of Terrorism in Pakistan

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## Report Author

“The Genesis of Terrorism in Pakistan” was researched, compiled, and written by Lt. General Tariq Khan (Retired), an erudite general from Pakistan’s Armored Corps and a decorated War Veteran, is an expert on critical issues related to Terrorism & Insurgencies. General Tariq Khan during the Battle of Bajaur, transformed and re-shaped Frontier Corps into a relentless fighting force and raised FC’s own special forces popularly known as SOG. Commanded and led major operations in FATA from the frontline, his model on counter-insurgency is still applied to this day. Lt. General Tariq Khan (Retired) leads CommandEleven’s Board of Advisors as our Patron-in-Chief.

## About CommandEleven

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Visit <http://commandeleven.com> for more information or contact [info@commandeleven.com](mailto:info@commandeleven.com).

'I weep for the liberty of my country when I see at this early day of its successful experiment that corruption has been imputed to many members of the House of Representatives, and the rights of the people have been bartered for promises of office.'

- Andrew Jackson

## HISTORY

A mosque demolished in Peshawar, more than a hundred dead, some may think they have furthered the cause of Islam through such an act, others understand this the start of another wave of terrorism in the country. Officials mention the vanquished in despatches, praising them for their sacrifice and the courage, while doing the least possible to secure their lives while in the service of the nation.

It matters little that none of them set out that day to sacrifice anything for anyone, let alone give up their lives for some unknown cause. It reminds one of the volunteers, who swam across the raging icy river, and on surviving the ordeal, enquired indignantly, as to who pushed him in?

The quip was not written to belittle the tragedy that caused so grievous a loss to so many, nor is it intended to deny the empathy that must be extended to the bereaved. The hurt inflicted upon them is not only irreversible but irreconcilable.

Yet the drama of deceit and mockery continues as usual with crocodile tears shed, and the feigning of false sympathy by the powers that be. Each pretender solemn in their staged dignity while shouldering the coffin, as photographs capture the display of unparalleled hypocrisy.

He offers his condolences with artificial concern and sincerity, deviously making promises he does not intend to fulfil.

***In the year of our Lord, 2022, terrorist incidents have increased by 28% with a total of 376 incidents, 533 fatalities and 832 injured/incapacitated.***

But who is asking – who is responsible for this? Who is making policy and what action is being taken?

The answers lie in the total irresponsible and casual attitude of an incompetent government and all its institutions, while people die or incapacitated for life.

This is terrorism at its worst; the incident itself, the effect that it leaves behind and the impact of poor governance that it exposes.

What is terrorism by definition – something even the United Nations is struggling to define since political connotations come in the way and begin to hurt some countries more than others.

For the purpose of this paper, we shall refer to it as a ***violent act by a criminal group to exact an abstract objective***.

Yet, in the Pakistani perspective, because of this incident in Peshawar, we are focused on terrorism only, forgetting the circumstances that facilitate it.

There are multiple problems in our administration across the full spectrum of governance, affecting the State and the people who live in it, while continuing to go through the motions and pretence of formal administrative dispensation projecting false propriety and timely justice.

To include the problems, we need to look at:

- the overall law and order situation
- highway dacoits
- city street crime
- traffic mismanagement
- energy and fuel shortages
- financial collapse
- unprecedented inflation
- garbage collection
- shortages of wheat and basic food items etc. among many other issues.

These are indicators of near anarchy, where apparently, there is no government or even if there is one, it's in name only – a madness that we have been enduring now for decades. When the State has lost the capacity, or the will to administer justice, apply law and order in letter and spirit, manage basic administrative matters, how can one expect them to manage a complex phenomenon like 'terrorism'?

On the other hand, a society that itself is radicalised makes it easier to penetrate, condition and shape into a violent aberration, inventing a cause or creating an event designed to offend the public at large, is easier in such societies. Extremists, obscurantists, and fanatics are generally angry people, always in search of a cause to extinguish the fire within their breasts. These are the communities that easily recruited for militancy, violence, and terrorism – always for a higher objective or a divine cause.

## CAUSES OF TERRORISM

Terrorism is always, first and foremost, a product of dissatisfied/misled people looking for attention in one way or another.

The leading factor that creates a conducive environment for terrorism is for a government to be indifferent to political, administrative, and judicial grievances of the people/communities.

When a government, either by its incompetence and lack of capacity, or simply because of an apathetic attitude, is conspicuous in its absence in addressing routine problems – society in general, becomes disenchanted. The common man's lack of access to the appropriate authorities, who could, but will not or cannot address, any of the general complaints, leaves him in an administrative vacuum, with nowhere to go and nothing to hope for. This leaves no alternative to the common man but to search for an external source that may appear to be more sympathetic and attentive. This external source is usually a hostile agency of an enemy state, lying in wait for exactly such an opportunity.

Once an aggrieved party has been engaged by a hostile agency, the leadership of the aggrieved community is funded, given access to foreign travel, provided with a political platform at the international plane to voice those grievances, real or perceived. The followers of the group are suitably paid, resourced, armed, and trained.

This is how terrorism is established and behind every terrorist, no matter what the case maybe - just or unjust, there will always be a hostile agency.

These agencies compete with one another to further their respective national interests through mayhem and chaos. They hope to provide a favourable environment for bargaining during a negotiated settlement, in line with their national objectives.

The problem becomes more complex because of the nature of work that these intelligence agencies do which is usually decentralised and allows for rogue elements or personal agendas to take the lead role.

One of the biggest reasons to pursue a terrorist organisation for assistance or become a terrorist himself is lack of judicial propriety.

When justice is denied to the common man it gives an opportunity for groups/militants/political dissidents to establish parallel courts. These courts are relatively more affordable, they dispense justice much quicker with far less hassle, have greater credibility in their judgements and have suitable means to implement their decisions through militant gangs. The Robin Hood effect comes into play and the movement or group begin to acquire local popularity.

This is always at the cost of the government that gradually becomes more and more irrelevant in that area/region.

The other factor which promotes terrorism, is a lack of opportunity and limited development where swathes of society are disenfranchised.

People feel disowned and want to be recognised.

This becomes a motive to join groups as one would join a club. It usually begins with the black and green turbans, where the individual wants to make a statement that he too belongs to something. Individuals and communities search for an identity, fraternity, ownership, and relevance through such groups. Catchy slogans are created, narratives developed and a cause is established – however, such activities are always in a vacuum where the absence of governance is the most defined characteristic of the environment.

Material motivation to the leadership is another cause for terrorism. A dissident group establishes no-go areas and then generates revenue (taxes) through dispensing administration and justice. Power is still yet an objective of any such groups but that power is once again focused on expanding spaces to enhance the potential for more material gains.

Ideological motivation is another rationale that is used as a tool for recruitment. The individuals, as well as communities, are brainwashed into submitting to the divine on an invented narrative. Foot-soldiers in an insurgency are usually young recruits with a very limited awareness of what the world is all about, fed from a narrow madrasa-based propaganda system grooming them towards a fatalistic order, where the only objective is to get to heaven the quickest way one can.

None of the existing groups in Pakistan have any strategic goals or objectives and those that are mentioned are simply rallying cries, rhetorical in nature with justifications and rationale given but only as a *casus-belle*.

Therefore, splinter groups (Aman Committees) are created, as they are weaned from their mother organisations with an offer of power and money.

This is where our own intelligence agencies come into play and aggravate the overall environment by inserting their own sources into communities in the exaggerated and futile hope that they can then influence the community with more ease. These communities then suffer these intelligences structured 'Aman Committees.'

These certified and approved armed thugs are seen as surrogates of the government. Such groups become bullies, establish check posts, and demand revenue – all under the protection and approval of some intelligence agency or other. Communities are further alienated and become even more bitter against the government, blaming them for the situation they have been put in as well as the violence generated around them. Those directly affected are ready to undertake anti-state activities, provide safe-havens, and facilitate recruitment to the insurgency/militancy which now seems to have developed a just cause – ***liberation from the tyranny of an indifferent government.***

## DIFFICULTIES IN ELIMINATING TERRORISM IN PAKISTAN

No sincere process to eliminate terrorism/violence exists in the country to date.

The phenomenon of terrorism is integrated in-depth with procedures and systems within government and governance. There is no part of governance that does not affect terrorism, beginning with the issues of a radicalised society, education, the justice system, the economy, immigration, anti-narcotics, smuggling and the general law and order, which must all be addressed simultaneously. Yet any attempt to do so is either corrupted or scuttled by the department concerned because someone or the other in office, is affected. Thus, no political or military will exists which can be applied.

Most organisations that could be used for counter terrorism, become part of the problem rather than the solution, such as the intelligence agencies or the law enforcement authorities because of incompetence, vested interest or corruption. The government cannot undertake any corrective measure without undermining its own vested interests and those of its own officials as well as the bureaucracy. Every office, institution and/or organisation has a stake in one thing or the other and thus if one even tries to touch the refugee system, immigration, NADRA, customs etc, someone, somewhere loses out.

Thus, the will to address the over-arching causes of terrorism simply does not exist.

The process to contain terrorism is reduced to glorifying Shahadat and not enquiring into the causes of why casualties occur after each event. Regardless of civil or military engagements, no one is ever held accountable for any security lapse, negligence, improper orders/instructions, poor planning, or non-adherence to procedures. Tactics are never questioned; strategy is never debated and policy is always secret. Events are forgotten in time only to be repeated after a lapse of a few months or years. Nothing is learned, and there is never any corrective measure put in place and those that are, usually include inconveniencing the people or disrupting their routine life.

Responses are displayed through slogans, rather than substance to appease people after each incident but no significant action is taken. NAP and NACTA remain subdued and castrated because of indifferent governments and their vested interests. Such organisations are doomed to failure because they are deliberately made dysfunctional so that they do not transcend into forbidden zones exposing illicit and illegal activities of each government organisation and institution.

Three major issues, for example immigration (legal and illegal), smuggling, as well as illicit funding/corruption are carefully evaded and blatantly concealed by the complicity of government organs and the dysfunctional judiciary themselves. Narcotics is another such case leading to a parallel administration by itself. Corruption, venality, dishonesty in almost every field of applied rules and regulation has now become one of the main causes for activity such as crime, militancy, and terrorism and if not addressed, will leave the door open for greater instability through such activities.

Soft legal action and improper judicial procedure allows criminals to buy their way out and continue with business as usual.

The haste and enthusiasm in releasing TTP prisoners is one good example which indicates the lack of proper understanding in these matters. The eagerness to negotiate with the terrorists, itself, had vested intent and interests. The State and its people, were not and never are, taken into consideration when undertaking such tasks such as to dealing with TTP. Only individual views and institutional positions come to the forefront – the loudest rhetoric wins the argument and is very rarely the correct one.

There is total lack of accountability or audit in all government institutions and of all individuals, where no one is made to pay for poor decisions and criminal negligence that have so badly affected the State and the people.

There is complete lack of enthusiasm for proper training or equipping the law enforcement personnel appropriately. Displays are demonstrated by various training institutes exhibiting acrobatic skills and gymnastic demonstrations to clueless senior officials, who are enthralled by the circus.

No institution shapes opinions or develops mind-sets. No psychological narrative has been structured to broadcast on the media or through print explaining the horrors of violence or terrorism in the manner that this nation is being subjected to. Ad hocism and making do is innovative and promoted as self-sufficiency. Even a road is blocked by putting a charpoy across it, whereas a simple contraption can be manufactured locally and does not have to be imported.

Not a single official is ashamed of the poor bearing of their subordinates, their conduct, or the presence that they project in public. There is no pride and very little self-respect.

Also, sympathy with the cause of terrorists within government offices prevents proper implementation of any orders. Sympathisers are influenced by irrelevant philosophies: sometimes anti-west, at other times because of Islamophobia and very often by playing the victim's card – matters that do not justify violence or terrorism in any case.

Centralised control by various institutions, impedes timely action and delays responses. Rules of engagement are not specified and everyone looks over his shoulder. Officials avoid giving written instructions and are reduced to providing warning of in-actionable intelligence reports. No one wants to sign an operational order or commit to any action since he lacks the faith and trust in his own institution and superiors.

Operators suspect that they may be abandoned and left standing in the wrong corner of the room, if matters go awry. Intelligence agencies are the first defence against terrorism but are woefully missing in action. They do not provide any actionable intelligence and generally circulate vague and broad warnings such as 'terrorist activity likely in Islamabad in the next few days.' If an event occurs, the intelligence claim that they had forewarned everyone and if nothing untoward occurs, they claim they have averted a disaster.

Terrorism cannot be fought with such superficial, frivolous, and meaningless antics.



## POSSIBLE ROAD TO CONTAINING TERRORISM

If one is to deal with terrorism and eliminate the menace of violence then first and foremost, **establish a government!!!!**

Stability cannot be achieved in any field, plain or scope without formal government. What is now passed off as a government is like a monkey at the control of a plane. Steps need to be taken to allow federal institutions some functional authority. Empowering NAP and NACTA, thus allowing them a free hand with their own integral judicial cover would be of paramount importance. Whereas, conduct and operations may be secret but policy cannot be a secret and policy-making must have institutional ownership and identity and be in the public knowledge.

The example of negotiating with TTP is one such glaring stupidity.

Who did it, the nation must know?

Accountability and responsibility must go hand in hand.

**Apply the Madrasa Regulations**, while auditing expense accounts and funding immediately and with commitment. Syllabi must be scrutinised and amended where needed. Religious parties must be banned from politics or for political parties using ideology as a political tool; they must decide – promote ideology or politics – one must not dabble in both.

Clear the Lines of Communication along major arteries on the National Highways of all structures associated with Madrasas. Relocate all the madrasas in Islamabad elsewhere; the capital must not be held hostage to mullahs of Aziz Burqa's fame.

Enough is enough and the government needs to come down hard on these miscreants who exploit ideology to further personal gain.

Establish a special court to deal with terrorists which should not be politicised or used for ordinary and routine activities. Only cases related to terrorism must be tried there and not cases such as threats to the election commission etc or government officials. One must differentiate between defamation and a terrorist threat – the latter must not be mixed in politicised accusations.

### **Create a de-radicalisation plan for society in general.**

National level plans be structured which should be focused on liberating the people from unnecessary ideological dogmas and regulations or where society is held hostage by the mullah and obscurantism. Education, sports, tourism, and entertainment must focus on liberating society. We should at the least study the model being followed in the Middle East and apply their customs, rules, and regulations.

Law and order must be upgraded as a discipline and way of life. SHOs must answer any untoward incident and be held accountable. Police must be able to explain who is renting

houses, occupants of local hotels, outsiders visiting respective localities etc. Traffic must be monitored through relevant chip technology and records maintained. CCTV coverage must be established, maintained, and be suitably operated around the clock. Private militias must be dismantled, personal armed guards disallowed. VIP culture must be curtailed ruthlessly. Every citizen must be as relevant as any other. Society to be gradually de-weaponised in an organised manner and shooting clubs to be established for enthusiasts where they may store and maintain their licensed/registered weapons that cannot be removed from the premises without formal approval and record. Aerial firing on celebrations and marriages must be deterred by strong punitive action.

## POSSIBLE MILITARY ACTION AND POSTURE

Military action is never a permanent solution to stabilising a region or an area. It can only create a conducive environment for a political process to engage the people through an institutional approach.

Nevertheless, our situation today calls for appropriate military action to stabilise the country in general and the western border regions.

Spaces must be secured, along with their population, by the field army while terrorist leadership must be taken out by intelligence-based operations (IBOs).

The intelligence agencies have a major role in counter terrorism; however, all agencies must be grouped under the field army in their respective areas and must not be encouraged to work independently. Briefs must be prepared as to who-is-who, what's happening and what is likely to happen in the immediate future. All intelligence activity must be approved by the field commander in his area. Functional plans, with kinetic and covert warfare elements, must be drawn up for appropriate military action against militant groups in Pakistan, as well as Afghanistan.

Redefining the relationship with Afghanistan is an important component of the military presence there. This relationship must be established because of mutual gain or reciprocal pain. Treat TTP as criminals and not as a political entity with any legitimate demands.

Government officials and the military must only talk to them on the terms of their surrender and that too after they have committed to following the National Constitution and are willing to disarm.

Failing these conditions, the TTP should be seen as a legitimate target to be engaged by air and by ground through drones, artillery, air force or physical attacks. Use of heli-borne troops in targeted areas for quick raids is an important method to eliminating the menace of the TTP.

Whereas, in counter insurgency/terrorism, action is always tactical in nature and size, yet the implication, is strategic. No action should be taken lightly or casually.

Some additional suggestions are listed below:

- Contain it
  - Fusion Cells must be set up. Compiling of data is essential: gathering of intelligence, general community habits, routine happenings, extraordinary events etc.
  - Develop early warning procedures. Identify people entering villages/towns, renting of buildings, hiring of hotel rooms etc.
  - Appropriate safe guards, protection of guards, bomb proof shelters for vehicle-checking, sniffer dogs etc.

- Precautionary checks points to be established spontaneously at random locations without a defined pattern.
- Zero tolerance for zealots, extremists, and religious preachers, preaching hatred.
- Regular communication monitoring and sharing of intelligence related to radio communication.
- Intensive air reconnaissance/drone activity of rural areas and border spaces.
- Protection to road moves. Road opening days to be scheduled and imposed/declared when situation is bad.
  
- Deter It
  - Take the conflict to the initiator's territory away from own doorstep
  - Punitive action against criminal elements regardless of official or political affiliations.
  - Village defence system to be established, coordinated, and integrated into the military posture.
  - Keeping an eye on families of militants, their visitors, and their activities.
  - Incentives for cooperation with the government to communities and individuals; maybe confidential or public, depending upon the threat to the party involved.
  - Rewards for diligence, alertness, and timely action.
  - Confiscation of property by the State of absconding militants.
  
- Eliminate it
  - Wrest the initiate and progress from the current response triggered actions to surprise operations initiated by own forces. Dominate the no-man's land through physical presence or surveillance. Physical presence can be done through network patrolling.
  - Attack the militant leadership through:
    - Intelligence based operations directed at the leadership and hideouts.
    - Raids by physical assaults and fire.
    - Drones.
    - Air strikes.
    - Heli-borne attacks and insertion of heli-borne troops on strategic features.
  - Control Lines of communication physically. Eyeball the roads for IEDs through segmented patrolling along 5 kms segments. Cover area sanitized by fire.
  - Identify and monitor routes used by militants. Establish random ambushes along these.
  - Secure spaces and the population within.
  - Illuminate the area, for eyes and ears, through spontaneous patrols.
  - Own the night in the rural spaces and ensure no movement takes place other than official movement or that, which has been approved.
  - Conduct surprise artillery raids on targeted areas.
  
- Sustain Stability
  - Ensure the courts are open regularly and attended to. Justice must be timely.

- Government offices are functional. Establish public complaint cells and ensure problems are addressed.
- Establish dial-in FM stations giving access to the public.
- Regulations are applied equally to all and there is public acknowledgement of justice being done equally.
- Develop community confidence in the government apparatus in the protection of their lives and property.
- Sustain Law and Order, with security, certainty, and continuity as the basic principles.
- Opportunity to all for gainful employment or trade/business.
- Visible Development such as useful education and training in skilled labour with third-party international certification.
- Provision to declare affected areas into military districts and imposition of emergency/martial law at the request of the civil administration if matters begin to get out of hand.

## CONCLUSION

It is widely understood and known how terrorism can be dealt with and contained by everybody and all officials in their respective posts. The only route is through governance, rule of law and a viable justice system. This is not likely to happen in the current scenario since the government itself aggravates the situation by either not applying itself appropriately, or then, because it lacks the capability, capacity and will to do so. We are thus destined and doomed to continue suffering this menace and cycle of violence till some time to come. Usually such a free-for-all environment eventually leads to a revolution but we are even denied that since our people have an infinite depth to tolerate anything, any humiliation, any insult – they are willing to suffer tyranny and injustice in the hope that it does not touch them and passes them by. Our population can be safely characterised as one that is always in search of a free lunch – something for nothing. Thus, we feed on road kill on the highways and vulture meat is served as chicken; our milk is adulterated as our young suffer a stunted growth, we will not queue up, we do not respect another's rights, cheat in exams, ignore merit, bribes are now a way of life and sycophancy a means to an end - and it is only from this society that we recruit officials in government and its various institutions – how can the government then be any different from the people it governs. Our fault thus does not lie in our stars as much as it does in the democracy that we know it to be and practice. However, very few are willing to agree that this democracy with this constitution and this government will not work for us. The State is sinking while we preserve a government that does not govern, a democracy that is not democratic, a constitution that cannot protect the people – but we have still not had enough. So, on this note, the final recommendation, that this paper proffers on a take-it or leave-it basis, is to have mercy on this hapless nation, and establish an interim measure and system. Something - anything that can discipline the nation, establish standards, define national objectives, ensure rule of law, and treat everyone as an equal citizen of the State. A technocrat setup. Other countries have done it, why can't we?

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