

A critical Appraisal of Pakistan's Military Operations in Swat and Waziristan

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Abstract:

This study aimed to critically appraise Pakistan's military operations in Swat and Waziristan. These military operations were foreshadowed by Pakistan's indulgence in the war against terror. The military operation in Swat was solely carried out by the armed forces of Pakistan while in Waziristan, a joint operation was carried out by the armed forces of Pakistan along with the American forces. These operations were conducted for territorial clearance and punishment of the militants. The strategy was totally traditional and population-centric and no hybrid war technology, such as the grey-zone tactics, was used to pinpoint the militants and their sanctuaries, that's why the human and economic cost of these military operations was very high. About 3 million people internally displaced in Swat, Waziristan and in the adjacent areas of FATA. In these operations, 32490 militants were claimed to be killed, 8832 military

and police personnel were martyred, 23372 civilians, 185 social activists and 63 journalists lost their lives. In Waziristan, the drone strikes, carried out by the CIA, particularly the double-tap and signature strikes resulted in killing of civilians either attending funerals or helping the injured. Neither the military nor the political leadership had any clear plan for the compensation of the families who lost their relatives or their property was damaged in these operations. These operations were successful in territorial clearance that improved the strength of the military forces in war tactics. However, these operations were carried out without developing a civilian-centered counter narrative, therefore, trust erosion both at national and international levels, high degree of hate against the armed forces, fear and insecurity, high crime rate and anti-state sentiments were the consequent symptoms of these military operations.

Introduction

The contemporary intra-state conflicts are usually fueled by the prevailing social and economic inequality, discriminatory access to resources, state failure and human rights violations, which can never be resolved through deterrence strategies or preventive measures (Avis, 2016; Tsarenko, Bundzelova & Olah, 2022). State failure is usually reflected in the form of bad governance, injustice, lack of social welfare and human rights violations (Adnan, 2012). The modern state concept is entirely centered upon social welfare but still some states in the developing world are security states. One manifestation of the concept of security state is spending major portion of the state budget on security of the state from foreign aggression while the second manifestation centers upon state-society relationship. The later concept is further divided into two categories; one is associated with economic security while the other one is associated with political security (Ahmad, 2011; Ali, 2010). The economic security could be ensured by guaranteeing basic needs to all citizens of the state while political security is to ensure that all property and human rights are protected. The modern concept of security has moved from state security to human security. It means that all security measures must center upon the citizens' lives and their nurturing.

There are two major strategic discourses that proved to be either destructive or result oriented for states with previous history of internal turmoil. These discourses are the security discourse and the peace discourse (Webel and Galtung, 2007). Pakistan, since 1947, has been working on

the security discourse while neglecting the peace discourse. The security discourse is a victory-oriented concept that requires huge human and financial resources. States, engaging their forces in providing security to people and their property, spend millions of dollars every year while the objective remain unachieved. In security centered operations peace becomes a virtual impossibility. Victory is an unmet objective of the military forces that can never be gained rather celebrated. Criminals or extremists can never be obliterated completely from the society unless criminal mindset is changed, however, the later objective is embedded in peace-oriented efforts not security-centered operations.

This research study focuses on the military operations carried out in Swat and Waziristan against the terrorists. The two operations were critically evaluated with the aim to identify strategic distractions and alternates for policy improvement and refinement. The following passage firstly the question of a need for a counter narrative was answered with more focus on national security capability and technical acquaintance. Secondly, a brief outlook of the two operations and their human and economic costs were discussed. Thirdly, a comprehensive comparative analyses were carried out on the two military operations with more focus on administrative and strategic bloomers that increased the cost of the two operations.

Lack of Building a Counter-Narrative

The incident of 9/11 was abruptly followed by a strong propaganda against the Muslim world

in general and the Taliban in particular. On every news channel of the world there were news about Islamic fundamentalism or Islamic extremism to drive the entire world towards a common ground to stand united and firm against the enemy (Corbin, 2017). The electronic and print media was completely overwhelmed with information of terrorism and extremism. This constant reverberation of information of terrorism and extremism was basically aimed to build a narrative against Taliban. With every single connotation the word “Islam” was associated to make it Islamic because Taliban in Afghanistan were all Muslims and they were the believers of Islam. Fundamentalism became Islamic fundamentalism, extremism became Islamic extremism and terrorism became Islamic terrorism to develop a perception among the people that every terrorist act in the world was underpinned by Islamic ideology. This was basically a psychological overhauling of the global community before raiding Afghanistan or starting a war. This narrative was very much successful in drifting the entire world against Taliban. This war was highly adorned by the slogan of war against terror.

The global community was imbued with the narrative of war against terror and the Americans were successful in building a narrative that obsessed the entire world (Gallova, Olah and Kamit et al., 2022). Similarly, there was a real need of developing a counter narrative by the Pakistan military forces and the intelligence agencies before starting operations in Swat and Waziristan. Developing a counter narrative was highly needed to psychologically prepare the common citizens for a war where the enemy was common. According to Rudrum (2005), a narrative is a cohesive binding of concepts that conveys a deep meaning related to the social, religious and cultural norms of the people. A narrative is basically a representation of a series of events in which the meaning is interpreted in such a way that attracts the attention of the common people (Braddock and Horgan, 2016). According to Klein (1999) a narrative consists of some preconception of events that depend more on the audiences’ tendencies with strong implicit and explicit meanings. On the other hand, a counternarrative is the representation of some events that counter the previous narrative or events or the propaganda. According to Tuck and Silverman (2016) a coun-

ternarrative is a coherent building up of a story that offers a positive alternative to the current or previous propaganda or narrative.

Before starting the military operations in Swat and Waziristan, two things needed to be prioritized; one was to deconstruct the narrative of the terrorists and the second one was to construct own narrative against the narrative of the terrorists. Two attempts were made to develop a counternarrative to tackle the extremists and terrorists in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, however, these attempts were failed to produce the expected results of organizing the entire nation against a common cause. The first attempt was the concept of “enlightened moderation” produced by the Musharaf’s regime to bring awareness among people about liberalism and liberal thinking. This narrative was deconstructed by the Taliban and declared it a western secular ideology to contaminate our mind with. The second counternarrative on the name of “*Paigham-e-Pakistan*” (the message of Pakistan) was developed as a consolidated and comprehensive counter narrative in collaboration of Higher Education Commission and the Council of Islamic Ideology (Amin and Siddiq, 2017). This was basically a document that consisted of signatures of different religious scholars belonging to different sects by disapproving the extremist violent interpretation of the Islamic ideology. This document consisted of verses from the glorious *Quran* and *Hadiths* that interpreted and refuted violence and extremism in the name of Islam. This counternarrative did not produce the expected results because it prevailed only in the form of a document. Contrary to the narrative of *Paigham-e-Pakistan*, the Taliban produced their own *fatwas* (decrees) delivered and authenticated by religious scholars that legalized the killings of the Americans and those in alliance by any means. Based on these failed efforts of the state and its intelligence to produce a strong counternarrative, still there is ambiguity among the common flock on the war against terror. Many among them still view the military operations of Swat and Waziristan a double game played by Pakistan army on the dictatorship of the Americans. This perception has eroded the trust of the common people on the military forces of Pakistan and fueled a degree of hate against Pakistan army in these areas.

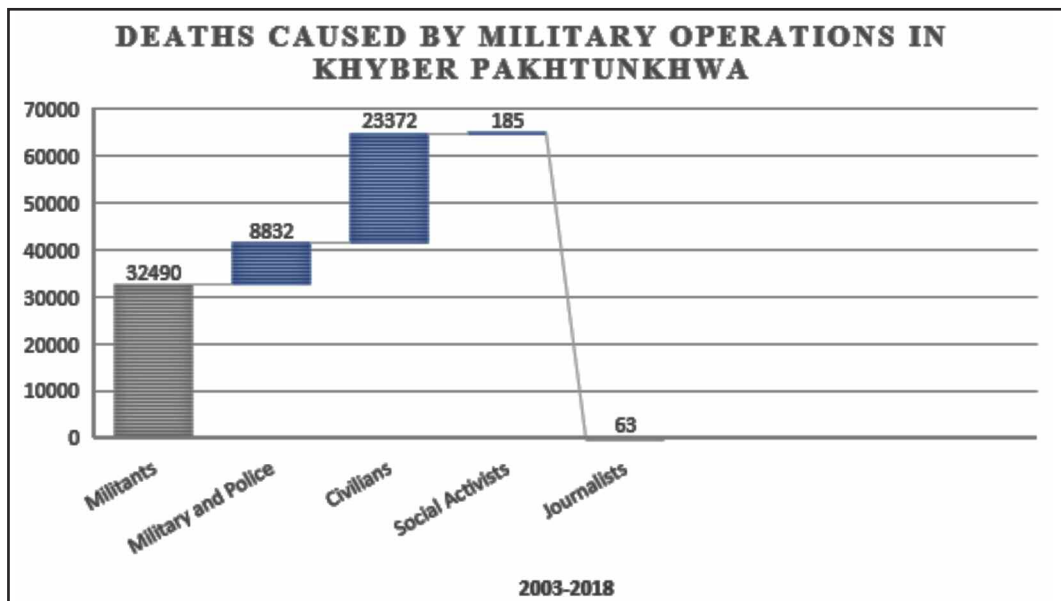
Population Centric Operations

The military operations carried out in Swat and Waziristan were entirely population centric that caused huge deaths of civilians, military and police personnel, militants, social activists and journalists. The strategy adopted by the Pakistan's military forces to fight against the militants was completely conventional on technical grounds. This strategy was previously adopted in Eastern Pakistan that resulted in its secession. Population centric operations were also carried out in Sudan, Cote de Ivore, Mogadishu, Bosnia and Herzegovina that left thousands of civilians killed indiscriminately. Similarly, in Pakistan about 03 million people left their homes and internally displaced. During these operations from 2003 to 2018 about 23372 civilians were killed, 8832 military and police personnel lost their lives, 185 social activists including foreigners were killed and 32490 militants were killed. In these operations, 63 media persons were also killed (Sayeed and Shah, 2017; Avis, 2016; Tankel, 2013; Amin and Siddiq, 2017). This huge human loss was caused due to population centric strategy adopted by the military forces in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. There was no strategy of proper identification of terrorists and their sanctuaries in these areas rather an indiscriminate op-

eration was started that resulted in huge human and infrastructure loss.

One manifestation of the population centric military operations, carried out in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa that caused huge human and economic loss, was lack of sophisticated warfare techniques. Population centric operations were conventional operations that caused huge cost to the state and population. Pakistani military forces lacked modern drone techniques of targeting the terrorists while protecting the common people. Drone technology was one of the modern warfare techniques that was used by the American forces in Afghanistan and Pakistan which proved to be highly adaptable to on the ground of pinpointing terrorist sanctuaries with less damage to population and infrastructure. The modern warfare trends highly moved from territorial grounds to human mind-space to carryout war against an enemy. The conventional warfare technologies were replaced by modern and sophisticated warfare competitiveness. Competition on symmetrical warfare capabilities no longer preferred by the strategic decision makers because these warfare techniques are outdated now. There is a movement from symmetrical warfare capabilities to asymmetrical warfare professionalism. It means identifying means and ways of warfare tech-

Figure 1.1 shows number of deaths caused by military operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa



Source: Amin and Siddiq, 2017

niques that are invisible and which can never be achieved through conventional warfare techniques.

One of the modern warfare strategies is the use of gray-zone tactics, where proxy groups and covert military forces are created to achieve the objective with less damage to the infrastructure and population. In addition, the artificial intelligence is used to cover and control both cyberspace and mind-space to achieve the target while adopting the strategy of killing-the-enemy-with-a-piecemeal. In Swat and Waziristan operations, these techniques were entirely absent because extra time and leverage was given to the terrorists to encroach the common territorial spaces and get organized. They highly influenced the common people in their proximities through proper amalgamation. Contrary to Swat, in Waziristan there used to be proper training grounds for Taliban under the patronage of the state agencies, therefore, for years the local people were under the influence of Taliban. When the military operations were started, thousands of the local people were killed quite indiscriminately because of their association, either through kinship, fellowship or through economic partnership with Taliban. These operations, therefore, needed to be preceded by dissociating strategies of the common people from the influence of Taliban. However, no such strategies were developed while indiscriminate population centric operations were carried out that resulted in huge economic and human loss.

Joint Military Operations and Drone Attacks

The military operation in Waziristan was jointly started with the American forces where local madrassahs and mosques were the primary targets for search of Taliban commanders. This joint operation created huge hate among the local people against Pakistan military forces and the trust which people had on the Pakistan army was completely eroded. Previously, every common man's perception was influenced by the rumors of foreign involvement in Taliban groups, however, this myth of "foreign hands" was diluted by the joint operation strategy. Due to the joint operation, the sentiments of anti-Americanism were escalated with hate against Pakistan army. Similarly, a pact was reached between Taliban commander Nek Muhammad and Pakistan army in 2004, however, very soon that pact was violated

by Pakistan army and Nek Muhammad was killed through a drone strike along with four others. Previously, Pakistan refused to allow drone strikes on its territory but a secret deal was reached between the CIA and General Musharraf which allowed them to carry out drone strikes in Pakistan (Tankel, 2013; CRSS, 2017).

Three types of drone strikes were carried out by the CIA in Pakistan. Signature strikes, personality strikes and double tap strikes (Tankel, 2013). These drone strikes were justified by the US on the ground that all these strikes were carried out against targeted individuals/groups who were on the target list or they were the militants' leaders. But usually, when a specific individual was targeted in drone strikes, such strikes were called the personality strikes, while the drone strikes which were carried out by the CIA were not personality strikes only. There were signature strikes and the double tap strikes as well and most of the civilians including children were killed and injured in the double tap and signature strikes. Signature strikes were those strikes that were carried out against those people who were supposed to be the supporters of Taliban without any evidence of their affiliation with any militant groups. Signature strikes were also carried out against the common population and residential areas allegedly occupied by the supporters of Taliban. Double tap strikes were carried out against those people who usually gathered at the spot of the incident to collect the dead bodies or help the injured or participate in the funeral of the deceased. In signature strikes and double tap strikes most of the civilians including children were targeted but none of them neither the CIA nor the Pakistani military forces accepted responsibility of killing the innocents. Hundreds of families were left without men or wage earners and thousands of women were widowed and their orphans were left helpless. All these strikes were carried out in violation of the humanitarian laws and against national sovereignty. There was no legislation or no bill passed by the parliament to allow these strikes nor the parliament of the state was heeded for. General Musharraf was a despot who did not ask anybody else while making decisions. The following table shows number of people killed and injured in drone strikes.

Table 1.1 shows number of people killed and injured by drone strikes carried out in Waziristan and FATA

Year	Number of Drone Attacks	People Killed	People Injured
2004	01	05	00
2005	02	07	02
2006	03	103	04
2007	04	46	30
2008	36	368	154
2009	50	633	331
2010	109	993	421
2011	73	574	15
2012	51	349	98
2013	13	105	32
Total	342	3183	1087

Source: Amin and Siddiq, 2017

The first drone strike was carried out by the CIA in 2004 in which 05 people were killed, however, this drone strike was a personality strike and it was carried out against Nek Muhammad. The identity of the rest of four persons was not revealed neither by the CIA nor by the ISI. This was an opening of the drone era and the number of which escalated with the passage of time. From 2004 to 2013, total of 342 drone strikes were carried out in which 3183 people were killed and 1087 were injured. Both the CIA and ISI claimed the deceased as the militants, however, majority of them were civilians who were targeted in the signature and double tap strikes. Maximum number of drone strikes were signature strikes that were carried out against the civilians who were supposed to be the supporters of the Taliban. Maximum number of casualties and killings were reported in the double tap strikes and the signature strikes in which the common people were targeted.

Implications of Military Operations

The military operations that were carried out in Federally Administered Tribal Areas and Swat, resulted in almost 3.0 million people displaced (Sayeed and Shah, 2017; UNFPA, 2009; PIPS, 2009). Internally displaced people in-

cluded children, women and old people. Many of them lost their relatives in these military operations. Loss of home and property behind and loss of their relatives in war resulted in double-tap trauma. Traumatic stress disorder resulted in bad health outcomes especially in children and women. The average temperature varied from 30 to 42 C⁰ that negatively affected children's health. Sun stroke, diarrhea, loose motion, ill-digestion and jaundice were the common diseases founded in children, women and men due to malnutrition, lack of clean water to drink and lack of ventilated shelters. Pregnant women and women who had their infants were the chief sufferers. About 69000 pregnant women were among the internally displaced people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (UNFPA, 2009). Medical camps were established only in designated areas but voluntary activities were helpful in providing relief to the people especially in provision of foods and medicines. The provincial government did not make any proper planning before carrying out these operations for adjustment of displaced people. Relief activities were mainly carried out either by local people or non-governmental organizations. The provincial government and the military leadership failed to specify the timeframe of displacement and readjustment, specification of alternate educational institutions for children and teenagers of displaced families, provision of ventilated shelters with availability of clean water to drink and wash and provision of pre-fabricated toilets. There was massive traffic jam and people stayed in queues for hours and hours for registration in high temperature. This unfair treatment of locally displaced people resulted in huge resentment against the military forces. According to Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies (2009) about 80% of the people were against the military operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 18% believed these operations as an outcome of Pakistan's decision to be an ally of the US in the war against terror. Similarly, majority of the Pashtuns believed these operations a threat to their identity and ethnicity. Such perceptions among the Pashtuns resulted in high degree of hate against the military forces of Pakistan. This hate factor was one of the intense consequences of the military operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa that could never be abolished with mere anthems of patriotism and nationalism.

In Pakistan, military dictators made few decisions in the past that dragged the entire nation to a ledge of destruction but none were stood responsible for their imprudent decisions nor they accepted their mistakes. Since, national security had been such a stake that cuts down all political limits and trespasses every legal boundary and it had been the sole product of Pakistan military forces, therefore, every violation of law/constitution was undermined by the matter of national security. The Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) operation of 2007 provoked all religious groups against the military forces of Pakistan and resulted in a war against the military forces (Siddique, 2008). In the year 2007, about 60 suicide attacks took place in the country in which 770 soldiers died and 1574 severely wounded (PIPS, 2009). The ex-chief of ISI, Asad Durani, himself realized that the Lal Masjid matter could even be resolved by an SHO (Station Head Officer) of the Police department but Musharraf brought a huge battalion to tackle the innocent students including girls and boys of Jamia Hafsa (Dulat, et al., 2018). They quite brutally martyred the innocent children of Jamia Hafsa which resulted in a catastrophic series of suicide bombing in the country. Similarly, General Musharraf reached into a secret deal with the CIA on drone strikes that resulted in 3183 deaths and 1087 casualties. The entire nation paid the price for such despotic decisions which caused huge insecurity in the country.

These military operations had quite negative impact on the security of the state. Insecurity plagued the entire nation and it was one of the negative consequences of the military operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The security situation highly intensified from 2007 to 2011. The entire Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province was in turmoil because of the increase in terrorist attacks on armed forces and civilians. This surge in terrorist attacks was a challenge for the security agencies of the state and many of these attacks took place in sensitive areas of armed forces garrisons and in their proximity. Terrorist attacks that targeted these sensitive areas resulted in escalation of more tension and fear in the province. The following table shows terrorist attacks that targeted the armed forces from 2001 to 2011. From 2001 to 2011, 423 terrorist attacks took place in the country in which 1322 persons of the armed forces were killed and 2582 were injured (Amin

and Siddiq, 2017). It was a series of catastrophic terrorist attacks on armed forces that finally reached Army Public School in the capital city of the province in which 149 innocent children and teachers were so brutally killed and 114 injured (BBC, 2014). It was a severe blow on the face of the security agencies of the state because this incident took place right in the center of the security nucleus of the armed forces where the core command of the province reigns.

Table 1.2 shows terrorist attacks on security forces from 2001-11

Year	No. of Incidents	Killed	Injured
2001	01	02	25
2002	00	00	00
2003	00	00	00
2004	14	33	38
2005	09	03	17
2006	42	128	190
2007	77	304	427
2008	59	214	252
2009	80	327	952
2010	98	149	365
2011	43	162	316
Total	423	1322	2582

Source: South Asia Terrorism Portal, 2011

The overall death toll of the terrorist attacks was more than 35000 people including civilians and armed forces. In this sum, the number of innocent people who were killed by the CIA in the drone attacks especially in the double tap and signature strikes in FATA were not included. Similarly, many extra judicial killings by the armed forces in the country, neither reported nor claimed, were not included in the estimation. This sum was an estimated figure that revealed the human cost of the war against terror in the country. It was vehemently a security discourse adopted by the armed forces to tackle the terrorist groups which resulted in huge economic and human cost because the security discourse was entirely a victory-oriented discourse which absorbed huge financial and human resources and inflicted great scourge to the economy of the state.

The economic cost of these military operations was quite huge in terms of scourge inflicted to the business sector in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Most of the businesses of the internally displaced people were negatively affected while they were given no financial relief to sustain and protect their businesses. The damage caused to their property was not compensated by any means. Many tranches were received by the military leadership under the Kerry Lugar Berman bill in US Dollars but this huge amount was neither invested in the infrastructure development of the devastated areas nor on the compensation of the families who lost their relatives in these operations (Kapur, 2009). The reconstruction work was mostly carried out by the national and international non-governmental organizations. The overall impact of these operations on the economy of Pakistan was quite huge. The following table (table-1.3) shows some economic indicators of Pakistan, measured in US Dollars.

Though, the military operations were not started in 2001 but during this time Pakistan became a strong ally of the US in the war against terror which in the later phase resulted in military operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Federally Administered Tribal Areas. The negative impacts of these military operations were far-reaching and the situation became more intensified when the Army Public School was attacked in December 2014 by the militants. It means that the after-shocks of these operations were continued till the

end of 2014. The above table (table-1.3) shows a decrease in all economic indicators including the GDP growth rate, exports, imports, trade balance, foreign direct investment and foreign exchange reserves, until 2009 while the rate of inflation increased from 3.40 in 2001 to 12.5 in 2009. During the time of 2007, 2008 and 2009 Pakistan was passing through huge security crisis that negatively affected the economy of the country.

Conclusion

Previously Pakistan army had not conducted such operations for territorial clearance and these operations were helpful in improving the capability of the armed forces in war tactics. The strength of the armed forces was also exposed in territorial clearance and fighting with the militant groups. Though, the government and the intelligence agencies could not develop a strong counternarrative to legitimize their war against terror and get their nation prepared for the crisis but the armed forces were capable of responding to situation of national emergency and the local population showed great tolerance in making themselves adaptable to the crisis. The local government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, especially the bureaucracy was unable to provide timely relief to the internally displaced people that resulted in severe health implications and malnourishment.

The strategy adopted by the armed forces for territorial clearance was a traditional strategy.

Table 1.3 shows economic indicators measured in US Dollars

Year	Economic Indicators Measured in US \$ (GDP Growth and Inflation in %)							
	Total Exports	Total Imports	Trade Balance	FDI	Forex Reserves	Foreign Remittances	GDP Growth	Inflation Rate
2001-2	9.13	10.34	1.2	484.7	6.43	2.39	3.60	3.40
2002-3	11.16	12.22	1.06	798	10.72	4.24	5.10	3.30
2003-4	12.31	15.59	3.28	949.4	12.33	3.872	6.40	3.90
2004-5	14.39	20.6	6.21	1524	12.61	4.17	8.40	9.30
2005-6	16.47	28.58	12.11	3521	13.14	4.6	6.60	8.0
2006-7	17.01	30.54	13.53	5125	15.18	5.49	7.0	7.90
2007-8	19.22	39.96	20.74	5152	10.83	6.5	5.8	10.3
2008-9	6.10	10.6	4.50	621.8	14.27	3.09	5.8	12.5

Source: State Bank of Pakistan and Federal Bureau of Statistics

This strategy was aimed to clear the area and punish the militants. Therefore, in these military operations, population centric strategy was adopted that damaged the local infrastructure and resulted in high death toll. No hybrid technology was used to pinpoint the militants and their sanctuaries to reduce the human cost. The transaction cost of the intelligence was also very high and many soldiers of the armed forces lost their lives in disguise while collecting intelligence information. In addition, neither the military nor the political leadership planned for the reconstruction of the damaged infrastructure and compensation of the families whose relatives were lost in these operations. The political leadership undermined these operations and it was not expected that millions of people would get displaced. Moreover, the military leadership did not brief the political leadership about the intensity of these operations.

The joint military operations in Waziristan and the drone strikes that constantly targeted the local population resulted in high degree of hate against the armed forces. In most of the drone strikes, carried out by the CIA, the local people were killed and injured, particularly in the double tap and signature strikes. Drone technology is highly sophisticated technology that is popular for accuracy and cost effectiveness but in the double tap strikes only the local people were targeted who were either attending the funeral or helping the injured. These drone strikes were completely against the sovereignty of the state and in violation of human rights. The military leadership of Pakistan did not even heed to disclose the real facts to the nation behind the drone strikes or the killings of innocents in these strikes. Every single person killed in drone strike was labelled as a militant or extremist.

Though, these operations were successfully conducted by the armed forces of Pakistan but it earned a bad name to Pakistan on the national and international forums. The inclusion of Pakistan in the FATF grey list was one impact of previously financing the breeding grounds for militants in FATA and Waziristan. The decisions to indulge in the war against the Soviet and then the war against terror resulted in huge economic and human losses but the benefit was extracted by only few families of the military generals and politicians. It had been a common perception that the military intelligence agencies play a double-

game while the chief sufferers are the common people, including poor soldiers and police constables - neither the politicians nor the military leadership. As a result, on the one hand, the trust of the nation on the armed forces eroded while on the other hand, the international community's distrust on Pakistan increased while fear and insecurity still there.

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