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A Brief Sketch of Pakistan's Security Strategy (2004-2011); An Appraisal

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ABSTRACT

In the aftermath of 9/11 syndrome, the world faced a new layer of terrorism and insurgency that compelled all the major powers to reconsider their security dynamics. The event was looked at with great concern by the world actors since they had to reconsider their security policies and made an alliance of the United States and the allied partners to address such issues. Pakistan, being a close neighboring country of Afghanistan was the one to suffer the most as the internal security structure of the country faced many challenges of insecurity. For the first time in the history of the country, the government of Pakistan had to sign peace deals with the non-state actors, followed by a series of military operations. Objectives of the study opine the need for these operations and the achievements and the challenges associated with these operations. Findings of the study conclude that the military operations were the result of the failure of the peace deals with the non-state actors, lack of education and reforms and non-participation of the civil society.

Keywords: Security, Military operation, Non-state actors, government.

Introduction

The 9/11 episode bore an unbearable imprint on the security paradigm of Pakistan as the country was compelled to in initiate a series of peace agreements followed by the military operations. The huge growth of militant groups and organizations in the country pose a threat to the writ of the government by embarking upon certain demands that could serve their interests (Thomas, 2025). As a consequence of the United States and allied partners' military operations in Afghanistan, security situation in Pakistan also got worsened. The Pak-Afghan border became the focus of

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attention for the regional and international community due to the cross border infiltration and its being utilized as sanctuary by the insurgent groups and terrorist networks (Thomas, 2025) .. Relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan took a serious turn and a game of accusations and counter- accusations ignited that added further fuel to the fire. All efforts by the US and allied partners faced certain challenges of state- building and institution reconstructions though democratic set ups were installed in Afghanistan during the 2001 to 2021. The operations in Afghanistan went through different nomenclature; the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the Resolute Support mission (RSM). The basic theme of all these operations lay in maintaining security in the country as per resolutions of the Security Council.

Security situation in Pakistan got worsened in the provinces of Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where many attacks of bomb blasts, suicide bombing, target-killings and use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) became very common amongst the terrorists and insurgents (Tariq, 2018). The government of Pakistan, in order to cope with the situation and bring in peace and harmony in the country first initiated a series of peace deals with the non-state actors and as a result of failure of these deals, the government had to launch military operations in order to uproot terrorism and insurgency from the country. It was for the first time that the government of Pakistan had to sign peace deals with the non-state actors in the country and then resultantly take recourse to military operations (Shami, 2009) . Both the government and the militants could not agree on a consensus based agreement since no party was in a position to comply with the demands of the other (Tariq M. , India-Pak Rivalry in Afghanistan , 2015). A glance at the government's strategy show that showed leniency as a pre-emptive doctrine by entering into peace parleys with the non-stat actors but the lack of trust by the both the parties led towards the initiation of military operations.

Due to the intervention of the US and allied partners in Afghanistan in 2001, security situation got worsened in Pakistan and particularly in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and erstwhile tribal agencies (Tariq D. M., Afghanistan Turmoil and its Implications for Pakistan's Security (2009--2016) , 2018). Security paradigm of the province saw the worst scenario where attacks of suicide, bomb-blasts, target-killings, use of improvised explosive devices in toys and firing on the common masses became a matter of routine (Thomas, 2025). Some experts opine that the Pak-Afghan border is the center of infiltration and terrorist activities whereby it has been used as a combined ground from both sides by the Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and foreign fighters in order to fulfill their nefarious designs (Thomas, 2025). The long and windy nature of the porous border is another area of concern for the two countries and regional powers since the mountains and the caves provide ample space for sanctuaries and hideouts thus leading to the exacerbation of security situation in the region (Tariq D. M., An ANalysis of Insurgency in Afghanistan (2001-2016) , 2018).

Shah Nawaz Tanai, former Defense Minister of Afghanistan, is of the view that the Taliban across both sides of the border have been coordinating and helping each other since the invasion of the Russian forces in Afghanistan (Khattak, 2012). They have even provided help to each other in the withdrawal of the Russians from Afghanistan (Khattak, 2012). Some experts hold another view opining that the

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current uprising across the border can be seen through the prism of a coordinated effort to sabotage the military operation initiated by the Pakistani security agencies against the Haqqani Network (Ali, 2012) . To provide peace and security to the common masses in the afffeced areas of he country, the ogvernment of Pakistan carried out some military operations with the aim of purging the area of terrorism, insurgency, outlaws and militancy (Marwat, 2010) . These operations include Operation *al-Mizan*, Operation *Rah-e- Haq*, Operation *Zalzala*, Operation Thunderstorm, Operation *Rah-e-Raast*, Operation *Sher Dil*, Operation *Rah-e-Nijat*, Operation *Koh-e-Safaid* and Operation *Zarb-e-Azab*.

Operation *Al-Mizan*

Operation Al-Mizan was the first military operation in the entire history of the country aiming at uprooting terrorism and insurgency from the country. The operation lasted for four years commencing in 2002 and culminating in 2006 during General Pervez Musharraf's Regime whereby 70,000-80,000 were deployed in the erstwhile areas of FATA. The operation was conducted along a 36 km area, west of Wana (South Waziristan) that had fallen under the command of militants, comprising Nek Muhammad Wazir, Noor-ul-Islam, Haji Muhammad Sharif, Maulvi Abbas, and Maulvi Abdul Aziz, all of whom were suspected to have been facilitating the foreign fighters in the local areas (DAWN, 2004) . The situation took a more serious turn when *fatwa* was issued by Ayman al-Zawahiri, calling for the assissaination of President Pervez Musharraf (DAWN, 2004) as a consequence of which several attacks were made on him by the Waziristan based-militants (DAWN, 2004) . This was the beginning of operation in the country where the law enforcement agencies had to devise strategies against the miltants and the government had to take four years by adopting different strategies to mainain law and order in the affecyed areas.

The death of commander Nek Muhammad, provided Baitullah Mehsud with the opportunity as their commander in South Waziristan. Significan loss was incurrede by both sides resluing in over 1,400 casualties and killing hundred of miltants including the Al-aeda leader (Wikipedia, 2024) . The operation aimed at eliminating the trrorist activities from the country and was not directed against a particular banned organization. Over 200 Checchens, Uzbeks, and Arabs who were facilitated by the local supporters were targetted in the operation (Wikipedia, 2024). Round about 1,2000 to 1,4000 security personnel lost their lives due to lack of informaion, use of modern warfare technology by the militants, knowledger of the hideouts of the insurgents (DAWN, 2004). Though the operation caused heavy loss to the law enforcement agencies yet the in charge of the Frontier Corps and XI Crops, General Safdar Hussain, announced victory stating that they had accomplished their mission (DAWN, 2004).

Operation *Zalzala*

In January 2008, operation Zalzala was launched in South Waziristan Agencies against Baitullah Mehsood and his group (Khan b. , 2011). The aim of the operation was to fight agaisnt those elements who had either fought agaisnt the government machinery or had challenged the writ of the government. The operation lasted from January24, 2008 to May 20, 2008 and during a period of about four months rhe law enformcnet agencies were able ot clear the area of the terrorists and insurgents (WIKIPEDIA, Operation Zalzala , 2025). During the operation, the law enforcement

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agencies lost 06 security personnel while 20-25 TTP members were killed and the number of people who faced displacement ranged from 150,000---200,000 (WIKIPEDIA, Operation Zalzala , 2025) . The arras of Spinkai, a strong hold of Baitullah Mehsood and the nearby localities fell to the law eforcement agencies in a short period of time (Khan b. , 2011). The operation was one of the most successful one since the army succeeed in capturing computers, weapons of mass destrcution and the improvised explosive devices used in the target killing and suicide bombing agaisnt the civilians and the law enforcemen agencies (Khan b. , 2011) . The government took four months to clear the area of miltancy and insurgency within a short span of time resulting in the loss of 6 soldiers. Besides, the government had also to deal with the issue of internally displaced persons in the settled areas and then had to repatriate them afer the culmination of war (Tariq M. , The Borderland Theory in the Context of Pak-Afghan Border, 2020). .

Operation *Rah-e-Haq*

Operation Rah-e-Haq, also known as the first Battle of Swat was launched on October 25, 2007 and culminated in November 7, 2007 aiming at clearing the area of the terrorist networks and the *Tehrik-e-Nifaz-Shariat-e-Muhammadi (*TNSM) militant group in Malakand Division. (WIKIPEDIA, First Battle of Swat , 2005) . The operation was carried out in the District of Swat against the TTP leader and insurgent groups resulting in the death of 15 soldiers and 03 police personnel while killing of 250 insurgents and capturing of 143 terrorists (WIKIPEDIA, First Battle of Swat , 2005). This was the first phase of the operation, followed by the second one that was launched in July 2008 and continued throughout the year (Amin, October 19, 2007). The operation was initiated at the request of the provincial government lasting for three months and culminating in the death of 36 law enforcement personnel, 9 civilians and round about 615 militants (Shamim-ur-Rahman, 2008) .. The third phase of this epiosde was launched in January 2009 with the slogan emphasizing "shoot on sight" (Naseer, 2009) (Abid,April 24, 2009) leading towards the imposition of curfew in the major cities of Swat (Khattak, October 2011, Volume 4, Issue 10) . The TNSM reciprocated by making attacks on schools, and security personnel. The operation culminated in February 2009 through the peace deal of Malakand Accord (Naseer, 2009) between the government and local militants. Siuation took a deteriorating position in April 2009 where the militants seized the public property and government buildings particularly in Swat, Buner and Shangla. Attacks were made on police stations, frontier constabulary officers, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and set up their own security posts (Naseer, 2009) (Abid,April 24, 2009).

A look into this operation shows that this was one of the toughest operations fraught with many challenges and issues for the security agencies of the country. Keeping in view the nature of the area and the mountains, the government embarked upon strategies that had to be applied in three different phases lasting for several months. An analysis of these operation show that the government had been successful in making arrangements for the internally and temporarily displaced persons and then their repatriation after the end of the war but situation went towards exacerbation when some insurgents and militants raised their head in 2009 by capturing certain territories that added further fuel to the fire and the government was faced with a new challenge and strategy to combat them.

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Operation *Raah-e-Raast*

Operation *Raah-e-Raast* was launched in Swat in May 2009 and continued till July 2009 with the aim to clear the area of terrorists, insurgents, militants and the Taliban. The operation faced stiff resistance from the militants when during the last week of May 2009 a few local villagers were captured by the militants (Waseem, 2011). The month of May 2009 proved to be very crucial for the law enforcement agencies when the militants were in strong position to get the control of the entire Mingora destroying concrete bunkers, taking into possession arms and ammunition, and explosives concealed in the sanctuaries of the hilly areas (Waseem, 2011). The operation proved to be very fruitful in uprooting terrorism and militancy from Swat, Buner, Shangla and the outskirts (Waseem, 2011) (Khan, May 21, 2009). Its success and goal achievement lay in bringing the displaced persons back to their homes and villages discouraging the Taliban never to raise their voice against the government. The only exceptional case was the attack on Mala Yousafzai who got seriously injured in the attack and was later on, shifted to the United States of America (Waseem, 2011). In response to her voice against girls' education, women rights and as ambassador of peace, she was bestowed upon the Nobel Prize.

This operation also bore fruitful results for the government as most of the equipment of the militants was taken into possession by the law enforcement agencies. The displaced persons were brought back to their homes and villages after clearing the area of terrorism and militancy. The insurgents faced discouragement and were not in a position to rise against the state machinery with the only exceptional case of Malala Yousafzai who sustained serious injuries in a terrorist attack.

Operation Black Thunderstorm

Operation Black Thunderstorm was the series of operations launched in Mingora Swat, Shangla and Lower Dir in April 2009 and continued till June 2009 aiming at combating militancy and insurgency (Waseem, 2011) . The basic purpose of the operation was to restore the writ of the government as challenged by the militants. As a result of the operation 50 law enforcement personnel lost lives while 100 go wounded while the number of casualties from the militants included 1,457 including 23 foreign militants coupled with the displacement of 3.4 million civilians (WIKIPEDIA, Operation Black Thunderstorm, 2025). The huge growth of refugees created problems for the government functionaries but it was brought under control (Waseem, 2011).

Operation *Sher Dil*

Operation Sher Dil was launched in Bajaur Agency commencing in August 2008 and culminating in February 2009.The operation aimed at cleaning the area of militancy as result of which greater number of people saw their displacement of the local and tribal population (Khan, 2009). The basic logic behind this operation was to target Qari Zia-ur-Rehman and other militants who had pushed the personnel of law enforcement agencies and the local security personnel (Khan, 2009). All those elements that had challenged the writ of the government as well as had threatened the security paradigm of the country were the target of this operation. Security situation had worsened to such an extent that by June 2008, over 72 security check points had been destroyed; civilian government had faced severe challenges, major bank robbery and suicide bombings against the officials (Khan, 2009). In the

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operation, 30 security personnel lost their lives and 4 sustained injuries while more than 1,000--1,500 killed and 2,000 militants were wounded (WIKIPEDIA, Battle of Bajaur , 2025) . The law enforcement agencies faced some stiff resistance from the people who were providing sanctuaries to the militants and providing them with spaces for storing weapons, ammunitions, radio frequency lists, guerilla warfare manuals, propaganda and instructions for attacks (WIKIPEDIA, Battle of Bajaur , 2025). (Seth. G. Jhones, 2009). The merit of this operation was its similarity to the Operation Zarb-e-Azab in its methodology and technique. This operation had also resemblance with the Operation *Raah-e-Raast*, Operation Black thunderstorm, and Operation *Sher Dil* as in all these operations the strategy of the government was to bring in aerial support prior to the ground troops. The aerial monitoring gave more enthusiasm and strength to the law enforcement agencies as felt more secure.

Operation *Rah-e-Nijat*

Operation Raah-e-Nijat was initiated as consequence of the failure of the operation Zalzala during the years 2008 and 2009 whereby Baitullah Mehsood and other militant networks carried their activities in their base in Waziristan (Mehsud, October 18,2009). The year 2008 saw a total of 2,148 terrorist attacks by the insurgents, militants and other sectarian groups in Pakistan (Report , 2009). This operation was initiated in June 2009 in South Waziristan where approximately 30,000 security personnel participated (Mehsud, October 18,2009). The main logic behind this operation was to restore the confidence of the security agencies by regaining the lost ground to the Taliban and other militant organizations. Irreparable loss was incurred by the militants as most of them infiltrated in to Afghanistan by taking shelter over there (Mehsud, October 18,2009).

During this operation, the law enforcement agencies of the country were assisted by the United States and its military personnel (Marwat, 2010) . The operation was conducted under the direct supervision of the 11th Corps with three sub-units; the 7th based in Miranshah, the 9th in Wana, and the 14th in Jandola. (Editorial & December 28, 2008). Strong bases of the militants comprising Laddah, Makin, and Sargodha were targeted with the aim of dismantling the terrorist networks (Editorial & December 28, 2008). By December 2009, the security forces of hte3 country were able to take control of these strong areas that had been there in the control of the terrorist networks (Marwat, 2010).

Operation *Koh-e-Safaid*

Operation Koh-e Safaid was launched in Kurram Agency on July 4, 2011 and lasted till 18th July 2011 in which 4, 000 security personnel took part (WIKIPEDIA, Operation Koh-e Sofaid , 2025) . The security agencies used modern warfare technology to clear the area of the outlaws and insurgent groups. The government took 1/4th of the population amounting to 100,000 residents as they were displaced by this operation (WIKIPEDIA, Operation Koh-e Sofaid , 2025).

Discussion and Conclusion

A deep look into all the military operations reveal that these were targeted towards the elimination of terrorism, insurgency and militancy with the aim of bringing peace and harmony in the affected areas. It was for the very first time in the history of Pakistan that the government had to enter into peace deals followed by the military operations. The government also learnt some lessons from the stance of the non-state actors on account of their making huge demands from the government

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functionaries while the latter also learnt a lesson that in case they don't change course of action and don come to the negotiation table with the government then state machinery can be applied against them. The law enforcement agencies were faced with many challenges and impediments in their way due to the windy and treacherous nature of the tribal belt and the frontier region.

Some of the operations were fought in a series of phases since the insurgents had to reinvigorate themselves after some interval of time. Despite the fact that the militants had o play hide and seek game in order to create law and order disturbance in the areas they were having strong hold yet the security agencies of the country were also in a better position to combat and reciprocate on time and establish their writ in the affected areas. It is pertinent to mention that the security agencies were able to establish the writ of the government in the tribal belt and provincially administered areas such as Swat, Dir, Shangla and Buner.

Every operation was better than the previous one since the law enforcement agencies had to uncover certain new areas where the militants had their hold, sanctuaries, facilitators and supporters. During the first operation in South Waziristan, ie Operation Al-Mizan, the army faced some challenges as he militants gave them some tough time but in the operations that followed the security agencies were in a better position to regain their lost prestige. In the operations that the security parameters of the country made further improvements particularly in the operations of *Sher Dil*, Operation *Raah-e-Raast*, and Operation *Raah-e-Nijat* and declared victory against the insurgents. Operation *Raah-e-Raast* was the most fruitful one in so far the strategy and warfare techniques of the army was concerned. The area was completely cleared from the terrorists and the insurgents while the internally displaced persons were restored their homes and localities.

The military operations were the result of the failure of the peace deals between the government and the non-sate actors. One of the major causes for its failure was the lack of consensus between the two contracting parties as the demands of the non-state actors were more than what the government expected from them. The sheer exclusion of the local population in these deals was another cause for its failure since most of the agreements the contracting parties were the government and the Taliban. With the exception of the Swat peace deal, all the agreements were signed under the patronage of the law enforcement agencies where no role or very less role was played by the political parties and ruling class of the country.

The government of Pakistan needs to focus on the peace and security of the people since it is the duty of the state to keep intact the welfare of the people. Educating the common masses by arranging seminars, workshops, distributing brochures in all public places, awareness programs, inculcating the sense of patriotism and keeping in touch with the terrorists, insurgents, and militants through dialogues and negotiations while finding out the causes of insurgency and militancy and provide remedies to make them true citizens and patriots of the country.

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