

## Identifying Causes of Terrorism in Pakistan

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### Abstract

*The primary objective of this research is to explore the domestic and international causes of terrorism specific to Pakistan. Given that the country is a victim of widespread terrorist activities, an inquiry into the causes of terrorism is required. In-depth interviews and content analysis have been used to explore the initial causes of terrorism. Based on the results of content analysis a quantitative analysis was conducted to collect rank-order data from experts. The results indicate that the most important causes of terrorism include lack of law enforcement, poverty, Pakistan's participation in war on terror, foreign involvement, and unemployment. This study concludes that no cause has a unilateral connection with terrorism, and focusing on a single factor may not suggest effective policy measures. This research suggests a multifaceted but a more focused diagnostic into the complex causes of terrorism in Pakistan.*

**Keywords:** Causes of terrorism; Pakistan; Qualitative and quantitative techniques

### Introduction

Terrorism is prevalent everywhere in today's modern world. Only 31 out of 158 countries ranked in Global Terrorism Index (GTI) did not experience a terrorist incident during 2002-2011.<sup>1</sup> The data presented in the index indicate a rise in the global impact of terrorism. "The world has become less peaceful every year since 2008, highlighting the importance of better understanding conflict and violence risk."<sup>2</sup>

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Terrorist activities yield not only human and physical losses but also generate an array of psychological, social, political, and economic damages in target countries. When societies bear losses of terrorism, there comes the issue of knowing causes of these incidents. The causes of terrorism are studied in order to determine which factors motivate the production of terrorist activities. This may help to bring down the terrorist activities. Krieger and Meierrieks note, "Unveiling the causes of terrorism and deriving sound policy advice is important because terrorism is costly to affected countries."<sup>3</sup> In order to determine how to respond, it is vital to understand why people resort to terrorism.<sup>4</sup> So, knowing the causes is important if we want to eliminate terrorism.

Since the first organized and systematic terror launched by Zealot sect in the Middle East in first-century Palestine till today's modern and postmodern terrorism, intellectuals have been struggling to understand the causes of terrorism.<sup>5</sup> In the academic literature, there exist variety of interpretations and diverse causes of the complex phenomenon of terrorism. Some scholars believe terrorism is rooted in economic deprivation, i.e. in poverty, inequality, and unemployment,<sup>6</sup> while others consider it a matter of religion.<sup>7</sup> There are many other explanations of the causes of terrorism such as ethnic,<sup>8</sup> cultural,<sup>9</sup> strategic,<sup>10</sup> institutional,<sup>11</sup> etc. Though a significant progress has been reported in empirical research, we cannot pinpoint a limited number of causes for every context. Recent discussion in terrorism literature draws our attention towards the fact that despite continuous efforts we are unable to answer the simple question of "what leads a person to turn to political violence?"<sup>12</sup> So, contemporary literature emphasizes on broadening our search to know the causes of terrorism.<sup>13</sup> Identifying the causes of terrorism is still a challenge, and more recent trend is towards conducting such research at group and societal level.<sup>14</sup>

The purpose of this research is to explore causes of terrorism at societal level, and the target country is Pakistan, a country where terrorism has mushroomed in an unbelievable manner for the last thirteen years. According to Global Terrorism Index (2014)<sup>15</sup>, Pakistan ranks third among the countries in the index. The same report indicates that 82% of terrorist activity took place in five countries; Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria and Syria. United States Department of State warns about a worrisome situation of terrorist violence in Pakistan.<sup>16</sup>

During 2002 and 2009 Pakistan accounted for 12% increase in global terrorism incidents, and in 2011 a total of 910

terrorist attacks caused 1,468 killings, 2,459 injuries, and damage to 458 properties.<sup>17</sup> Statistics in South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP) inform that since 2003 a total of 19,350 civilians, 5,906 security force personnel, and 28,583 insurgents have lost their lives till 31<sup>st</sup> August 2014.<sup>18</sup> These statistics indicate the severity of terrorism and anti-peace situation in Pakistan.

Owing to rapidly spreading terrorist attacks in the country a fall in production, disruptions in financial markets and transport system has been observed. As the need for security increased, the central government had to allocate huge shares to the military, which is making it difficult to sustain social and economic expenditure. In recent economic conditions, terrorism is a big threat to Pakistan's economy and business environment. The academic literature and information media are full of the details of losses Pakistan economy is bearing because of terrorism in the country.

A review of the literature suggests that there may be various causes of terrorism in a country, and each cause has its own explanation depending on the situation and time frame, and some causes are more important than others.<sup>19</sup> Insights from research on critical success factors (CSFs) suggest that knowing relative importance of causing factors is important,<sup>20</sup> so that a few most important factors could be selected.<sup>21</sup> Applying that sense to this research, exploring the causes of terrorism and knowing their relative importance is essential because policy makers need to focus on some most important causes as the resources to cope with the complex phenomenon of terrorism may be limited and consequently a parallel working on all the causes cannot be feasible.

The following section explains our methodology of exploring the causes of terrorism and provides results of quantitative analysis which was conducted after in-depth interviews and content analysis. Section three discusses the causes of terrorism specific to Pakistan. The final section provides the conclusion of this research.

### **Methodology**

In order to explore the causes of terrorism in Pakistan, we used a two-step method. At first step a qualitative analysis was conducted. The purpose was to develop, through expert opinion, an initial list of the causes of terrorism. At second step a quantitative analysis was conducted to obtain expert opinion about the most important causes of terrorism among the list established in qualitative

analysis. The participants were selected based on their experience and expertise in criminal investigations, academic research, and the level of professional involvement in tackling the issue of terrorism. In sum, the respondents had deep knowledge and understanding of terrorism phenomenon in the country. Forty one male and female experts participated in qualitative analysis.

#### *Qualitative analysis*

Data were collected through face to face interviews with experts in their workplace. The interviews were conducted during September-October, 2014. Average time for each interview was forty five minutes. The central question for all interviews was: what are the major domestic and international causes of terrorism in Pakistan? Two researchers participated in each interview. One of the researchers played the role of interviewer. The interviewer's task was to generate and facilitate discussion on identifying the causes of terrorism in Pakistan. The second researcher recorded the interview, took important notes and added the discussion where necessary. All the interviews were summarized on flip chart by highlighting the most important causes. As a feedback, the key points of each interview were shared verbally with the participant. Any final thoughts from the participant were also included in the flip chart notes.

It took about two months to collect initial data from all selected experts. We performed a content analysis after collecting data. For the purpose of content analysis an independent transcriptionist transcribed flip chart notes. Later on, the transcribed notes were compared against flip chart notes to assure accuracy.

#### *Content analysis*

In order to examine the emerging themes in data we entered the transcribed notes into Atlat.ti and developed precise categories after fulfilling the requirement of the objectivity of analysis.<sup>22</sup> Using insights from existing literature, a three step process was followed.<sup>23</sup> At first step, some general themes applicable to the causes of terrorism in Pakistan were identified. Single word descriptors from the data were used for defining categories. Each category was determined after capturing all possible but idiosyncratic interpretations. This step helped to confirm that the interview question was appropriate for deriving themes. At second step, we used sample judgment process to test the consistency and objectivity of categories. In this regard, we used a random number

generator to obtain three samples of responses generated in the interviews. Based on the general themes derived by the authors, two independent researchers (judges) categorized these sample responses. In other words, the judges were asked to define a number of words which could explain a category. The final categories and their corresponding definitions have been shown in table 1.

Table 1: Categories of the causes of terrorism in Pakistan

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Definition</b>
What are the major domestic and international causes of terrorism in Pakistan?	
Corruption	Corruption/bribery/dishonesty
Ethnic strife	Ethnic strife/conflict/enmity
Foreign involvement	Foreign involvement/interference/external hand
Illiteracy	Illiteracy/ignorance/uneducated
Lack of Law enforcement	Law enforcement/implementation, prosecution
Pakistan's participation in war on terror	War on terror/al-Qaeda/Taliban
Poverty	Poverty/deprivation/impoverishment
Separatism	Separatism/separatists/apartheid
Unemployment	Unemployment/underemployment

*The symbol “/” shows either term “or”. The categories of definitional words were determined by taking into account all possible variations in these words. For example, corruption, corrupt, and corrupting were all categorized into the corruption category.*

At third step each final category was entered into Atlat.ti, and Wildcards were used for category search. The wildcards were used by using the definition list compiled by judges. In category search through wildcards a search expression such as “poverty\*/deprivation / impoverishment\*” finds all passages with these words. The outcomes of this search are the quotations which are also called as category hits.<sup>24</sup> These hits constitute passages related to a specific category. So, we used paragraphs for examining category hits.

After gathering search results any misplacement of quotations in a category was checked. Only four quotations were

found with improper placement. We removed these misplaced category hits and placed them in proper category.

#### *Results of content analysis*

In the content analysis we used nine final categories (see table 2). The central question of interview was; what are the major domestic and international causes of terrorism in Pakistan? We identified 159 hits for this question. Table 2 shows that the lack of law enforcement was discussed the most (16 %) while illiteracy was mentioned the least (6%). The hit closer to the lack of law enforcement was poverty (15%). The next closest hits are Pakistan's participation in war on terror (13%), foreign involvement (12%), and unemployment (11%). The content analysis helped identify some initial causes of terrorism in Pakistan.

Table 2: Frequencies of codes (in number and percentage)

Categories	Total hits (raw)	Total hits per question (relative % )
What are the major domestic and international causes of terrorism in Pakistan?		
Corruption	15	9
Ethnic strife	16	10
Foreign involvement	19	12
Illiteracy	10	6
Lack of law enforcement	26	16
Pakistan's participation in war on terror	20	13
Poverty	24	15
Separatism	12	8
Unemployment	17	11
Total	159	100

*Each hit constitutes one respondent. N= 41.*

#### *Quantitative analysis*

In order to complete qualitative analysis we returned to the same respondents with a questionnaire containing the nine themes identified in qualitative analysis. The respondents were asked to rank each theme according to its relative importance as a cause of terrorism in Pakistan.

The respondents evaluated nine causes of terrorism, and ranked each cause in relative terms with respect to its influence on the terrorism phenomenon in Pakistan. We analyzed these rankings using Kendall's W or Kendall's coefficient of concordance; a non-parametric test for overall rank differences among different factors in a group of variables. The results have been shown in table 3.

#### *Results of quantitative analysis*

The results in table 3 show that the causes of terrorism have been ranked significantly different from each other. Kendall's W= 0.379 and chi-square = 124.155. The p-value (< 0.01) indicates the significance of test. Lack of law enforcement and poverty have been ranked as first and second respectively, and are significantly different from each other (summed ranks = 104 and 143, respectively).

Table 3: Descriptive statistics and rankings of the causes of terrorism

Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance for rank differences among organizational factors				
Kendall's W	Chi-square	df	Sig.	
0.379	124.155	8	0.000	
Rank orders				
Causes of terrorism	Summed Rank order <sup>a</sup>	Percent ranked (1)	Percent ranked in top 3	Percent ranked in top 5
Lack of law enforcement	104 (1)	44	77	91
Poverty	143 (2)	13	61	84
Pakistan's participation in war on terror	148 (3)	11	49	82
Foreign involvement	151 (4)	8	45	81
Unemployment	177 (5)	12	31	79
Corruption	255 (6)	5	10	28
Ethnic strife	273 (7)	2	10	20
Illiteracy	277 (8)	2	7	18
Separatism	291 (9)	2	10	17

<sup>a</sup> Summed rank order has been calculated by  $\sum (Frequency \times Rank)$  for each factor. The lowest score results in the highest-ranking (1), and the highest score results in the lowest ranking (9).

Pakistan's participation in war on terror, foreign involvement, and unemployment have been ranked as third, fourth, and fifth, respectively (summed ranks = 148, 151, and 177, respectively). The results indicate that the ranks two, three, and four appear as a ranking cluster next to poverty, which indicates that the respondents consider these factors equally important with a small difference. Corruption has been ranked significantly different from above cluster. The results also suggest that the importance of first five causes is significantly higher than the causes ranked as six to nine. In other words, it can be said that the respondents believe that lack of law enforcement, poverty, Pakistan's participation in war on terror, foreign involvement, and unemployment are the most important causes of terrorism in Pakistan.

### Discussion

Several causes of terrorism were identified in qualitative and quantitative analysis. However, five causes have been considered as the most important. Now we discuss these most important five factors.

#### *Lack of law enforcement*

Lack of law enforcement was ranked as the most important cause of terrorism. Law enforcement is defined as ensuring obedience to state laws, and is generally considered as a society's formal attempt to obtain compliance with the established rules, regulations, and laws of that society.<sup>25</sup> Law enforcement has much to do with terrorism as it is an important counterterrorism tool, and provides basis for responding acts of terrorism in a country.<sup>26</sup>

Unfortunately, the situation of law enforcement in Pakistan is very discouraging. According to the Rule of Law Index 2014<sup>27</sup>, Pakistani administrative agencies are ineffective in enforcing regulations. Out of 99 countries included in this index, Pakistan is ranked 95<sup>th</sup> for regulatory enforcement, and ranks last in the world for order and security. The index further highlights that the country's judicial system is slow and ineffective, and law violation is common. A publication of United States Institute of Peace indicates that Pakistan's law enforcement organizations are continuously failing to combat crime effectively, uphold the law, provide basic security to citizens, and fight growing militancy.<sup>28</sup> It can be stated that poor and ineffectual law enforcement in the country has leveled the playing field for terrorist activities.

Moreover, the country's antiterrorism legislation is full of flaws. A review published by Pakistan's Center for Research &

Security Studies<sup>29</sup> highlights many weaknesses of Pakistan's antiterrorism act. The first important shortcoming is that many detained terrorists are released without trial as their detention expires without any action. Among other shortcomings are; lack of a proper mechanism to collect and preserve authentic evidence to present in court, poor police system, absence of high security prisons for terrorist suspects, lack of security for the judges, prosecutors & witnesses, and lack of a monitoring mechanism over mosques & religious madrassas. These are some serious weaknesses of an antiterrorism act, and can be expected to encourage rather than preventing terrorism. Recently, the military courts have been established to deal with terrorists. In sum, an overall situation of law enforcement in the country can be thought an important cause of terrorism.

#### *Poverty*

Poverty has been ranked as the second most important cause of terrorism in Pakistan. It is generally believed that poverty, inequality, and poor economic conditions are among the root causes of terrorism.<sup>30</sup> Though contradictions exist in literature regarding the role of poverty in breeding terrorism, many world leaders have warned about the relationship between poverty and Islamic militancy.

Our respondents believe poverty as an important cause of terrorism because the ground reality is evident that in this country 60% of population lives below poverty line, if \$2 be the minimum daily wage<sup>31</sup>. Many poor parents are unable to feed and educate their children, and send them to madrasas (religious schools) to fulfill these basic needs. Madrasas are an important source of militancy in Pakistan.<sup>32</sup> Madrasas are not the only source of militancy emerging from poor economic conditions. The youth from poor families also directly join the militant groups to improve their living.<sup>33</sup> Thus, poverty causes the provision of an ample supply line of manpower for terrorist organizations.

#### *Pakistan's participation in War on Terror*

Among the most important causes of terrorism in Pakistan, a considerably high rank was assigned to participation in war on terror. Pakistan's participation in war on terror means Pakistan's support to US, UK, and NATO forces in global war on terror which was initiated by US in search of Usama bin Laden after the tragic incident of 9/11. Pakistan's support was "in terms of access (basing, sea and air access), intelligence support and logistics".<sup>34</sup>

Historically, Pakistan patronized these groups for achieving its objectives in Afghanistan and India, but Pakistan's participation in war on terror converted these groups into anti-Pakistan militants, and they started targeting the Pakistan army, police, infrastructure, and civilian population.<sup>35</sup> These anti-Pakistan groups organized themselves as Tehreek e Taliban, Pakistan (TTP). TTP claimed the responsibility of recent attacks on Karachi international airport. The militant group also owned responsibility of May 2011 attacks on Mehran naval airbase. Many other attacks of mass destruction have been claimed by this militant group. On June 15, 2014 Pakistan's joint military forces launched an offensive, Operation Zarb-e-Azb, against these militant groups.

#### *Foreign involvement*

Respondents believe that foreign intervention is the fourth most important cause of terrorism in Pakistan. It is common perception among Pakistani media and academic literature that foreign intelligence agencies are widely present in the country, and they are financing and training terrorists in anti-state activities. A research published in *The Washington Quarterly* indicates that "most private media outlets go so far as to find a joint 'CIA – RAW – Mossad' – in other words, U.S. – Indian – Israeli – hand in every terrorist attack that takes place inside Pakistan".<sup>36</sup> Other researchers such as Sajjad<sup>37</sup> and Dostani<sup>38</sup> also indicate the similar facts. A press article written by Scahill<sup>39</sup> in *The Nation* informs the widespread existence of Blackwater in the country. However, no solid evidence has been found about Blackwater's involvement in terrorist activities in Pakistan, but there is much such noise in media. Though foreign intervention can be a cause of terrorism in Pakistan, the country's media may have some impact on expert opinion.

#### *Unemployment*

Unemployment was believed to be the fifth most important cause of terrorism in Pakistan. Generally speaking, unemployment refers to the situation in which the people of working age are not working but looking for employment. Though there are some contradictions, strong evidence exists on the relationship between unemployment and terrorism.<sup>40</sup> Unemployment is a source of insurgency as it creates grievance among unemployed people. If the economies are unable to provide a reasonable employment, especially to low-skilled marginally unemployed people, recruitment in insurgent groups may be high. This argument comes

from opportunity cost approach which describes that supply of labor to terrorist groups is not legitimate in the presence of paid employment.<sup>41</sup> Referencing from existing research, Justino describes that

*“More recent studies have suggested that persistent levels of unemployment may make soldiering a means of earning a living when other (non-violent) means of livelihoods offer limited opportunities”.*<sup>42</sup>

Looking at these arguments it can be stated that a strong line of reasoning exists on the relationship between unemployment and terrorism.

Pakistan is a country with high unemployment rates. Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2013)<sup>43</sup> reports only 6% unemployment rate in the country, but the statistics don't reflect real employment situation. The researchers and academic scholars believe that these statistics don't show a connection between employment and other macroeconomic variables. This fact is further confirmed by International Labor Organization's Global Employment Trends 2014, which emphasized that Pakistan should create decent employment for young men and women.<sup>44</sup> CIA World Fact Book<sup>45</sup> also indicates that substantial underemployment exists in the country.

Unemployment, underemployment, and lack of decent jobs for qualified youth are among the causes of militant recruitment in Pakistan.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, a sense of helplessness and deprivation is promoting suicidal attempt and ideation among unemployed Pakistani youth.<sup>47</sup> In his address to Third Global HR Excellence Awards-2012, that time Federal Minister Dr. Farooq Sattar highlighted the connection between unemployment and terrorism in Pakistan.<sup>48</sup> So, there is less doubt that unemployment is an important cause of terrorism in Pakistan.

In sum, the results of this research indicate that lack of law enforcement, poverty, Pakistan's participation in war on terror, foreign involvement, and unemployment are the most important causes of terrorism. Understanding these causes is imperative for preventing terrorism in the country. To a great extent the rank order results are consistent with the discussion in qualitative analysis. The causes identified here are consistent with existing approaches on the causes of terrorism. However, a societal level analysis was required to identify causes specific to Pakistani society. We believe that an understanding of these causes can

provide useful policy implications for focusing on some specific areas of intervention.

### **Conclusion**

This research was conducted with the objective of exploring the most important causes of terrorism in Pakistan. Five most important causes were identified. Owing to our access to some very important personalities for gathering information on this critical issue we are the first to conduct a mix of qualitative and quantitative research based on expert opinion in Pakistan. This research provides insights into the causes of terrorism specific to Pakistan, but generalization is quite possible. Though such findings already exist in terrorism literature, a precise and systematic research with reference to Pakistan was lacking.

Lack of law enforcement enhances operational capability of terrorist groups as accountability is less likely to occur. There exists an anti-terrorism act in the country but unfortunately the implementation is very poor. A very alarming situation is that civil administration is unable or unwilling to invigilate the arrested terrorists in jails as they succeed to escape. In the absence of efficient law enforcement it can be said that other causes can easily take ground. If today foreign intervention and terrorist groups (internal or external) have deepened their roots in the country, this is majorly due to the negligence of law enforcement agencies. So, lack of law enforcement is not only a cause of terrorism per se, but also feeds other causes to grow.

To some extent our results are in line with economic deprivation hypothesis.<sup>49</sup> In our analysis economic deprivation is a source of facilitating the operations of terrorist groups and enables them to recruit and train the people they want. Our research does not show that poor economic conditions have created terrorist groups in the country. These groups may have other origins. They have used poverty as an opportunity. Reducing poverty may hinder terrorist activities by increasing militant groups' opportunity cost, but a complete eradication will require a crackdown of native and non-native militant groups.

Pakistan's participation in war on terror is reported as the third most important cause of terrorism, but the researchers and policy makers should take that result carefully. Participation in war on terror could not become an important cause of terrorism if Pakistan would have been prepared for the consequences of such war. In a situation where escaping from participating in war on

terror is not possible, the country should improve its ability to tackle with the adverse effects of such war.

As far as foreign involvement is concerned, there is much noise in media and public opinion, and it is a fact that in many terrorist attacks foreign citizens have been killed or arrested. However, local intelligence agencies are unable to provide solid evidence against foreign involvement in terrorist attacks. This is perhaps because of the sensitivity and strategic nature of the issue. Also, we should not ignore the corrupt bureaucracy and governments in the country that make possible for foreign elements to take ground.

However, no cause has a unilateral connection with terrorism, and focusing on a single factor may not suggest effective policy measures. Our research, thus, suggests a multifaceted but a more focused diagnostic into the complex phenomenon of terrorism in Pakistan.

Like many other studies our research is not free of limitations. This research explored a number of most important causes of terrorism in Pakistan, but a causal relationship between these factors and terrorism remains to be determined. In fact, our research was not aimed at testing theory, but to explore organizational factors specific to Pakistan. Future research can use theoretical insights for developing hypothetical relationship between these specific causes and terrorism. Based on our results, future research can also identify measures to bring improvement in these variables for reducing or eradicating terrorism in Pakistan.

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