

Perceptions Towards Terrorist Activities in Pakistan: A Case Study of Madrassa Background Students

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Abstract: The present study aims at understanding the perception towards terrorist activities by Madrassa students in Pakistan. Terrorist activities have influenced different groups of Pakistani society in a very harsh way. Pakistan is one of the biggest victims of terrorist activities after the start of US lead war on terror. Fifteen case studies and three Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were sampled from Gujrat city, Pakistan for this study. The results showed that majority of the cases and participants perceive terrorist activities negative for the national interest and interest of local people. Few respondents perceived terrorist activities against specific places (cinema, CD shop, etc.) promoting vulgarity according to their point of view. It was noted that majority of the respondents were against the killing of humans for achieving any positive or negative objective. They also perceived terrorist activities against government as a loss of common people, property and on the basis of religion against Islam and humanity. They perceived that there may be some external powers which are involved in terrorist activities in Pakistan. It was suggested to tackle the issue by promoting respect to humanity, tolerance, upgrading security and acceptability.

Key words: Perceptions • Terrorist Activities • Religion • Madrassa • Students • Gujrat • Pakistan

INTRODUCTION

Terrorist activities have a long history. It was firstly used by the Jewish against Roman Empire as early as 66-72 A.D [1]. These small Jewish groups were named as *Zealots*. The second group which used terrorist activities was *Assassin*. It was a group of Shi'ite Muslims sect called *Nizari Isma'ilis*. They used to kill the enemies even at the price of their own life. They created fear among the enemies through targeted killing of their opposition leaders [2]. These two groups considered it as a divine duty to use terrorist activities against enemy.

Arab-Israel and Palestinian conflict gave birth to new strategies of terrorism like hijacking the airplanes. In 1960's Cuba supported the terrorist groups from all over the world [3]. This was the era when terrorism became a global phenomenon rather than local as it was before. Terrorist activities were used as a tool for ending colonialism in mid of the 20th century [4].

The Palestinian cause became the main focus of terrorist activities after the end of colonial period in 1960's. Arab defeat from Israel has given birth to a new kind of terrorism which was religion based terrorism. 1970s

was the era of hijacking airplanes. In 1980s Americans supported Muslim Jihad of Afghanistan against Soviet Union. Mujahidin were given complete support and were provided modern weapons. This war was considered as a holy war by Muslims and Muslims from all over the world participated in it especially the students of *Maddaris* took part in war and were called as Taliban. Osama Bin Laden also came from Saudi Arabia and was called a hero by the West. At that time Americans and West left the issue unresolved in Afghanistan. In 1990s former mujahidin and students of the same *Madrassa* started Taliban movement with the preaching of Islam which was also followed in Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf [5]. After the first attack on world trade center in 1993, American turned against the Muslim Mujahidin [6]. Second attack of the terrorists on world center on 9/11 gave birth to a new conflict [7]. War on terrorism started and led by US against Al-Qaida changed the world scenario. American attacked Afghanistan and terrorist activities started in the area, as history of theoretical attempt to understand the terrorism was derived from sub-discipline of collective violence in the discipline of political science [8].

Terrorist activities were not a new phenomenon for Pakistan prior to 9/11. World had not realized the sacrifices of the Pakistani nation [9]. Terrorist attacks, targeted killings, sectarian violence and drone attacks had all contributed to the post 9/11 death toll in Pakistan [10].

The tactic of suicide first came into view in 2002 in Karachi, in a controversial suicide bombing that led to the killing of 14 people, including 11 French engineers of the state firm DCN, involved in the sale of Agosta submarines to the Pakistani army and *Lal masjid* operation against radical clerics in July 2007 and assassination of Benazir Bhutto in 2008 further intensified terrorist activities [11]. Terrorism occurs with high scale of cultural detachment, relational detachment, inequality and functional independence-together [12].

Pakistani society faced great threat of terrorism in the recent decade. Terrorists hit different sections of the society. It was not only state which was affected due to all these activities rather common man in the country also had very worse impacts on his life. It also damaged the economy of the country which resulted more problems for people of Pakistan. Pakistan had to bear a loss of \$10 billion by becoming an ally on war on terror [13].

Objectives of the Study:

- To explore the demographic characteristics of the respondents.
- To find out the perception towards terrorist attacks against specific places where un-islamic activities are performed.
- To explore the perception towards terrorist activities against State/Government.
- To find out the perception regarding terrorist activities on the basis of beliefs system.
- To explore the perception regarding future of terrorist activities

MATERIALS AND METHODS

For the present study fifteen respondents for case studies and twenty four participants for focus group discussion were selected through snow ball and volunteer sampling. Because sampling frame of the Muddrassa background students was not available. Students were selected after the informed consent. Sample was selected from Gujrat city on the basis of the characteristics like Muddrassa background students, lived there at least three years, living in Gujrat city from two years, having age between 20 to 40 years. An interview guide was

administered by the researchers which contained different parts like a) the demographic characteristics of the respondents b) perceptions regarding, i) terrorist activities against specific place, ii) terrorist activities against state/government, iii) terrorist activities on the basis of religion/sects/belief and iv) future of terrorist activities. Further the data was analyzed by using qualitative method.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents:

The duration of stay at *Maddrassa* of the respondents was ranging from three years to seven years. The respondents were from district Gujrat and their age was ranging 20 to 40 years. Monthly family income of the respondent was ranging from Rs. 20,000 to 80,000. Two Respondents were unmarried and rest of 18 was enjoying their married life with their family. Their number of children was ranging from six to 15, living in a nuclear and joint family system. All the respondents were living in the vicinity of Gujrat.

Terrorist Attacks Against Specific Places Where Un-Islamic Activities Are Performed:

The participants argued that attacks and blast on CD shops and cinemas were not fair and external powers were involved in it. They discussed that youth was spoiled through watching porn sites in internet cafes but innocent people who come there for study work can be killed in blasts there too so it was wrong.

The respondents argued about attack of *Lal Masjid* on massage center that that it was not fair in their point of view. They stated that it was against national interest of Pakistan. Massage center was a Chinese investment and China had good relations with Pakistan. Women who were doing massage were not Muslims. They argued that if a *Malshia* (Traditional expert of massage in subcontinent) can do massage why not women can, as he said verbatim as "*Agar malshia massage kar sakta hey to phir aurtain kiyoun nahi*"

Translation: If traditional massage expert can do massage why not women can do.

Respondents stated that from Islamic point of view owning Western culture and exhibition of body parts are wrong. But terrorist activities should not be done instead it should be condemned. They said it was not necessary to stop these ceremonies through terrorist activities. This is something that government should stop as one of

them said verbatim as: "*hukoomat ko yeh cheezain rokni chahyain deshat gardi ki karwaion sey nahi roka ja sakta*".

Translation: Government should stop these things; it cannot be stopped through terrorist activities.

Terrorist Activities Against State/Government: Government uses power or force to create terror among people [14]. Participants were against the implementation of Islamic laws through terrorist activities. They discussed that in General Zia's time period some Islamic laws were introduced but it was not result of terrorist activities. They discussed it was not fair according to Islamic point of view, one said verbatim as: "*yeh to hukoomat ka kaam hey Islam mein to yeh qatal e na haq hey*".

Translation: It is duty of government and in Islam, it is unjust killing.

Respondents stated that Muslims had system of caliphate in the past too but it was not brought through bomb blasts. They argued that caliphate is not something one can get through coercive power as one of the respondents said verbatim as: "*pehley jo khalifa houiy woh zabardasti nahi baney khilafat to shoura key zariye aati hey*".

Translation: Caliphs before did not come into office through coercive means, caliphate is brought by *shoura* (executive council of prominent Muslims).

The respondents viewed it as a wrong approach. They said killing someone is not a legal or right way. Through damaging government assets how much Islam had been implemented by the government they questioned.

The respondents response towards relations of Pakistan government and Taliban was that in Zia's era Taliban were used on the name of Jihad. They were called Mujahidin against Russia and now they are Taliban. Respondent argued that Taliban had good relations with Generals in the past.

Respondents stated that now government did not have good relation with Taliban. They argued that if government does not change its behavior then relation will spoil because they are not ready for table talk with them. Government uses power or force to create terror among people [14].

The respondents viewed *Lal Majid* revolt against government as illegal and unfair. They said that one of

lal masjid leader was trying to escape in *Burqa* which showed their false commitments. They also viewed actions of Sufi Muhammad and his companions wrong and illegal.

While asked about Media Coverage of terrorist activities against specific places respondents said they do not give proper coverage. One of them said verbatim as: "*agar to police, Masjid ya Mizar par par ho phir to coverage daitey hein laikin mekhsoos jaghon dhmakey ko sahi terah bharooor coverage nahi daitey*".

Translation: If it was in mosque, shrine or police then they give proper coverage but when there was a blast in specific places with un-Islamic practices they do not rightly provide proper coverage.

Respondents said role of media in providing coverage for terrorist activities against government is appreciable. Many journalists were killed during this duty. About specific places respondents said media should provide proper coverage to highlight this issue.

They said weak security points of the government should be displayed and media should highlight both positive and negative points. They only highlighted negative points which were not fair. For highlighting terrorist activities against specific places respondents suggested that government should use media and they should appoint intelligence agencies to provide information to media.

When asked about solution of terrorist activities against specific places respondent suggested that policy should be drawn and people in uniform should be appointed for security. For solution of terrorist activities against government respondents suggested that security measures should be proper. For permanent solution there should be check on government officials. People should be provided their basic rights. People become militants due to poverty according to respondents.

Respondents suggested that community members should use mobile for informing media to tell if CD shop or cinema had pornographic materials. For highlighting issue of terrorist activities against government they said people can do this through media. Media is the medium of learning for all people. Domestic terrorism is a threat to Pakistan's security and policy response [13] and it affects on FDI, GDP, tourism and social sector [15].

Pakistani refusal to capture FATA militants will affect the Chinese core interest. It was argued that little attention was given to this due to attacks of NATO on Pakistan army post which killed 24 soldiers; Pakistan and its consequences [16].

Terrorist Activities on the Basis of Beliefs System:

Participants viewed it very wrong and against humanity and Islam. They discussed that there was no benefit of fighting like this. Respondent explained *Mula'n* urged emotions against others. If it was not possible to be together on all issues then they should be together on basic teachings. Respondents argued that sects were always there but killing like this was new. One of them said verbatim as: "*firqa wariyat to shuroo sey hey laikin Islam mein khooon bahana ghalat hey*".

Translation: Sectarianism was always there but blood shedding is not fair in Islam.

Respondents said they kill each other when they say something wrong about each other. Leaders only urge emotions fighters are followers as one of them said verbatim as: "*yeh logon ko qatal o gharat par ubhartey hein aur khud nahi lartey*".

Translation: They urge people for killing and do not fight themselves.

The respondents perceived attacks on religious places a crime against humanity. They said it was against our religious teaching. Our religion teaches to protect holy places whether they were holy places of Muslims or non Muslims.

The respondents argued that everyone wants to perform religious rituals according to his own beliefs. They should be allowed to perform religious activities as their scholars told them. They explained it was not possible to stop people from performing religious rituals through terrorist activities. As he said verbatim as: "*mazhabi sargarmi dehshat gardi key zariye nahi roki ja sakti*".

Translation: Religious activities cannot be stopped through terrorism.

Respondents argued that killing someone on blossomy act without trial was not fair. They said people become blind on the basis of belief. Respondents suggested that they should go to Supreme Court for the trial of such individual.

Future of Terrorist Activities: Respondents said that till law was enforced these activities would continue. It was not possible to stop all these till someone was there to stop them. Respondents argued Government procedure of investigation was not fair. There can be some external pressures. After death of Bin Laden, US want further for

hunting other Al Qaida officials; this will increase anti American element in Pakistan. This aspect and drone attacks will increase terrorist activities in Pakistan [17].

People or groups who want separate and independent land from external powers launch different form of movements. Difference in distribution of wealth, inequality and differences of power, prestige, resources in social groups, deprived groups struggle against the system and they become terrorists. Lack of democratic system also leads terrorist activities like political terrorism [18]. The most common cause amongst all was poverty and economic exploitation of people. A society with poverty, hunger, low rate of literacy had more chances to rapidly flourish terrorist activities [19].

CONCLUSION

Perceptions about terrorist activities against specific places; where some un-Islamic activities were performed shown, that only few respondents perceived it as positive and good strategy to end vulgarity. Most of the respondents perceived it as negative and unfair activity. But it was also noted that most of the respondents perceived vulgarity as against the tradition of society and they wanted legal action against it. Terrorist activities against state/government were perceived as a negative activity. Only few respondents perceived it as positive because they think that it was reaction of people against government policies. Most of the respondents perceived attacks on government assets as attacks on people's assets. Terrorism had a diverse affect on social, economic; legal structures of the society; it stops whole process of development [20] and targeted schools during war against terrorism in Pakistan [21].

There were multiple factors which were playing their role to promote terrorist activities in Pakistan like to some extent external powers to weaken Pakistan as a nation, vulgarity, wrong government policies, poverty and lack of education. It was suggested by the respondents that government policies should be changed for the rule of law and providing rights to people for solution of the issue. Another suggestion was implementation of already existing Islamic laws in true spirit. Some also suggested that unemployment, vulgarity and poverty should be eliminated from the society for the solution of the issue. Terrorist activities can be minimized by creating respect to humanity, tolerance, acceptability of other views and religious scholars should promote harmony as suggested upgrading security in Pakistan [22]. Terrorist activities will

come to an end soon. Peace will win and in the end terrorist activities will get to an end through negotiations. Government will be able to defeat terrorists in the future.

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