

An Overview of Pakistan's Security Situation after Operation Zarb-e-Azb

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Abstract

In the backdrop of a deteriorating security situation, increasing terrorist attacks across the country, kidnappings and target killings, Operation Zarb-e-Azb (June 2014) was launched against terrorist outfits operating from North Waziristan by the Pakistan Armed Forces. A comparison of pre- and post-Zarb-e-Azb security situation shows that Pakistan's security has considerably improved. Underscoring the success of Operation, the review identifies future challenges such as reforming the political status of Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), ensuring economic security of its people, initiating more deradicalisation programmes and effective Pak-Afghan border management, which need to be addressed on priority basis. The paper concludes that initiating reforms in FATA and introducing effective border management can change the region from being a security risk to an economic strength for the country and its neighbouring regions as well.

Key words: Zarb-e-Azb, Counterterrorism, Security, Deradicalisation, Rehabilitation, Reforms.

Introduction

Operation Zarb-e-Azb, a counterterrorism operation, was launched on June 15, 2014 against terrorists operating from North Waziristan Agency in Pakistan.¹ Before this initiative:

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[T]he country was plagued with terrorism – bombings, IEDs² explosions, target killings and kidnappings... North Waziristan had become a hub of all kinds of terrorists, with recruitment and training centres and hosted factories making suicide vests, IEDs and vehicles for suicide missions.³

The precarious security situation of the country had eroded the confidence of foreign investors which resulted in reduced Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Due to the terrorist attacks on tourist sites such as Malam Jabba (June 2008)⁴ and Nanga Parbat Base Camp (June 2013)⁵ and attack against the Sri Lankan cricket team (March 2009),⁶ Western governments issued negative travel advisories to their citizens which was not only a blow to the revenue generating capacity of Pakistan, but also tarnished its image abroad.

Before initiating Operation Zarb-e-Azb, the Government held negotiations with the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which had failed to honour its ceasefire agreement. A major blow to the peace talks, in this regard, was the attack on Jinnah International Airport after which Zarb-e-Azb was launched.⁷ Two years after the Operation, command and control centres of TTP and other militant groups were effectively dismantled from North Waziristan. This was followed by a repatriation process for the Temporarily Displaced Persons (TDPs) which began in March 2015. The paper provides an overview of the security situation in Pakistan in the pre- and post-Zarb-e-Azb timeframe. While highlighting the success of

¹ Umbreen Javaid, "Operation Zarb-e-Azb: A Successful Initiative to Curtail Terrorism," *South Asian Studies* 30, no. 2 (2015): 43-58 (44), http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/csas/PDF/3%20Umbreen%20Javaid_30_2.pdf.

² Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs).

³ Military spokesperson Maj Gen Asim Saleem Bajwa, quoted in Tahir Ali "Long Way from Home," *Friday Times*, June 24, 2016, <http://www.thefridaytimes.com/tft/long-way-from-home/>.

⁴ "Malam Jabba Motel Set on Fire," *Dawn*, June 27, 2008, <https://www.dawn.com/news/309220>.

⁵ Peter Miller, "Climbers Recount Murder on Famous Pakistan Peak," *National Geographic*, June 28, 2013, <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2013/06/130628-nanga-parbat-pakistan-mountaineering-climbers-world-murder-poland-nepal-china-lithuania/>.

⁶ Hufsa Chaudhry, "8 Years ago Today: Attack on the Sri Lankan Cricket Team," *Dawn*, March 4, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1317979>.

⁷ "TTP Claims Attack on Karachi Airport," *Dawn*, June 9, 2014, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1111397>.

Operation Zarb-e-Azb and rehabilitation process, the paper identifies future challenges including the political status of FATA, ensuring economic security for the people of the region, introducing deradicalisation programmes and effective Pak-Afghan border management that needs to be addressed on urgent basis.

Pakistan's Pre-Operation Zarb-e-Azb Security Situation

Before the launch of Operation Zarb-e-Azb on June 15, 2014, the security situation in Pakistan had been deteriorating rapidly with increasing terrorist attacks throughout the country. The London-based Institute for Economics and Peace conducted a study in 2014 that ranked Pakistan third after Iraq and Afghanistan on the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) list,⁸ with a 37 per cent increase in fatalities and 28 per cent increase in injuries since 2012. The extremist group responsible for almost a quarter of all deaths and 49 per cent of all claimed attacks, was TTP. From 2000-03, TTP claimed 778 attacks, of which 12 per cent were perpetrated by suicide bombers. In 2013, there were 71 suicide attacks bringing the death toll to 2,740.⁹

Nexus between Militant Organisations and Criminal Networks

During this tumultuous period (2000-03) an emerging nexus between militant organisations and criminal networks was observed with lawlessness on the rise. The rate of reported kidnapping cases increased from 8,450 individuals in 2003 to 20,194 in 2012.¹⁰ Kidnapping is a major source of revenue for the TTP.¹¹ It was reported that the organisation took as many as 70 hostages in 2008; mostly targeting wealthy families,

⁸ "Pakistan Ranks Third on Global Terrorism Index," *Dawn*, November 18, 2014, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1145300>.

⁹ *Ibid*.

¹⁰ Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Service Coordinators, "Impact of Terrorism on Pakistan," *KPPSC.Com*, accessed September 10, 2016 http://www.kppsc.com.pk/pages/?Impact_of_terrorism_on_Pakistan.

¹¹ Catherine Collins and Ashraf Ali, "Financing the Taliban: Tracing the Dollars Behind the Insurgencies in Afghanistan and Pakistan," (policy paper, New America Foundation, Washington, D.C., 2010), 6, <http://frc.com.pk/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/AshrafAli1.pdf>.

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businessmen, local as well as foreign aid workers, and journalists.¹² Due to the nexus between criminal groups and terrorists, sometimes, the former kidnapped people and then sold them to the Taliban for onward deals with family members, and ransom money.¹³

Geographical Proximity with Afghanistan and Spillover Effects

Due to its geographical proximity and cultural similarities, developments in Afghanistan have strong bearing on Pakistan. Due to porous Pak-Afghan border and the lack of an effective border management system, terrorists from both sides traverse the border, without any check.

Impact on Economy, Tourism and Sports Activities

Terrorism caused direct and indirect economic costs to Pakistan. Direct cost includes human casualties, damage to physical and transport infrastructure, reduced economic activities and high cost of rehabilitating displaced persons.¹⁴ From 2011-14, physical infrastructure losses were estimated at USD 2.47 billion.¹⁵ While the cost of rehabilitation of displaced people from conflict-affected areas was calculated to be around USD 59 million.¹⁶ As mentioned before, FDI inflows lowered and the tourism industry and international sports activities came to an almost complete standstill. The former was a valuable revenue generating source for the Government of Pakistan in the 1970s to mid-1990s.¹⁷ Historically, the country has been an important tourist destination due to its scenic beauty in the north and archeological sites such as Harappa, Mohenjo Daro and Buddhist religious sites. The War on Terror (WoT) and subsequent terrorist attacks in Pakistan drastically decreased the number of tourists as Western governments issued negative travel advisories to

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Muhammad Ramzan Shahid, "Pakistan's Economic Aid and Losses in the War on Terror," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analysis* 6, no. 5 (2014): 10-15 (13), <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/CTTA-June14.pdf>.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ammara Gul Mustafa, "Tourism in Pakistan: An Elusive Dream," *Daily Times*, July 20, 2016, <http://dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/21-Jul-16/tourism-in-pakistan-an-elusive-dream>.

their nationals.¹⁸ The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index 2009 released by the World Economic Forum, ranked Pakistan 113 out of 130 countries.¹⁹ The first terrorist attack on a tourist site was on Malam Jabba, Swat - a hill station and the only ski resort of the country. It was destroyed by terrorists in 2008 causing a loss of PKR 60 million to the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC).²⁰ The next blow to tourism was an attack on Nanga Parbat base camp on June 22, 2013 that killed ten foreign climbers and a local tourist guide.²¹ TTP claimed responsibility for the attack and termed it as a retaliatory act to avenge the killing of TTP leader Wali ur Rehman in an American drone strike.²² These acts resulted in the suspension of tourist expeditions to the Northern areas of Pakistan.

Like tourism, international sports activities in the country were also affected when the Sri Lankan cricket team was attacked on March 3, 2009, injuring 20 people, including seven team members and killing six policemen and one civilian.²³ Earlier in May 2002, New Zealand abandoned the test series after a suicide bomb exploded outside their hotel.²⁴ Due to terrorist threats, Pakistan was unable to host the 2011 World Cup. Moreover, it was forced to host home series at neutral venues increasing costs.²⁵ Table 1 gives an overview of the costs and losses incurred from 2001-15:

¹⁸ Waqas A. Khan, "Tourism in Pakistan," *Pakistan Today*, December 27, 2016, <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/12/27/tourism-in-pakistan-3/>.

¹⁹ Jennifer Balnke and Thea Chiesa, eds., *The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report 2009: Managing a Time of Turbulence*, report (Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2009), http://www.ontit.it/opencms/export/sites/default/ont/it/documenti/files/ONT_2009-03-04_02101.pdf; Arshad Ali, "Economic Cost of Terrorism: A Case Study of Pakistan," *Strategic Studies XXX*, no. 1 & 2 (2014), http://issi.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/1299569657_66503137.pdf.

²⁰ Rehmat Mehsud, "KP Struggles to Bolster Terror-hit Tourism Sector," *Daily Times*, September 26, 2016, <http://dailytimes.com.pk/features/26-Sep-16/kp-struggles-to-bolster-terror-hit-tourism-sector>.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Shabbir Mir, Samra Aamir and Waqas Naeem, "Nanga Parbat Assault: Tragedy in Himalayas," *Express Tribune*, June 24, 2013, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/567527/nanga-parbat-assault-tragedy-in-himalayas/>.

²³ Hufsa Chaudhry, "8 Years Ago Today: Attack on the Sri Lankan Cricket Team."

²⁴ "Black Caps Abandon Pakistan Tour after Hotel Bomb Blast," *NZ Herald*, May 9, 2002, http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=1844136.

²⁵ KPPSC, "Impact of Terrorism on Pakistan," *KPPSC.Com*, accessed September 10, 2016, http://www.kppsc.com.pk/pages/?Impact_of_terrorism_on_Pakistan.

Table-1
Estimated Economic Losses (2001-15)

Years	USD Billion	PKR Billion	Percentage Change
2001-02	2.67	163.90	--
2002-03	2.75	160.80	3.0
2003-04	2.93	168.80	6.7
2004-05	3.41	202.40	16.3
2005-06	3.99	238.60	16.9
2006-07	4.67	283.20	17.2
2007-08	6.94	434.10	48.6
2008-09	9.18	720.60	32.3
2009-10	13.56	1136.40	47.7
2010-11	23.77	2037.33	75.3
2011-12	11.98	1052.77	-49.6
2012-13	9.97	964.24	-16.8
2013-14	6.63	681.68	-33.5
2014-15*	4.53	457.93	-31.7
Total	106.98	8702.75	

Source: Ministry of Finance, GoP, "Impact of War in Afghanistan and Ensuing Terrorism on Pakistan's Economy," *Pakistan Economic Survey 2014-15* (Government of Pakistan, 2015), 280, http://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/chapters_15/Annex_IV_War_on_Terror.pdf.

* Estimated on the basis of 9 months actual data.

Table 1 highlights the country's economic losses only. Terrorism not only creates feelings of insecurity but also impacts each and every segment of the state and society. In order to improve the security situation

of Pakistan, and dismantle militant and criminal networks, various military operations were undertaken by Pakistan's military.

Military Operations (2001-14)

Operation Zarb-e-Azb was not the first counterterrorism operation in the country. Post 9/11, WoT in Afghanistan resulted in fuelling militancy in FATA, particularly across South and North Waziristan. Though local people trace the source of militancy in FATA to the Afghan War of the late 70s, yet, WoT led by the United States of America (USA) contributed in increasing militancy.²⁶ The fall of Taliban in Afghanistan compelled its militants to relocate in border regions. To curb their menace of terrorism, several military operations were launched in tribal agencies:

- Operation Al-Mizan (2002)
- Operation Rah-e-Haq (November 2007)
- Operation Zalzal (January 2008)
- Operation Sher Dil (September 2008)
- Operation Rah-e-Rast (May 2009)
- Operation Rah-e-Nijat (October 2009)
- Operation Koh-e-Sufaid (July 2011), and
- Operation Zarb-e-Azb (June 2014).

Operation Al-Mizan was the first major military operation, launched in FATA in 2002 to combat militant groups.²⁷ Then, Operation Rah-e-Haq was launched in a phased manner against Tehreek-e-Nafaz-i-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM), the first phase started in November 2007 to clear the area from militants in Swat Valley; the second phase began in July 2008 and continued throughout the year; the third and the last phase was initiated in January 2009. Operation Rah-e-Haq ended when the

²⁶ Saifullah Mahsud, "Combating Militancy in Bajaur and North-Waziristan Agency in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan – A Comparative Analysis," *TIGAH-A Journal of Peace and Development II*, (2012): 149-164 (151), <http://frc.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/91.pdf>.

²⁷ Ibid.; Tasneem Noorani, "A Herculean Task," *Dawn*, March 21, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1321848>; Ismail Sheikh, "Timeline: Major Offensives Launched by Army against Militants," *Express Tribune*, June 15, 2014, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/722391/timeline-major-offensives-launched-by-army-against-militants/>.

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government and TNSM signed a peace agreement called the 'Malakand Accord' in February 2009.²⁸ Operation Zalzalā was launched in South Waziristan in January 2008 to curtail increasing violence unleashed by militants under the command of Baitullah Mehsud.²⁹ In September 2008, Operation Sher Dil was launched in Bajaur Agency against heavily armed men with modern weaponry who had been targeting security personnel.³⁰

Operation Rah-e-Rast was launched in Swat in May 2009 due to non-compliance of TNSM to the peace agreement and to control the influence of Taliban as well as other militant groups. This Operation led to the exodus of nearly three million people from Malakand Division.³¹ Operation Rah-e-Nijat was launched in October 2009 in South Waziristan.

All these military operations in tribal agencies ended by signing peace accords except Operation Rah-e-Rast in Malakand division and Operation Rah-e-Nijat in South Waziristan which were decisive counterterrorism operations. In July 2011, Operation Koh-e-Sufaid was launched in Kurrum Agency, FATA, in order to secure the Thall-Parachinar road from constant attacks by Sunni militants and to reopen it.³²

Operation Zarb-e-Azb: Its Genesis

Terrorists after losing their sanctuaries in South Waziristan found North Waziristan as the most suitable place to hide and operate from due to its rugged terrain and its proximity to Afghanistan. As a result of General Elections in 2013, the newly elected government of Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) sought to negotiate a peace deal with militants before opting for yet another military operation. On March 1, 2014, Government of Pakistan and TTP agreed on a month long truce.³³ In this regard, first round of talks was held between the representatives of both sides on

²⁸ Sheikh, "Timeline: Major Offensives Launched by Army against Militants;" C. Christine Fair and Seth G. Jones, "Pakistan's War Within," *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 51, no.6 (2009): (161-188) 176.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 168.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 175.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 177.

³² Sheikh, "Timeline: Major Offensives Launched by Army against Militants."

³³ Nida Hameed, "Struggling IDPs of North Waziristan in the Wake of Operation Zarb-e-Azb," *NDU Journal* (2015): 95-116 (97).

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March 26, 2014 in which TTP put forward two demands: establish a demilitarised zone in Shakto, the mountainous region in South Waziristan agency; release of non-combatants.³⁴ The GoP agreed to release low profile prisoners while it refused to establish a peace zone in South Waziristan.

Unfortunately, there was no peace during the ceasefire as TTP continued attacks on the security forces as well as civilians.³⁵ The final blow to the peace talks was an attack on Jinnah International airport, Karachi on June 8, 2014, that killed 36 people and injured 18.³⁶ The TTP claimed responsibility for the attack and warned the government about future terrorist attacks. After a week of the airport attack, on June 15, 2014 Operation Zarb-e-Azb was launched against militant groups – TTP, the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) operating from North Waziristan. According to former Army Chief Gen. Raheel Sharif, the Operation was meant to:

... root out terrorists from tribal areas, to get rid of terrorism from the country and to ensure the rebuilding of affected areas and rehabilitation of the TDPs.³⁷

Its operational guidelines made no distinction between ‘good or bad Taliban, avoiding collateral damage, with ‘due regard for human rights considerations.’³⁸

During its first year, a retaliatory suicide attack hit India-Pakistan border crossing at Wagah on November 2, 2014 which claimed 55 lives, leaving 200 injured.³⁹ In addition, another TTP splinter group led by Mullah Fazlullah perpetrated a fatal terrorist attack on the Army Public

³⁴ Ibid., 98.

³⁵ Ibid., 97-99.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ “Zarb-e-Azb has Long-Term Objectives: COAS,” *Nation*, September 7, 2014, <http://nation.com.pk/national/07-Sep-2014/zarb-e-azb-has-long-term-objectives-coas>.

³⁸ “Army Played no Favourites during Zarb-e-Azb: DG ISPR,” *Express Tribune*, September 1, 2016, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1174157/zarb-e-azb-indiscriminate-operation-dg-ispr/>.

³⁹ Farhan Zahid, “The Successes and Failures of Pakistan’s Operation Zarb-e-Azb,” *Terrorism Monitor* 13, no. 14 (2015): 5-6, https://jamestown.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/TerrorismMonitorVol13Issue14_02.pdf.

School in Peshawar on December 16, 2014. In this attack, 132 school children lost their lives.⁴⁰ Following this tragic attack, in January 2015, the military and political leadership formulated a 20-point counter terrorism agenda called National Action Plan (NAP) to root out terrorist elements from the country.⁴¹ The plan contributed in boosting Operation Zarb-e-Azb and amplifying counter terrorism efforts.⁴²

By April 2016, Pakistan Army successfully restored the writ of the state in the tribal region including North Waziristan, which was formerly known as a hotbed of foreign terrorists. An area of 4,304 km was cleared from terrorists,⁴³ while 253 tonnes of explosives were seized. In addition, 7,500 bomb-making factories were sealed in Shawal, 3500 terrorists killed and 992 terrorist sanctuaries were destroyed. 490 soldiers of the Pakistan Army lost their lives during the Operation.⁴⁴ In February 2016, during its final phase, Shawal Valley was cleared and terrorist hideouts were demolished. After this Operation, the repatriation process began.⁴⁵

Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Repatriation

As discussed earlier, the reconstruction, rehabilitation, and repatriation of TDPs was identified as the second objective of Operation Zarb-e-Azb. The process of repatriation began in phases by initially completing the process of reconstructing, rebuilding and rehabilitating the

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Shakeel Ahmed Ramay, "National Action Plan: Implementation, Gaps & Successes" (Islamabad: Sustainable Development Policy Institute, 2016).

⁴² "Role of National Action Plan in Stabilization of Internal Security of Pakistan," *eBookSheir.org*, October 17, 2017, <http://sheir.org/edu/role-of-national-action-plan-in-stabilization-of-internal-security-of-pakistan/>.

⁴³ Kamran Yousaf, "Operation Updates: Army Restores Writ of the State in Tribal Belt," *Express Tribune*, April 4, 2016, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1078374/operation-updates-army-restores-writ-of-the-state-in-tribal-belt/>.

⁴⁴ "490 Soldiers, 3,500 Militants Killed in Operation Zarb-e-Azb so far: DG ISPR," *Express Tribune*, June 15, 2016, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1123356/dg-ispr-addresses-press-conference-afghanistan-pakistan-border-clashes/>.

⁴⁵ Yousaf, "Operation Updates: Army Restores Writ of the State in Tribal Belt."

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educational institutions, healthcare facilities, drinking water supply and other civic services.⁴⁶

To enhance connectivity within FATA and with the rest of the country, developing physical infrastructure was given priority. In this regard, the reconstruction work began after clearing the area of terrorists, a 72 km long Miranshah – Razmak – Makeen dual carriage road was inaugurated as part of the 705 km Central Trade Corridor that reduces travel time between North and South Waziristan and links Waziristan agencies and Pakistan’s Indus Highway with the Afghan Ring Road.⁴⁷ Another 76 km long Shakai – Makeen road funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) was constructed parallel to Central Trade Corridor which links the two main axes of trade corridor.⁴⁸ The main purpose of these strategic roads is to reduce travel hindrances as well as to enhance intra-regional economic activities.

For the first phase of rehabilitation process, PKR one billion (approximately USD 9.5 million) were spent. The projects for this phase included 47 water supply schemes, renovation of 11 schools, construction of eight new healthcare centres, upgradation of existing health facilities and reconstruction of the main marketplaces in Miranshah and Mir Ali.⁴⁹ Similarly, USD 9.5 million was allocated for the second phase of rehabilitation which included 42 water supply schemes, 84 new schools, six new healthcare facilities, and 11 markets in different *tehsils* (administrative divisions) of North Waziristan.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Rahimullah Yusufzai, “A New Way of Life,” *News on Sunday*, November 13, 2016, <http://tns.thenews.com.pk/new-way-life/#.WT2lg-uGPIU>.

⁴⁷ Mateen Haider, “Army Chief Inaugurates Development Projects in South and North Waziristan,” *Dawn*, June 14, 2016, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1264790>; “Army Chief Inaugurates Central Trade Corridor and Bridge in South Waziristan,” *Express Tribune*, November 9, 2014, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/788109/coas-raheel-sharif-visits-south-waziristan-to-inspect-development-work/>.

⁴⁸ “Army Chief Inaugurates Central Trade Corridor and Bridge in South Waziristan,” *Express Tribune*.

⁴⁹ Ali Akbar, “Is North Waziristan Ready to be Called Home,” *Dawn*, October 19, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1208610>.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

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Around 82,000 families were internally displaced during the Operation and settled in different parts of Pakistan; while 10,000 families residing in border areas including Datta Khel, Shawal, and Baka Khel chose to migrate to Afghanistan and settle in Paktia, Paktika and Khost.⁵¹ The return of TDPs to North Waziristan started in a phased manner in March 2015. According to political leadership of North Waziristan, about 63,000 families returned to their homes in North Waziristan by December 2016.⁵² Regarding repatriation of tribal people from Afghanistan, the first batch of 200 families, consisting of 2,000 people traversed the Ghulam Khan border crossing after two years of displacement.⁵³ 95 per cent IDPs have returned to South Waziristan Agency so far.⁵⁴ It was also reported that some families, had settled in other cities, and also set up businesses there, and were therefore, hesitant to return and shift their entire family back to North Waziristan.⁵⁵

Pakistan's Post-Operation Zarb-e-Azb Security Situation

After completion of Operation Zarb-e-Azb, the security situation in Pakistan has relatively improved and an overview of terrorist attacks shows that terrorists have been unable to attack hard targets. Failed attempts included infiltrating two military airbases in Quetta on August 14-15, 2014 and hijacking a naval ship at Karachi seaport.⁵⁶ As compared to 2014, there has been a 56 per cent decrease in militant attacks, with 48 per cent reduction in deaths and 57 per cent decline in injured persons'

⁵¹ Adeel Saeed, "Return of Pakistani Tribes Shows Success of Operation Zarb-e-Azb," *Pakistan Forward* http://pakistan.asia-news.com/en_GB/articles/cnmi_pf/features/2016/08/19/feature-01.

⁵² "1,350 TDPs to Return to Homes in North Waziristan Today," *Daily Times*, December 12, 2016, <http://dailytimes.com.pk/khyber-pakhtunkhwa/12-Dec-16/1350-tdps-to-return-to-homes-in-north-waziristan-today>.

⁵³ "2000 TDPs Return to N Waziristan," *Daily Times*, January 17, 2017, <http://dailytimes.com.pk/pakistan/17-Jan-17/2000-tdps-return-to-n-waziristan>.

⁵⁴ "Final Phase of South Waziristan IDPs' Return Begins on Tuesday," *Dawn*, July 23, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1347102>.

⁵⁵ Rafi-ud-Din Mehsud, "A New Life after Conflict in FATA," *Daily Times*, June 22, 2016, <http://dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/21-Jun-16/a-new-life-after-conflict-in-fata>.

⁵⁶ Rahimullah Yusufzai, "Zarb-e-Azb: Findings and Conclusions," *News International*, June 21, 2015, http://tns.thenews.com.pk/zarb-e-azb-one-year-on-findings-and-conclusions/#.WKQNi_mSyoM.

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ratio.⁵⁷ 2016 witnessed further reduction with average militant attacks per month dropping to 42, which were 60 in 2015; whereas the average terrorist attacks recorded before June 2014, when Zarb-e-Azb was initiated, was 161.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Gul Dad, Abdullah Khan, *Annual Security Assessment Report 2015*, report (Islamabad: Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies, 2015), 9-10, www.picss.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/ASAR-2015-PICSS-Final-PDF.pdf.

⁵⁸ PICSS, *Annual Security Assessment Report 2016* (Islamabad: Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies, 2016), 13-14, <https://www.picss.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/PICSS-Annual-Report-2016.pdf>.

Table-2
Pakistan's Security Profile 2003-17

Years	Civilians	Security Force Personnel	Terrorists/ Insurgents	Total
2003	140	24	25	189
2004	435	184	244	863
2005	430	81	137	648
2006	608	325	538	1471
2007	1522	597	1479	3598
2008	2155	654	3906	6715
2009	2324	991	8389	11704
2010	1796	469	5170	7435
2011	2738	765	2800	6303
2012	3007	732	2472	6211
2013	3001	676	1702	5379
2014	1781	533	3182	5496
2015	940	339	2403	3682
2016	612	293	898	1803
2017	38	11	18	67
Total*	21527	6674	33363	61564

Source: "Fatalities in Terrorist Violence in Pakistan (2003-2017)," *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, accessed February 16, 2017, <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/Pakistan/database/casualties.htm>

* Data till February 5, 2017.

Despite the fact that structural problems still remain unaddressed, Pakistan's economic growth has shown signs of recovery due to growing foreign remittances and improved security situation. The Economic Survey 2015-16 indicates 4.7 per cent GDP growth which is better than the previous eight years performance.⁵⁹ Industrial growth has increased due to the higher activity in manufacturing and construction; the latter is driven by initiation of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) infrastructure projects. CPEC being the largest foreign investment venture is the direct result of improved security situation after Operation Zarb-e-Azb.⁶⁰ It has transformed Pak-China bilateral economic ties and reestablished the confidence of foreign investors in Pakistan. Similarly, the indiscriminate nature of the Operation has improved Pakistan's image internationally.

Despite its success, 2016 witnessed several major terrorist attacks on the civilian population that included an attack on Bacha Khan University in Charsadda on January 20, 2016;⁶¹ a suicide attack in Gulshan-e-Iqbal Park on March 27, 2016 which claimed the lives of 72 people and injured about 340 people at the time when Christians were celebrating Easter.⁶² On August 8, 2016, another suicide attack on Civil Hospital in Quetta took 70 lives and left several injured.⁶³ On September 2, 2016 a suicide bomber blew himself up in the premises of District and Session Court in Mardan,⁶⁴ while another suicide bomber targeted a mosque during Friday prayers in Mohmand Agency, on September 16,

⁵⁹ Manzoor Ahmed, "Economic Survey – What the Numbers do not Tell us," *Express Tribune*, June 6, 2016, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1116826/economic-survey-numbers-not-tell-us/>.

⁶⁰ Nisar Mahmood, "CPEC Outcome of Army, Nation's Sacrifices: COAS," *News International*, December 24, 2015, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/84088-CPEC-outcome-of-army-nations-sacrifices-COAS>.

⁶¹ "Gunmen Attack Bacha Khan University in Charsadda, 21 Killed," *Nation*, January 20, 2016, <http://nation.com.pk/national/20-Jan-2016/bacha-khan-university-in-charsadda-under-attack>.

⁶² "72 Dead, 340 Injured in Gulshan-e-Iqbal Suicide Blast in Lahore," *Nation*, March 27, 2016, <http://nation.com.pk/national/27-Mar-2016/at-least-15-injured-in-gulshan-iqbal-blast-in-lahore>.

⁶³ "70 Dead as Blast Hits Quetta Civil Hospital after Lawyer's Killing," *Dawn*, August 9, 2016, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1276183>.

⁶⁴ Ali Akbar, "Suicide Bombers Kills 13 in Attack on Mardan Courthouse," *Dawn*, September 2, 2016, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1281561>.

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2016.⁶⁵ Attacking soft targets not only shows the inability of terrorists to hit hard targets such as military installations and other sensitive facilities, but also highlights the lack of morality when it comes to targeting unarmed civilians, particularly women and children.

In order to maintain pressure on terrorist networks from re-establishing their safe havens in the country, and ensuring that soft targets become less accessible to insurgents, the Government authorised Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad in February 2017 to:⁶⁶

[I]ndiscriminately eliminating residual/latent threat of terrorism, consolidating gains of operations made thus far and further ensuring security of the borders. Pakistan Air Force, Pakistan Navy, Civil Armed Forces (CAF) and other security/Law Enforcing Agencies (LEAs) will continue to actively participate/intimately support the efforts to eliminate the menace of terrorism from the country.⁶⁷

Future Challenges

After the completion of Operation Zarb-e-Azb and the phased repatriation of TDPs in their respective areas, there are future challenges that need to be addressed so that durable peace can be achieved.

FATA Reforms

With the completion of rehabilitation and resettlement process, the civil administration is required to assume its responsibilities and create a conducive environment for normalcy to return in the area. The task will remain inconclusive unless FATA reforms are implemented. A committee on FATA reforms was set up in November 2015 headed by Deputy Chairman Planning Commission and former Foreign Affairs Advisor to Prime Minister, Sartaj Aziz, 'with the mandate to draft

⁶⁵ Shams Momand and Jibran Ahmad, "Suicide Bomber Kills at least 25 in Pakistani Mosque," *Reuters*, September 16, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-attack-idUSKCN11M141>.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ "Inter Services Public Relations, press release no. 87, February 22, 2017, https://www.ispr.gov.pk/front/main.asp?o=t-press_release&id=3773&cat=army

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administrative and political reforms for FATA.⁶⁸ The Committee initially offered four options for political reforms: maintaining *status quo* while introducing judicial and administrative reforms; creating FATA Council on the pattern of Gilgit-Baltistan; making a separate province of FATA; and integrating FATA with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK).⁶⁹ After consulting tribal elders, FATA parliamentary members, representatives of political parties, traders, journalists, youth and civil society organisations, the Committee found the fourth option as the most feasible one. Given the economic and cultural links with adjoining districts of KPK, lack of required revenue generation capacity and the ‘lack of vertical links’ among different agencies of FATA, the option of making FATA a separate province was ruled out by the tribes.⁷⁰ Similarly, the option of FATA Council on the pattern of Gilgit-Baltistan could not gain widespread support. Reforms Committee proposed the integration of FATA with KPK.⁷¹

Mainstreaming FATA would require a transition period of five years. The Committee recommended completing the process of reconstruction and rehabilitation of TDPs which was not completed within the given 2016 timeframe – while reconstruction should be completed before the end of 2018.⁷²

The Committee proposed to form a Special Committee under the Governor of KPK to finalise a ten-year comprehensive development plan for FATA. In this regard, it has been recommended that the National Finance Commission (NFC) should allocate 3 per cent of available resources for its implementation, and that the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) should be repealed and replaced with *Tribal Area Rewaj Act*.⁷³ While suggesting extension of jurisdiction of the Supreme

⁶⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, GoP, *Report of the Committee on FATA Reforms* (Government of Pakistan, 2016), <http://www.safron.gov.pk/safron/userfiles1/file/Report%20of%20the%20Committee%20on%20FATA%20Reforms%202016%20final.pdf>.

⁶⁹ Prime Minister’s Office, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, “Committee on FATA Reforms 2016: Presentation on FATA Reforms” (Government of Pakistan, 2016), <http://pmo.gov.pk/documents/PresentationFATAREformCommittee.pdf>.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.* Editor’s Note: *Rewaj* is a convention or custom in a society.

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Court of Pakistan and Peshawar High Court to the territory of FATA, the Committee also recommended:

The *Jirga*⁷⁴ system will be retained for both civil and criminal matters, whereby the Judge will appoint a Council of Elders to decide factual issues in accordance with *Rewaj* and will pass a decree in accordance with its findings in a civil reference or pass an order in accordance with its findings and applicable law in a criminal reference.⁷⁵

Addressing Economic Insecurity

Ensuring sustainable economic security for the people of North Waziristan is a daunting challenge. North Waziristan being a rugged area lacks arable land. According to land use data (2007-08), only 4 per cent of the total geographic area is cultivated, while more than 96 per cent is not suitable for cultivation.⁷⁶ About two per cent of arable land is under irrigation while the remaining cultivated area relies entirely on rainfall.⁷⁷ Hence, most of the people in North Waziristan remain dependent on business and trade activities. Old *bazaars* (markets) in Mir Ali and Miranshah were destroyed during Operation Zarb-e-Azb. The new Mir Ali *bazaar* was to have 150 shops but keeping in view the demand, new shops are being constructed on adjacent lands.⁷⁸ A huge market is being constructed to replace the famous Miranshah *Bazaar* which will contain about 4,000 shops. In the first phase 672 shops are under construction, while in the next phase, another 1,304 shops will be constructed.⁷⁹ Ahmer Bilal Soofi, former caretaker Federal Law Minister and international legal expert suggested that the government should set up tax free industrial zones in proximity with militancy-hit areas so that militants driven by economic

⁷⁴ Editor's Note: A *jirga* is grand tribal council which has a legislative function.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ "Federally Administered Tribal Areas," *FATA Official Web Portal*, <https://fata.gov.pk/Global-fac.php?id=417&fid=35&pId=298&mId=114>.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Rahimullah Yusufzai, "A New Way of Life," *News International*, November 13, 2016, <http://tns.thenews.com.pk/new-way-life/#.WIWYNvmSyoM>.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

compulsions can find employment while undergoing deradicalisation protocols.⁸⁰

Deradicalisation Programme

Apart from initiating reconstruction and rehabilitation programmes, post-conflict societies undergo various deradicalisation processes that help people overcome their psychological problems. With the completion of Operation Zarb-e-Azb, the process has begun which is a ‘process through which individuals abandon extremist worldview, shun violence to effect social change and accept political pluralism.’⁸¹ Though Pakistan lacks a comprehensive strategy, yet it has been running six deradicalisation centres under different frameworks. These include *Sabaoon*, *Mishal*, *Sparley*, *Rastoon*, *Pythom*, and *Heila*.⁸² *Sabaoon*, *Mishal* and *Sparley* projects not only provide detainees with formal education, they also impart corrective religious education, vocational training, counseling/therapy and a discussion module that focuses on social issues and includes sessions with the families of students.⁸³ *Sabaoon* is the only centre in the world that is established for deradicalisation of children.⁸⁴ Project *Mishal* which is administered by Pakistan Army in Swat directs its efforts towards deradicalising adult detainees, while project *Sparley* extends the programme to the families of detainees. The sole objective of these programmes is to reintegrate these individuals into mainstream society.

A comprehensive FATA Youth Package was announced in November 2014.⁸⁵ It is estimated that 14000 youth from FATA will be recruited in Pakistan Army in the next five years; 1500 students from

⁸⁰ JI, “Second Opinion: New Battle Lines – Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency Beyond Zarb-e-Azb” (Islamabad: Jinnah Institute, n.d.), accessed August 1, 2016, <http://jinnah-institute.org/second-opinion-new-battle-lines-counterterrorism-and-counterinsurgency-beyond-zarb-e-azb/>.

⁸¹ Selina Adam Khan, “Deradicalisation Programming in Pakistan” (brief, United States Institute of Peace, Washington, D.C., September 14, 2015), <http://www.usip.org/publications/2015/09/14/deradicalization-programming-in-pakistan>.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Yumna Rafi, “Bringing them Home: Pakistan’s Child Deradicalisation Centre offers Second Chance,” *Dawn*, September 23, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1208602>.

⁸⁵ “Enviably Role of Armed Forces Against,” *News International*, April 10, 2015, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/11904-enviable-role-of-armed-forces-against>.

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FATA will be enrolled in Army Public Schools across the country; students from FATA will be granted admissions on quota basis in Military Colleges; technical training institutes will be set up in all major cantonments; and arrangements would be made for large-scale overseas employment of youth from FATA.⁸⁶ This may help to relieve the psychological trauma of the youth of FATA who had suffered under Taliban threats and later on during the displacement period.

Pak-Afghan Border Management

Pak-Afghan border management has been a major issue between the two states since 2001. Given allegations of infiltration, Pakistan has repeatedly proposed to fence various parts of the border and install a biometric system at border crossing points, but the Afghan government has remained reluctant to agree to these proposals. Pakistan shares 2,430 km long border and has eight formal border crossings with Afghanistan, with only one operationalised at Torkham border after a violent standoff in June 2016.⁸⁷ The Government of Pakistan intends to build 18 proper border crossings with Afghanistan to regulate cross-border movement.⁸⁸ For Pakistan, to sustain the successes of Zarb-e-Azb, an effective border management mechanism is imperative.

Conclusion

The future of national security in Pakistan is entwined with the future of FATA. Operation Zarb-e-Azb has successfully dismantled terrorist networks in North Waziristan but sustainability and durability of its success depends on future course of action. Therefore, to consolidate and retain the gains of previous military operations, Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad (February 2017) has been launched across the country⁸⁹ aimed at eradicating the 'residual/latent threat of terrorism' from the country.⁹⁰ In

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ismail Khan, "Afghan Border Crossings Throw up Security Concerns," *Dawn*, September 2, 2016, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1281514>.

⁸⁹ "Pakistan Army Launches 'Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad' Across the Country," *Dawn*, February 22, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1316332>.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

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addition to strengthening institutional mechanisms to counter terrorism, addressing the root causes of terrorism and extremism is imperative. In this regard, it is pertinent to identify the reasons other than WoT that led to the creation of militancy in FATA. Socioeconomic development of FATA and deciding its future political status may contribute in bringing peace to the region in accordance with the wishes of its people. Operation Zarb-e-Azb has denied space to local and foreign militants to plan and carry out terrorist attacks against Pakistan or any other state but terrorism cannot be effectively curtailed unless the Pak-Afghan border is secured. Without effective border management mechanism, menace of terrorism will persist. With the initiation of reforms and a strengthened border management system, FATA has the potential of becoming a strategic asset rather than a security risk for Pakistan and become a hub of trade and transit activities with Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics paving the way for sustainable development. ■