



Pakistan's Intractable Corruption Provides Terror Groups Agency

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the challenges faced by Pakistan, a country in South Asia, with a focus on corruption as a major contributor to the ongoing instability, particularly in relation to terrorism. Corruption has created conditions that are conducive to terrorism by creating economic and political instability, weakening the rule of law, and undermining the legitimacy of government institutions. Terrorist groups, including the Taliban, TTP, and LeT, exploit public frustration to recruit vulnerable individuals, offer financial incentives, and social services. Corruption has led to a lack of accountability, lack of resources, and a breakdown of trust between the government and the people. Furthermore, corruption has contributed to the high turnover of government leadership in Pakistan. The paper also looks at the historical lack of public trust in Pakistan's government, marked by military coups, political instability, and economic challenges. The paper concludes that unless the issue of corruption is addressed, Pakistan will continue to face significant challenges that undermine its social, political, and economic landscape.

Keywords: corruption, instability, terrorism, donors, accountability, recruitment

INTRODUCTION

Pakistan, a country situated in South Asia, is known for its rich cultural heritage, diverse religious and ethnic groups, and a complicated political situation. Over the past few decades, Pakistan has faced significant challenges, including political instability, terrorism, and sectarian violence. These challenges have had a profound impact on the country's social, political, and economic landscape. Pakistan has been grappling with a rapid strengthening of the Taliban, a militant Islamic group that has carried out numerous attacks on civilians and security personnel in the country. The country has also been plagued by other terrorist groups, including Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), which have been involved in several attacks on civilians and security personnel. Furthermore, the attacks on educated classes and professionals, including medical doctors, have led to a significant brain drain in the country.

In this paper, we discuss the current situation in Pakistan as it relates to these issues, highlighting the key challenge of terrorism and analyzing the various factors contributing to the ongoing instability with a focus on the underlying and contributive problem of corruption.

Corruption has been a major concern for donors, with Pakistan ranked as one of the most corrupt countries in the world. According to the World Bank, Pakistan ranks in the bottom 10% of countries worldwide in terms of control of corruption. Specifically, Pakistan's control of corruption score was 20 out of 100, which indicates a high level of corruption in the country. (World Bank, 2021) The government has been accused of siphoning off aid money for personal

gain, with little being done to address the issue. This has resulted in aid being held up, as donors are hesitant to provide money that may be misused.

There is a complex relationship between corruption and terrorism in Pakistan. Corruption can create conditions that are conducive to terrorism by creating economic and political instability, weakening the rule of law, and undermining the legitimacy of government institutions. (Gabbay, 2014) When government officials engage in corrupt practices, they may divert resources away from public services such as education, healthcare, and law enforcement, leaving citizens feeling disenfranchised and disillusioned with the government.

CORRUPTION AS A CONTRIBUTOR TO TERROR

Increasingly terrorist groups in Pakistan including the Taliban, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) are exploiting public frustration (Ahmad, 2023), using it to recruit vulnerable individuals to their cause. These groups offer financial incentives, social services, and a sense of belonging to individuals who feel their needs are not being met by the government.

Funding

Corrupt Pakistani officials have long been known to siphon off funds meant for development or security and redirect them towards their own pockets. This practice deprives law enforcement agencies of the necessary resources to effectively combat terrorism, thereby emboldening terrorist groups. According to Transparency International:

Accumulated losses of up to Rs 254 million were papered with several instances of over-staffing and inefficient productivity in heavy mechanical industries. By 1976, the state had been hijacked by group and individuals trying to accumulate wealth by redistributing resources from public enterprises to private individuals. Public enterprises "became a device to extend political patronage to those that the regime favoured, to pay political debts, or to accumulate power". (Mirza, 2021)

Corrupt officials also collaborate with terrorist groups, providing them with financial support, weapons, and safe havens in exchange for favors or protection. This collaboration further undermines the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies and erodes public trust in the Pakistani government's ability to provide security and protect citizens from terrorist attacks.

Lack of Accountability

Corruption can lead to a lack of accountability, particularly in law enforcement agencies. This can result in a failure to apprehend or prosecute terrorists, which can further strengthen their grip on the region.

Collusion

Corrupt officials can often collude with terrorist groups to further their own interests. This can range from providing safe havens to terrorists, to turning a blind eye to their activities.

There have been several instances where corrupt officials in Pakistan have been found to have collaborated with terrorist groups. One such example is the case of Malik Ishaq, the founder of the extremist group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), who was arrested multiple times on charges of

terrorism, but was released due to lack of evidence or pressure from powerful groups. In 2015, he was finally killed in a police encounter, but not before he had paperedly received support from some police officials. (BBC News, 2015)

In addition to providing support to terrorist groups, corrupt officials in Pakistan have also been known to turn a blind eye to their activities. For example, in the case of the Taliban, it has been papered that some officials in the Pakistani military and intelligence agencies have provided them with safe havens and allowed them to operate freely in certain parts of the country. This has undermined the efforts of law enforcement agencies to tackle the problem of terrorism and eroded public trust in the government's ability to provide security.

Overall, the collusion between corrupt officials and terrorist groups in Pakistan has been a major contributing factor to the ongoing instability in the country. It has weakened state institutions and undermined the rule of law, making it more difficult to combat terrorism and maintain public safety.

Recruitment

Corruption can lead to a breakdown of trust between the government and the people. This can create fertile ground for terrorist groups to recruit disaffected individuals who feel marginalized by the state.

Weak Institutions

Corruption can weaken state institutions, including the judiciary, police, and military. This can create a power vacuum that terrorist groups can exploit.

Furthermore, the insidious disruption of corruption over a long time, which has been the case in Pakistan, erodes the legitimacy and effectiveness of state institutions, making it more difficult to enforce the rule of law and maintain security. If the police or other law enforcement agencies are perceived as corrupt, they may struggle to win the trust of the public to gather intelligence about potential terrorist threats.

All of this corruption leads directly to a high turnover of government leadership, which is precisely the case here, as the following section details.

HISTORICAL LACK OF PUBLIC TRUST IN PAKISTAN'S GOVERNMENT

Given its complex political history in which the Pakistan government has experienced periods of military rule and democratic transitions, an ongoing degree of skepticism exists among some Pakistanis regarding the government's ability to deliver on its promises.

A look back at the history of Pakistan leadership since it gained independence from British colonial rule on August 14, 1947, provides clarity on the public's lack of trust. Since then, the country has experienced a tumultuous political history, marked by military coups, political instability, and economic challenges.

Pakistani Leadership a Revolving Door

In the early years after independence, Pakistan was governed by a parliamentary system with a prime minister as the head of government. However, this system was short-lived, as the

country's first prime minister, Liaquat Ali Khan, was assassinated in 1951, and subsequent governments were marred by corruption and political instability. In 1958, General Ayub Khan led a military coup and declared martial law. He ruled the country as president for the next decade, during which time he implemented major economic and infrastructure reforms, but also restricted political freedoms and suppressed dissent. In 1969, General Yahya Khan took power in another military coup and suspended the constitution. He presided over a disastrous election in 1970, which led to the secession of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and a devastating war with India.

In 1971, a civilian government was installed under the leadership of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Bhutto introduced a new constitution that established a parliamentary system and gave more power to the provinces. Finally, a sense of hope emerged among the people, who believed they finally had a government who cared about its citizens. However, Bhutto's government was plagued by allegations of corruption and authoritarianism, and in 1977, General Zia-ul-Haq launched another military coup and imposed martial law.

Zia-ul-Haq ruled Pakistan until his death in a plane crash in 1988. During his regime, he introduced a series of Islamization measures, including the imposition of sharia law, and cracked down on political opposition. In 1988, civilian rule was restored with the election of Benazir Bhutto, the daughter of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. However, her government was plagued by corruption and inefficiency, and she was ousted in a military coup in 1990. The 1990s saw a series of short-lived civilian governments, interspersed with military interventions. In 1999, General Pervez Musharraf launched a coup and declared himself president. Musharraf ruled Pakistan for the next decade, during which time he implemented economic and social reforms, but also faced accusations of human rights abuses and suppressing political opposition.

New Promises, Same Failures

This story continues in a similar fashion until the present. Imran Khan was elected as Prime Minister of Pakistan in 2018 with a promise to fight corruption and improve the economy. Then, abruptly in 2022, he was ousted, a move he blames on US involvement but which the US strongly denies. (Saifi, 2022) Khan's government had faced criticism on various issues such as inflation, unemployment, and governance and economic mismanagement.

Pakistan's new leader, Shehbaz Sharif, "called for 'unity' and vowed to repair the country's damaged economy after he was sworn in as Prime Minister ...following the ouster of Imran Khan. Former opposition leader Sharif, 70, is set to serve as Prime Minister until the next general election, expected in 2023." (Saifi, 2022)

Intrigue, Murder Attempts, and Legal Charges Don't Deter Khan from Trying to Regain Power

It's not easy to find many Pakistanis who agree on future pathways to a corruption-free nation when the former Prime Minister is shot by a radical terrorist as happened in November of 2022, which served to intensify the injustice felt by members of his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party, or PTI. Since November the PTI have battled police in escalating street fights using slingshots and tear gas. Khan, who is waging a comeback, accuses rival politicians of pulling the strings, including the current incumbent Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

“In addition to bullets, Khan has also been hit by charges—143 over the past 11 months, by his count, including corruption, sedition, blasphemy, and terrorism, which he claims have been concocted in an attempt to disqualify him from politics.” (Campbell, 2023)

RADICALIZATION

Corruption can also contribute to the conditions that drive Pakistanis to join terrorist organizations. Some individuals may turn to extremist groups as a way of challenging the existing power structure and expressing their dissatisfaction with the status quo.

Corruption often exacerbates economic and social inequality, which can create fertile ground for terrorist recruitment. When people feel that they are not getting their fair share of resources and opportunities, they may become more vulnerable to extremist ideologies that promise a better future. In some cases, terrorist groups may exploit these grievances to recruit disaffected individuals.

The Taliban's recruitment strategy in Pakistan is complex and varied, but it generally relies on a combination of ideological appeal, social networks, and coercion.

One of the keyways in which the Taliban recruits' followers in Pakistan is by appealing to their ideological beliefs. The Taliban presents itself as a defender of Islam and a champion of traditional values, and it often frames its actions as a response to perceived injustices against Muslims. This narrative can be particularly compelling to young men who feel marginalized or disenfranchised by the political and social systems in Pakistan.

In addition to ideological appeal, the Taliban also relies on social networks to recruit followers. This can include family and community ties, as well as connections to religious or educational institutions. The Taliban often targets young men who are looking for a sense of purpose and belonging, and it may offer them a sense of camaraderie and brotherhood that they may not find elsewhere.

Finally, the Taliban also uses coercion and violence to recruit followers in Pakistan. This can include threats, intimidation, and even kidnapping and assassination. In areas where the Taliban has a strong presence, people may feel that they have no choice but to comply with the group's demands to avoid reprisals.

HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES

Finally, corruption in Pakistan can be linked to human rights abuses, which have fueled resentment at and the same time support for terrorist groups. With security forces involved in corruption and other illegal activities, this has led to the mistreatment of innocent civilians and a sense of injustice that can, and often is, exploited by extremist groups.

Corruption comes in many forms, and Pakistani officials have been criticized for a range of human rights abuses in recent years (U.S. State Department, 2022) including:

Attacks on Educated Classes and Professionals

For many years Pakistan has been facing a significant brain drain due to the ongoing security situation in the country. In recent years, there have been numerous attacks on educated classes

and professionals, including medical doctors, which have contributed to this phenomenon. These attacks have not only resulted in loss of precious lives but also pushed many highly skilled professionals to leave the country in search of safer and more stable environments.

For example, in 2014, a group of militants attacked the Army Public School in Peshawar, killing over 140 people, mostly students. The attack shocked the entire nation and highlighted the vulnerability of educational institutions. Similarly, in 2016, a bombing at a hospital in Quetta killed over 70 people, including many lawyers and medical professionals. These attacks, among others, have created a climate of fear and insecurity for professionals in Pakistan, leading many to seek opportunities abroad.

As a result, Pakistan has experienced a significant brain drain, with many highly skilled professionals, including doctors, engineers, and scientists, leaving the country in search of better opportunities and safer environments. The loss of these professionals has had a detrimental impact on Pakistan's economy, as well as its healthcare and education systems. Furthermore, the loss of human capital has hindered the country's progress in many fields, including science and technology, and has made it difficult for Pakistan to compete globally in terms of innovation and development.

The attacks on educated classes and professionals in Pakistan have had a profound impact on the country, leading to a significant brain drain and loss of valuable human capital. While the government has taken steps to address the security situation, more needs to be done to create a safe and stable environment for professionals and to prevent further brain drain.

Extrajudicial Killings

Pakistani security forces have been accused of engaging in extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances of individuals suspected of terrorism, insurgency, or even drug offenses. (Gabbay, *The Treatment of Drug Offenses in Sharia Based Countries: The Case of Pakistan*, 2014) Many of these individuals are held in secret detention centers without access to legal representation or family members.

Freedom of Expression

The Pakistani government has been criticized for restricting freedom of expression, particularly with regard to critical or dissenting voices. Journalists, human rights activists, and others who express critical views have been subjected to harassment, intimidation, and violence.

Religious Discrimination

Religious minorities, including Hindus, Christians, and Ahmadis, have papered discrimination and persecution in Pakistan, including forced conversions and blasphemy charges.

Gender-Based Violence

Pakistan has a high incidence of gender-based violence, including honor killings, domestic violence, and sexual assault. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable, with inadequate legal protection and social stigmatization discouraging papering of such crimes (Human Rights Watch, 2022)

Discrimination Against Marginalized Groups

Marginalized groups, including Dalits, transgender individuals, and refugees, face discrimination and marginalization in Pakistan. Many are denied access to education, healthcare, and other basic services. A glaring example is the steady stream of abuse heaped upon Shia Muslims in Pakistan. Individually, and as a group, Shias have faced persecution and violence from terrorist groups and others, with targeted attacks on mosques, religious gatherings, and educational institutions.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Pakistan is a country with a rich cultural heritage and diverse religious and ethnic groups, but it has been plagued by significant challenges, including political instability, terrorism, and sectarian violence. Corruption has been identified as a major factor contributing to these ongoing issues. It creates conditions that are conducive to terrorism, weakens the rule of law, and erodes public trust in government institutions. Pakistan's historical lack of public trust in its government has also played a significant role in the ongoing political instability. Addressing corruption and restoring public trust in government institutions is crucial for Pakistan to effectively tackle the challenges it faces and ensure a stable and prosperous future for its citizens.

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