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Issue Brief

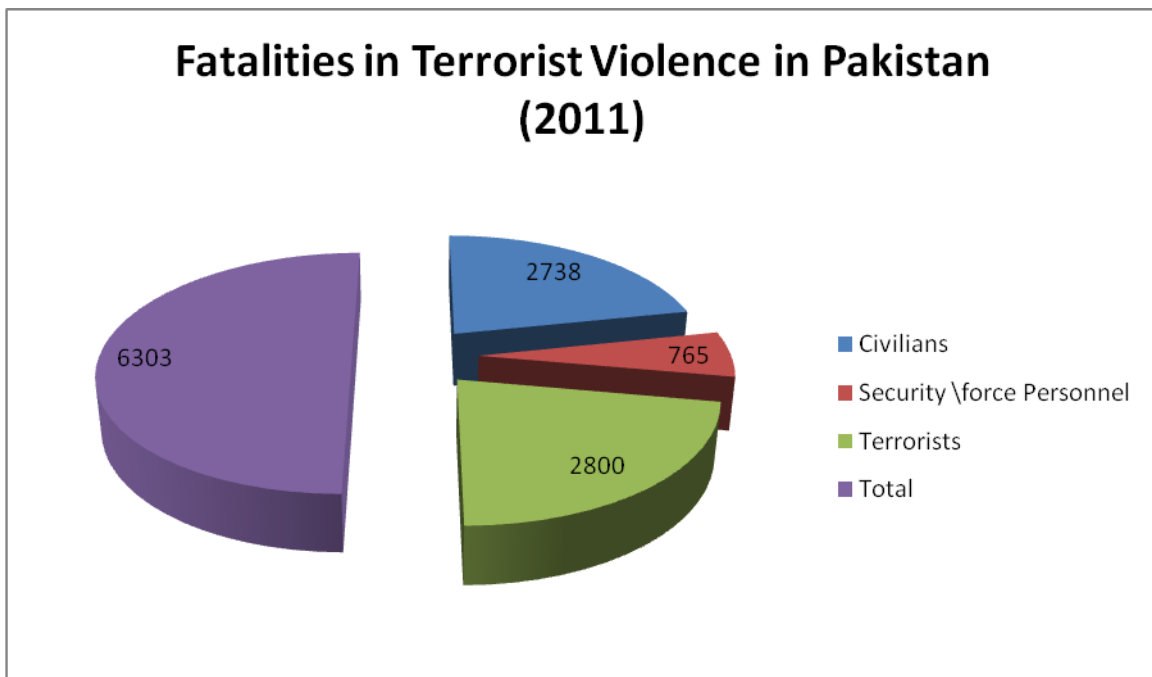
Counter-Terrorism Instruments

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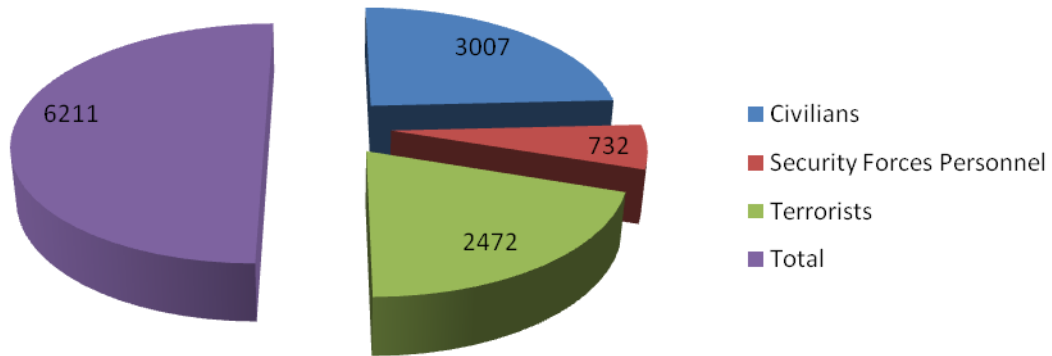
June 01, 2016

In the aftermath of the Karachi Airport attack on June 8, 2014, which resulted in the loss of the lives of 28 people including 10 militants, the decision to launch a broad well-targeted military operation against militants especially in North Waziristan was taken. Operation Zarb-e-Azb was launched on 15th June, 2014. Since its initiation, more than 5,000 militants have been killed and about 4,304 square kilometre area has been cleared by the security forces. The scope of the operation has been widened since its commencement about two years ago, as a result, we have seen a reduction in terrorist incidents in the country.

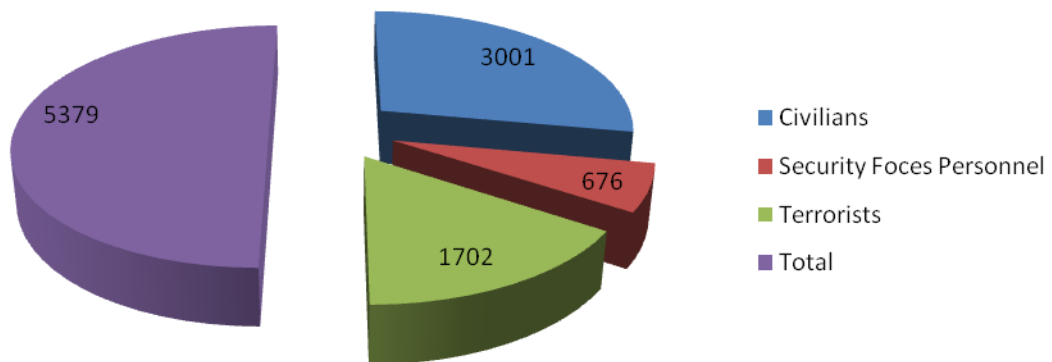
Graphical View of Fatalities in Terrorist Violence in Pakistan (2011-2015)



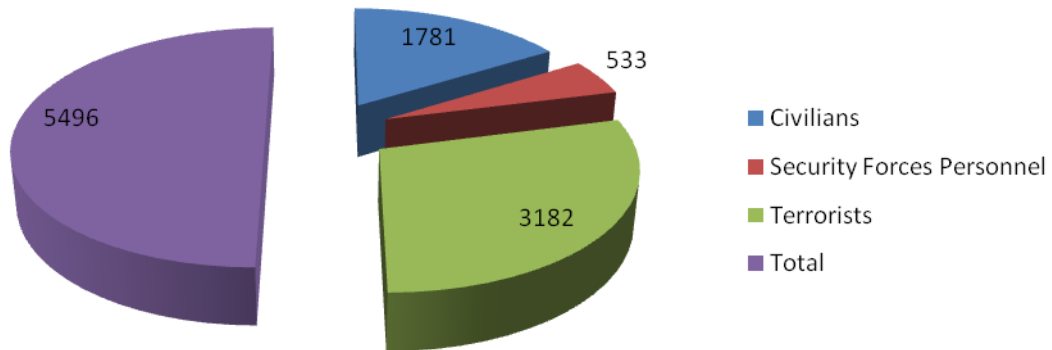
Fatalities in Terrorist Violence in Pakistan (2012)



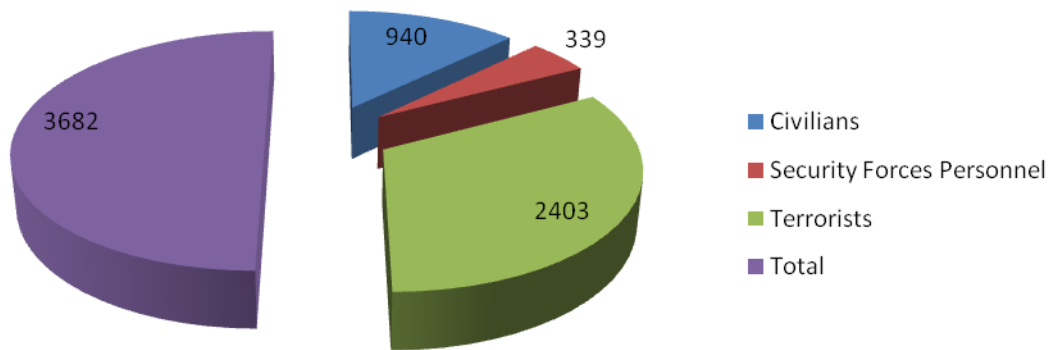
Fatalities in Terrorist Violence in Pakistan (2013)



Fatalities in Terrorists Violence in Pakistan in (2014)



Fatalities in Terrorists Violence in Pakistan (2015)



Source: South Asian Terrorism Portal.

The above data given in the graphs is before the launch of operation Zarb-e-Azb starting from 2011 till the end of 2015 (the post operation launch year). This data clearly indicates almost 50% reduction in civilian casualties and an increase in terrorist fatalities.

The list of military operations conducted by armed forces against the militants include Operation Rah-e-Haq (2007), Operation Sher Dil (August, 2008), Operation Black Thunderstorm (April, 2009), Operation Raah-e-Raast (May, 2009), Operation Rah-e-Nijat (June, 2009), Operation Brekhna (Nov, 2009) and Operation Zarb-e-Azb (June, 2014).

The most significant aspect of these operations until now is the targeting of the militants without any discrimination. It has been asserted that no terrorist on the Pakistani soil will be spared in these ongoing military operations. If this assertion is true, then without any doubt, this measure can be seen as a huge paradigm shift in the policy pursued by Pakistan, and certainly indicates that the Pakistan Army has not been selective in their operations.

Unlike previous operations, Operation Zarb-e-Azb has seen less casualties on part of military forces because of the strategy pursued. Primarily in the initial stage the targets were pounded by PAF fighter jets.

The methodology of Operation Zarb-e-Azb is also similar to the Operation Black Thunderstorm, Operation Raah-e-Raast and Operation Sher Dil. In all these operations, aerial support came first followed by the advancement of ground troops. This helped the ground forces to move into the area with force and effectiveness. Locals were evacuated from the area, and then the Army bombed TTP positions using heavy artillery, jets and helicopters. After strengthening their positions, the military moved in with ground forces.

Among all the major operations, Operation Rah-e-Rast was the most successful operation to date against militants in the sense that it effectively removed terrorists from Swat, ensuring return of displaced people back to their homes. During his visit to Gawadar Port on April 12, 2016, Army Chief General Raheel Sharif highlighted the success and importance of Operation Zarb-e-Azb when he stated, "Operation Zarb-e-Azb is not only an operation but a wholesome concept. It ultimately aims at breaking the syndicate of terrorism, extremism and corruption".

National Counter Terrorism Authority has taken a very bold initiative to formulate a strategy through a Task Force on a subject with the active input of all related Federal and Provincial Ministries/Departments/Organs along with other stakeholders. In this regard, a meeting was held on January 26, 2016 under the Chairmanship of National Coordinator, National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) to finalise the nominations for the Task Force. The mandate of the Task Force is to frame a comprehensive model law for orderly operations of NGO's/NPO's/Charities in Pakistan. Representatives of all stakeholders at various levels (i.e. Federal Level, Provincial Level and NGOs Level) attended the meeting.¹

The government is successfully running the National Action Plan with effective planning. Its implementation can be accelerated further only after further empowering the NACTA. One positive step towards the functioning of NACTA is that the organization is online with an operational website. Moreover the Senate is seeking an additional Rs.2bn for reactivation of NACTA through a resolution passed in the Senate on January 12, 2016.

A major flaw in the policy of combating terrorism in Pakistan is that it is entirely focused on military action. In the long run, besides military action some important steps in educational reforms, economic reforms and cultural integration are needed on an urgent basis to fill the vacuum. The outdated administrative system from the region of FATA must be removed so that the long awaited opportunity of administrative integration can be created. A significant investment in road networks, creating job opportunities and linking remote areas with other parts of Pakistan can be useful in this regard.

¹ <http://nacta.gov.pk/Events.htm>