

# Socio-economic Impacts of Terrorism and Counter-terrorism on the Local People: A Case Study of Swat, Pakistan

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## ABSTRACT

**Aim of the Study:** This study attempts to explore the rise of terrorism in Swat, Pakistan, and the causes that gave rise to terrorism in the region and how the state responded to the terrorism. To understand this impact, the study examines the life of the local people of Swat in four phases, i.e., the Pre-Taliban Phase, the Taliban Phase, the Military Operations Phase, and the Post-Operations Phase.

**Methodology:** This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods. The study primarily focused on Swat, Pakistan, the area badly affected by terrorism and counter-terrorism efforts. To gather the qualitative data on the impacts of terrorism and counter-terrorism, 5 focused group discussions were held and semi-structured interviews were conducted from 80 participants including community leaders, government officials, business owners and students.

**Findings:** This study found that, according to 59% of participants, the Military Operations phase was the worst, while 41% considered the Taliban Phase the worst among the four phases. Considering the best phase among the four, 17% of participants voted for the Post-Operations Phase as the best, while 83% opted for the Pre-Taliban Phase as the best among the four phases.

**Conclusion:** In summary, before the rise of terrorism, the Swat district was a peaceful and thriving region known for its natural beauty, cultural heritage, and tourism industry. However, the emergence of the TTP and subsequent insurgency drastically changed the landscape, leading to the decline in tourism, education, and overall security, impacting the social and economic lives of the local people. To counter the terrorism in the region, the government launched two major military operations, i.e., Operation Rah e Haq and Operation Rah e Rast. Although the military operations competed with the Taliban and evacuated the Taliban from the region and ended their rule, it impacted the local people even more than the Taliban rule. Because all the businesses were shut down, schools were closed, people became jobless, and most of the local people got displaced, which impacted the social and economic life of the local people.

**Keywords:** Terrorism, Counter-terrorism, Military Operations, Socio-economic Impacts, Local Communities, Displacement, Swat.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of terrorism does not belong to any religion, state, or region. It can exist anywhere and at anytime. Terrorism, militancy and extremism are not confined to Pakistan or any specific region. Winds of terror have swept all across the region and the world (Ghani 2019; Ahmad et al., 2022; Ahmad, 2021; Adetula & Emmanuel, 2022). Since the '9/11' incident, Muslim countries in particular feel emotionally threatened with the word terrorism and perceive it as synonymous with the acts of terror carried out by so-called Muslim extremist groups. This is further complemented in the media by the unjust linking of such horrendous terror attacks to Islamic Jihad (Hassan, et al., 2018; Imran et al., 2023).

Terrorism has always been a serious threat to Pakistan's security. Pakistan has always faced a deep economic and financial challenges combined with political turmoil as various power centers vie for control of its fragile democracy.(Nawaz, 2023) Pakistan witnessed a rise in terrorism in the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Since 2001, more than 18,000 terrorist attacks were perpetrated by various global, regional and local terrorist organizations killing thousands of Pakistanis Ghani (2018). Terrorism has brought an enormous burden on South Asian countries through the adverse impacts on their social, economic, political and physical infrastructure. Pakistan has suffered particularly excessively from the social, economic and human costs due to terrorism (Daraz, et al., 2012). After the 9/11 attacks and the U.S. war on terror in Afghanistan, Pakistan saw a rise in terrorism, specifically in the areas adjacent to the Pak-Afghan border. In Pakistan, terrorism witnessed a surged following 9/11 (Noor and Ajmal, 2021) The Taliban started entering Pakistan as there was an ongoing war against them in Afghanistan. After entering into Pakistan, the Taliban gradually moved to other areas like Dir, Bunir, Swat, etc. They started to take control of those areas and implement their rule, which they called the Sharia rule. In the context of Swat, the local people, due to their strong affiliation with religion, also supported the slogans of the Taliban and the implementation of sharia law. But later on, the local people also opposed them because of their harsh policies, which the local people did not consider legitimate under the Sharia Law. For instance, they imposed a ban on female education, threatened government employees, and forcibly recruited local people into their army. When the Taliban started expanding their rule, the Pakistani military was deployed into the Swat region to compete with the Taliban and to take control of the region back from them. Two major operations were carried out: Operation Rah e Haq in 2007 and Operation Rah e Rast in 2009. Operation Rah-eHaq did not completely clear the region from the Taliban, and gradually, they began to regain strength in the area. After the Operation Rah e Rast, the rule of the Taliban was ended in Swat, but it badly affected the socio-economic conditions of the local people. Under both the Taliban phase and the military operations phase, the people of Swat were significantly impacted. Many civilians were killed and injured; educational institutes got closed, disrupting students' education; businesses were shut down, forcing employees to quit their jobs. The Pakistan Army has used heavy ground and air weapons during the operations. That has also resulted in enormous collateral damage. The killing of innocent people, including women and children, the destruction of educational institutions as a result of these operations, together with the casualties inflicted by suicide attacks have wide ramifications on internal security (Khan, n.d.). More importantly, during the confrontation between the Taliban and Pakistan Army, hundreds of thousands of civilians got displaced and migrated to other districts to find peace, leaving all their assets behind in Swat. Terrorism and counterterrorism had an impact on the country's political environment, overall economy and sociological landscape, particularly in the military operations areas. Batool and Virk (2002) the after effects of terrorism are usually reported without understanding the underlying psychological and social determinants of the terrorist act (Arie et al., 2009). The social and economic aspects of the local people are undermined in the majority of the research studying the terrorism and counter-terrorism. This study covers such gaps by analyzing the socio-economic impacts of terrorism and counter-terrorism and challenges faced by the local people of Swat during the era of the Taliban and then during the military operations.

## **1.1 Problems Statement**

Terrorism and counter-terrorism efforts have hit various regions in Pakistan. It badly impacted the socio-economic lives of the local people. Swat, Pakistan is one such region which faced terrorism and counter-terrorism efforts in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Although, terrorism was ended in Swat, both the terrorism and military operations affected the socio-economic conditions of the local communities of Swat. The topic of terrorism and counter-terrorism is widely discussed in various research but it's socio-economic impacts on the local communities remain poorly understood. This knowledge gap is covered in this research through rigorous data.

## **1.2 Study Objectives**

1. This study aims to examine the socio-economic impacts of terrorism on local communities of Swat, Pakistan.
2. To analyze the effects of counter-terrorism/military operations on the socio-economic well-being of local people.
3. To identify the challenges faced by local people in recovering from the impacts of terrorism and counter-terrorism.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Tahir and Baloch (2018) define terrorism as “a phenomenon that aims to target and destroy fundamental human rights by destabilizing democratic governments, freedom, rule of law, and ultimately, basic human rights. Indeed, terrorism destabilizes a society and creates chaos and violence, which make the lives of common people very vulnerable. Swat also faced the experience of terrorism in the early 2000s. Before the annexation of Swat with Pakistan, there was peace and prosperity in the region. The people of Swat were very loving towards the state of Pakistan; still, they are very patriotic. In the 1948 war, numerous people of Swat went to the battlefield and fought for Pakistan against India. But when Swat was merged with Pakistan, grievances and conflicts started between the people of Swat and the government of Pakistan.

Tabassum (2016), in her book, says that “the main reasons behind such conflicts were the poor judicial and administrative system of the government. Before the annexation, the Jirga system was in practice in Swat in which all the cases were to be resolved, but after the annexation, the Jirga system was abolished, and the cases were to be decided by the government institutions.

Tabassum (2016) says that “the people of Swat were not happy with the judicial system because, unlike the Jirga system, there was no justice and swiftness in the system. Furthermore, the people wanted to have a Sharia system (Islamic system) in the region because they considered the new system as against the Sharia rulings. Some religious people also spoke about the issue but got no positive response from the government. Later on, a religious group named Tehreek e Nifaz e Shariat e Muhammadi (TNSM) was formed by Sufi Muhammad, the purpose of which was to implement the Sharia Law in the region. From there the religious activism started in the region, but they were nonviolent in their action and were peacefully asking for their demands. But when TNSM was banned by Musharraf, Sufi Muhammad was arrested, and Mullah Fazlullah became the leader of TNSM. During the leadership of Mullah Fazlullah, violence started in the region and he affiliated TNSM with TTP (Tehreek i Taliban Pakistan), due to which the Taliban started intervention in Swat.

Till 1969, Swat was one of the princely states that remained sovereign after the independence of Pakistan. It was one of the most peaceful and prosperous regions, having a lot of national and international tourists. “Swat was also one of the leading districts in terms of education, with male and female enrollment ratios at the primary level at 92% and 75% respectively. (Avis, 2016) But after the rise of terrorism and military operations in Swat, the ratios dropped significantly due to the damages and closure of educational institutes in the region. According to a research, “282 girls’ schools (121 fully and 161 partially) were damaged during terrorism and counter-terrorism in Swat. (Khattak, 2018)

Another big challenge that the people of Swat faced was the displacement of local people. The experiences of terrorism and counter-terrorism forced the local people of Swat to migrate to other districts to find peace and safety. "About 600,000 people got displaced during the period of terrorism and counter-terrorism in Swat. (Khattak, 2018) The displacement of people from their homeland caused huge devastation. Their socio-economic life was affected very badly. The income of most of the people was coming from their lands through agriculture and farming. But due to the displacement, they had to leave their assets back in Swat. People who were holding jobs in government or private sectors had to quit their jobs due to displacement and insecurity.

Due to financial reasons, the migrated people had to live in refugee camps. "Before the Taliban entered Swat, local people especially females were encouraged to work in government sector, NGOs, and the private sector, but during Taliban and military operations they had to quit their jobs (Avis, 2016).

### **3. PRE-TALIBAN PHASE**

Before the rise of terrorism, the Swat district was known for its natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, and peaceful environment. Swat was referred to as the "Switzerland of Pakistan" due to its high mountains, lush green valleys, and crystal-clear lakes, attracting tourists from all over the country and from abroad. The local people of Swat were known for their hospitality and tolerance towards diversity.

Swat district had a thriving tourism industry that contributed significantly to the local economy. The region had many tourist resorts, hotels, and recreational facilities, facilitating both the domestic and international tourists. Tourists enjoyed a range of outdoor activities, including hiking, camping, skiing, and boating. They experienced and enjoyed the local culture of the region.

Swat was known for its strong emphasis on education, with numerous educational institutions providing quality education to the local people. Schools, colleges, and universities were established, contributing to the advancement of the community. The literacy rate was very high compared to other neighboring districts such as Dir, Shangla, and Bunir. The district was also considered an agricultural hub, with fertile lands supporting the cultivation of various crops, including wheat, maize, rice, and fruits. Many residents were engaged in agricultural activities such as farming and livestock rearing.

However, the peaceful environment of the Swat district took a dramatic turn following the emergence of terrorism in the region, particularly after the rise of the Tehreek e Nifaz e Shariat e Muhammadi (TNSM) and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). The TTP/TNSM sought to challenge the authority of the state. They targeted government officials, security forces, schools, and civilians who opposed their ideology.

### **4. THE TALIBAN PHASE**

#### ***4.1 Causes of the Emergence of the Taliban in Swat***

There may be one or more motives behind the birth of any sort of extremism, radicalization or terrorism in a region. The reasons might be injustice, criminality, or brutality etc. Talking about the motives led to the extremism or terrorism, some authors identified a singular motivation as crucial; others listed a 'cocktail' of motives (Sageman, 2004; Bloom, 2005).

The history of the Taliban's emergence in Swat traces back to the rise of religious activism in the region. After the accession of Swat with Pakistan, the Jirga system was abolished in the region. The conflict-resolving and decision-making process, which was previously handled by the Jirga, was handed over to the governmental institutions. The local people were unsatisfied with the governmental institutions because, compared to the Jirga, there was a lack of transparency and swiftness in the system of governmental institutions. Secondly, they saw the lack of Sharia Law implementation by the institutions established by the government of Pakistan. Furthermore, the local people, specifically the religious leaders, thought the government institutions, such as judicial courts and administrative departments, intervened in their domestic affairs, and they considered that unfair and unjust. The people of Swat wanted the authority to be given back to the Jirga because they wanted their affairs to be addressed

according to their own norms, values, and beliefs instead of the law made by the state of Pakistan. So, for the purpose of reestablishing the Jirga system and implementing Sharia Law in the region, the local people, especially the religious leaders, started protesting to recover the Jirga system in the region and to get rid of the government. Thus, the religious activism started in the region, which later led to the Talibanization in Swat. According to the researchers, the act of carrying out terrorist activity does not come from a single moment of inspiration but rather from a complex process of cognitive accommodation and assimilation over accumulating steps. (Atran, 2003; Horgan, 2008).

Sufi Muhammad, a very prominent and active religious leader of the region, openly opposed the system of the state established in Swat. He led many protests and negotiations with government officials for the voices of the people of Swat. To unite the local people of Swat, the Tehreek e Nifaz e Shariat e Muhammadi (TNSM) was formed, which became very popular in the history of Swat. Tehreek e Nifaz e Shariat e Muhammadi was founded by Sufi Muhammad in 1992 for the purpose of implementing Sharia Law in the region. Initially this group was not involved in any violent or extremist activities but was peacefully asking for their demands.. They went on negotiations with the government many times but did not remain successful in the majority of the cases. This group was banned during the Musharraf regime when Sufi Muhammad was arrested after his participation in the war against the U.S. in Afghanistan. Mullah Fazlullah became the leader of TNSM. He aligned TNSM with TTP (Tehreek e Taliban Pakistan). After the alliance of TNSM and TTP, the Taliban were deployed into Swat, and violent activities were started in the region.

To counter the terrorism in the region, two major military operations were carried out: Operation Rah e Haq in 2007 and Operation Rah e Rast in 2009. During both of these phases, i.e., terrorism and counter-terrorism, the local people and their socio-economic life were affected very badly.

#### ***4.2 Support of the Taliban from the local people of Swat***

I asked the question of the respondents as to whether the local people supported the Taliban and what the reasons for their support were. The majority of the respondents responded that initially the local people of Swat did support the Taliban because the local people were much affiliated with the religion, and the Taliban were using the name of religion and Sharia Law to convince the people. They promised the people that they would restore the Sharia

Law and Jirga system in the region and ask the local people to support them in all their activities. Initially the people supported them financially and morally. A large quantity of gold, money, and other resources was given to them. They were provided places for their accommodations. A large number of local people joined the army of the Taliban.

After some time, the local people realized that the Taliban were not here to implement the Sharia Law and work for the betterment of the people of Swat but just wanted their tyrannical rule over the region, so the people stopped supporting them. Initially, the Taliban were settled in Imam Dherai (a small village in Swat), but gradually they started controlling different regions. When they took control over almost the whole region of Swat, their activities became more extremist, and their attitude towards the local people became harsh. They forced the people to join their militia, forced men to keep their beards, and bound women to stay inside their homes and to wear a burqa (cloak) if going outside home in case of emergency. Female educational institutes were bombed and closed, and female employees were forced to quit their jobs. Even the male employees working in some specific institutions like police, military, media, and peace committee (Aman Committee), etc., were forced to leave their jobs. Talking about the tyrannical rule of the Taliban, one of the respondents said, “They (Taliban) took locals’ houses and properties by force and slaughtered (killed) government officials and other innocent people to spread horror among the people. Whoever resisted, they used to slaughter him in public in Nishat Chowk.”

### **4.3 Socioeconomic Impacts of the Talibanization in Swat**

During the tyrannical rule of the Taliban, the lives of local people of Swat were significantly impacted. Before the rise of the Taliban, Swat was a peaceful region famous for national and international tourism. People from all over Pakistan and from abroad used to visit Swat and enjoy its beauty. The tourism industry was a leading industry and a major source of income for many households. But the emergence of the Taliban immediately stopped the national and international tourism in the region, and hence the source of income of many people got affected. One of the respondents said that “the Taliban seized most of the hotels from the local people and used to stay there themselves free of cost.” Moreover, many people were forced to quit their jobs. Female education and employment were completely banned. Females who were previously working in public/private sectors were forced to leave their jobs. Male employees who were working in police, military, media, and some other institutions were also forced to quit their jobs. One of the respondents said that “I was working in the police department at that time (during Talibanization), and my uncle, who had joined the Taliban militia, threatened me and my family to quit the job. So, I was compelled to leave my job immediately”. During the rule of the Taliban, many job holders became jobless, and their financial status was affected very badly.

The social life of the local people was also affected very badly during the Taliban rule in Swat. People who were living their life according to their own culture and traditions were forced to follow the way that the Taliban directed them to live. The local customs and traditions were abolished. One of the respondents said that “the people of Swat had a beautiful and unique tradition of marriages in which there were cultural dances and other customs and traditions, the happiness and celebration of which would last for months, but the Taliban abolished those traditions and made the marriages very simple.” During the Taliban rule, the local culture was affected because they abolished most of the local cultural traditions like attan (a cultural dance), the marriage system, and other festivals.

Talking about the impacts of Taliban rule on the social life of the people, another respondent said that “the people of Swat were very hospitable, and they loved to visit relatives and friends and spend time with each other. Relatives and friends had very close bonds with each other. But due to the horrible rule of the Taliban, there was horror everywhere, and people did not want to go outside their homes, which affected the social life of local people of Swat.” People’s social ties were affected, and relatives and friends became enemies because of their disagreement on whether to support the Taliban or not.

Famous snow festivals and other cultural festivals were held in Malam Jabba, Kalam, and other spots in Swat, which used to attract tourists from all over Pakistan and abroad, which would feed many local households. The tourists also had an opportunity to experience the beautiful local culture of Swat. But with the emergence of the Taliban, all the cultural festivals were abolished, which affected the local culture as well as the financial status of many people.

## **5. THE MILITARY OPERATIONS PHASE**

To counter the terrorism and stop the increasing control of the Taliban in Swat and surrounding regions, the Pakistan Army carried out two major military operations in Swat: Operation Rah e Haq in 2007 and Operation Rah e Rast in 2009. The primary goals of the operations were to expel the Taliban from the region and to end their support system and their sources of strength.

### **5.1 Operation Rah e Haq**

Operation Rah e Haq, also known as the first battle of Swat, was the first military operation carried out against the Taliban rule in Swat. It was carried out in October 2007. The aim of this operation was to take control of the Swat region back from the Taliban and to restore the law and order system in the region. Swat became a battlefield when the army was deployed in the region and confrontations were started between the Taliban and Pakistan Army. This operation included three phases. In the first phase of the operation, about 3000 military troops were sent to Swat to compete with the Taliban in the region. A heavy fight was started between the two groups, i.e., the Taliban and military troops. The army attacked

the hidden the Taliban the while the army check posts and cantonments were attacked by the Taliban. In the second phase, 5000 more military troops were sent to Swat, which further fueled the fight. The Taliban were moved out from some of the places, but the army still could not get access to their major spots like Charbagh, Matta, and their headquarters, Imam Dherai. In the third and final phase of the operation, the Taliban were evacuated from many places, and most of their hideouts were destroyed. But still the control of the Taliban was not completely ended in the region.

During the Operation Rah e Haq, the Battle of Shangla was also fought. Shangla is a neighboring district to Swat. During the operation, when the army started attacking the different hideouts and bases of the Taliban, they started moving to other places. Shangla, being a neighboring and a mountainous place, was more appropriate for them, so many Taliban forces moved to Shangla and started controlling different regions in Shangla. At the same time, the army realized that along with retaking control of district Swat, they should also take care of the surrounding districts. Hence, the army was sent to the Shangla district, and the Battle of Shangla was fought during the period of Operation Rah e Haq. In the aftermath of the Battle of Shangla, the Taliban were evacuated from Shangla, and the control of the region was retaken from them. But the Taliban and their control still existed in the Swat district even after the completion of Operation Rah e Haq.

## **5.2     *Malakand Accord***

The Operation Rah e Haq was officially ended in the end of 2007, but the Taliban and Pakistan Army were present in Swat and were in continuous confrontation with each other. On February 17, 2009, the government of Pakistan signed an agreement with the Taliban called the Malakand Accord. The Malakand Accord called for the withdrawal of military forces from Swat, the withdrawal of criminal cases registered against the Taliban, the release of all Taliban prisoners, and the imposition of Sharia Law in the region.

According to one of my interview respondents, the Malakand Accord was a very controversial agreement signed between the Taliban and the government. Another respondent stated that “After the first operation (Operation Rah e Haq), an agreement (Malakand Accord) was signed between the Taliban and the government of Pakistan through which all the Taliban who were captured were released. It was a plan of government to re-strengthen the Taliban and provide them a chance to create violence and control in the region once again so that the government can launch another operation in Swat”. According to a research Terrorism is suggested to be ‘the use of intimidation or fear for advancement of political objectives’ (Kruglanski & Fishman, 2006).

## **5.3     *Operation Rah e Rast***

Operation Rah e Rast is also known as the second battle of Swat. This operation was launched in May 2009. After the first operation, Operation Rah e Haq, the Taliban were not completely evacuated from Swat, and their control was not ended completely. They gradually got more strength and started recapturing different regions of Swat. When they recaptured most of the regions and made their control stronger, the government responded by launching the second operation in Swat and deployed a huge number of troops in Swat.

A heavy confrontation started between the Taliban and the army. Tanks and jets were even used in the fight. Swat became a great battlefield for both groups. Along with the Taliban and Army, a huge number of local people were killed and injured. The local people could not survive in Swat and were compelled to leave their houses and properties and to migrate to other districts. More than 600,000 people migrated from Swat during the military operations in search of peace.

At the end of the Operation Rah e Rast, the Taliban were almost completely expelled, and their rule was ended in Swat. Large numbers of Taliban were killed and captured during this operation.

#### **5.4     *Socio-economic Impacts of Military Operations on the Local People of Swat***

Although the military operations ended the rule of the Taliban in Swat, it badly affected the local people. The local people who were already irritated by the harsh policies and attitude of the Taliban were further annoyed by the military operations. When the local people were fed up with the Taliban rule, they were hoping that the deployment of the Pakistan military would ease their suffering and their conditions would become better and peaceful in a short period of time. But military operations and their confrontations with the Taliban lasted for about three years, which made the people even more depressed and annoyed. During the military operations, the local people suffered even more than during the Taliban period because Swat remained a battlefield during the whole period of military operations.

The lives of the local people of Swat were affected the most during the period of military operations. This was a period of bombing, blasting, and suicidal attacks. During the attacks and confrontations between the Taliban and the army, the local people were affected the most. One of the respondents said that “the military operations in Swat were more against the local people than the Taliban. Because the local people were affected more than the Taliban. The number of local people being injured and killed during the confrontations between the army and the Taliban was much more than the collective casualties of both the army and the Taliban. During the military operations in Swat, both groups, i.e., the Taliban and the army, were in a regular state of war with each other in which neither of them took care of the local people and their properties.

Another respondent said that “once a military jet struck three missiles on Charbagh Bazar during the time when the bazaar was full of the local people. I don’t think there was a single person of the Taliban present in Bazar at that time, nor was there any hideout of the Taliban in the Bazar. But missiles were struck, and dozens of local people were injured and killed. Several shops were crashed during that strike”.

The social life of the local people, which had already been badly hit by Talibanization, was further worsened with the entrance of the military and the military operations in Swat. During the period of military operations, the local people of Swat were divided into groups. One was the group of people who had joined the Taliban or who were supporting the Taliban during this period; the second was the group of people who were in favor of military operations in Swat, and they were supporting the army. The third one was the group of people who were neither supporting the Taliban nor in favor of military operations, they were completely neutral. The Talibanization and the military operations divided the people of Swat, who were previously very united. These were not just the ideological differences and divisions, but each group became the enemy of the other groups. Many people killed each other due to such ideological differences. Those who were neutral and were not supporting either of the groups were most of the time forced by each of the groups to support them. This grouping affected the social and political life of the people very badly. The unity of the people was destroyed, and ideological divisions were created among the people, which led to the long-lasting enmity. Such a kind of division was even created among the people of the same families. There were many cases in which members of the same family killed each other due to their ideological differences.

The powers of the Taliban and the army were also misused by the local people in their personal affairs. Whoever had disparity over some issues, they used to deal with that issue with the support of the Taliban/Army so that they could suppress the opponent through the horror of the Taliban/Army.

One of the respondents stated that “most of the people who had some influence in the Taliban or army became so brutal at that time, and they used to suppress other people and capture their properties.”

After the entrance of the army in Swat, they captured buildings from the local people and started living there without any compensation. A lot of people lost their homes, hotels, and other buildings because the army forcibly took them away from them. The local people did not give their building willingly, but they were forced to do so. Because at that time the local people were so helpless and frightened that they could not ask about their own rights. They were afraid of the brutality of both the Taliban and the army. When



the buildings of the local people were captured by the army, it also created more issues for the local people because the Taliban considered such people the supporters of the army, and the Taliban then used to torture them. On the one hand, the local people lost their buildings and properties, and on the other hand, they had to face the consequences from the Taliban side.

According to one of the respondents during the military operations in Swat, the army forcibly captured homes, mosques, hotels, schools, and other buildings from the local people, and the people were forcibly exited from their properties. Even many people had no place to stay in, and they were compelled to keep a house on rent or to stay in someone else's houses.

Students' education was also severely affected during the military operations phase in Swat. All the educational institutes were shut down because of the unfavorable conditions in the region. Swat was in a state of war, and there were always bombings and blasting everywhere in Swat. In such conditions it was impossible for the students to go to schools and to continue their educational journey, and thus their education was affected the most.

One of the respondents said, "Due to the continuous confrontations between the army and the Taliban, the educational institutes were closed off, all the students stopped going to schools for months, and then many people migrated from Swat, and thus most of the time of students was wasted due to those unfavorable conditions."

The economic impacts of the military operations were also severe in Swat, and financially the local people were affected very badly. All businesses were shut down, which halted the sources of income for business owners in Swat. People who owned hotels and restaurants were badly affected because most of the hotels were captured by the army, and secondly, if some hotels were not captured, there was no one to stay in hotels and eat in restaurants because at that time there was not a single tourist, and the local people were so afraid of the situations that they did not want to stay outside their homes. Furthermore, numerous houses, schools, hospitals, roads, and other infrastructure were damaged or destroyed, which hindered economic activities and affected access to basic services such as healthcare and education.

In Swat, agriculture was the main source of income for most of the households, but that was also affected during the period of military operations. Because many people were displaced from one place to another, roads were destroyed, and due to the state of insecurity, the agricultural activities became very difficult for the local people of Swat. Moreover, if some people managed the agricultural activities and got some crops, then the problem was selling the crops. Almost all the internal markets were shut down, and access to the market outside the district was very difficult for the people because of the insecure conditions and lack of transport system in the region.

The financial status of the employees was also significantly impacted because many people became jobless because of the insecure conditions in the region. Many businesses were shut down, due to which numerous people became jobless. People who were working in public or private sectors were compelled to leave their jobs because they were unable to perform their duties in the presence of conflicts between the army and the Taliban. At that time, it was very risky to go outside the homes. Everyone wanted to stay inside their houses to be safe. In such conditions, people who were holding some jobs were compelled to quit their jobs to protect their lives.

## **5.5     *Displacement of the People***

Another huge setback for the people of Swat was the displacement of the local people. During the confrontations between the army and the Taliban, when the conditions in Swat became severely insecure, the locals were compelled to migrate to other districts. About 60,000 people got displaced during that period. The people of Swat had to leave their houses and properties behind and migrate to other places in search of peace. Migration was the only option for the people of Swat because the conditions became so insecure that it was very difficult for the people to survive in Swat. To protect their lives, the people of Swat migrated to other districts due to the social and economic conditions of the people being further

impacted. When displaced, the people had no jobs, no businesses, and no source of income. They had to depend on someone else and on relief and aids.

One of the respondents said that “thousands of people migrated to other places, leaving behind all the assets and livelihoods. The conditions of the migrated people were very bad. Sometimes they had nothing to eat; they had no place to live in. Most of the refugees were to live in refugee camps. They were all depending on relief and aids.”

Another respondent said that “all of our relatives got scattered during the migration. We had no plans where to go; we did not have money, nor were there any means of transport through which we could move to another place, but we had to walk for several days. And we had to depend on other people to eat and to find shelter.”

The displacement of the people was the most difficult time for the local people of Swat. They had to leave all their properties and assets behind and move to some strange places in search of peace. They had to move without money, water, and food. They had no place to live in.

They had no jobs and businesses. They had to depend on the support of other people and relief and aid. Education, businesses, and employment—everything was lost during the displacement of people. According to a research the war [between terrorists and military] has led to a loss of innocent human lives, compounded by the deep psychological scars for survivors which will undoubtedly persist for generations to come (Bhui, Everitt, & Jones, 2014).

## **6. POST-MILITARY OPERATIONS PHASE**

After the Talibanization and military operations, the conditions of Swat gradually became safer and more peaceful, but still the effects of the Taliban and military operations exist in the region. The condition of Swat to be normalized took several years after the military operations ended. When the military operations ended, the army was still present in the region for many years. They had their control over the region. People’s lives were still very vulnerable, and the locals still had to face many difficulties. In the post operations, the existence of the army annoyed the local people very much. Although the region was evacuated from the Taliban, a large number of army personnel were still present in the region for many years. They were still living in the buildings of the local people. The people had to wait in long queues in army check posts for security checks while entering different places.

Tourism was somewhat restored in the region, but still there were not that many tourists as there were in the pre-Taliban and operations period because the tourists were afraid of the conditions and security in the region. Furthermore, the tourists who were entering the region had to go through a strict security check that required a lot of time and energy. The national tourism was somewhat restored, but international tourism is still lacking in the region. Even in 2023, there are very few international tourists in Swat compared to the pre-Taliban and operations period.

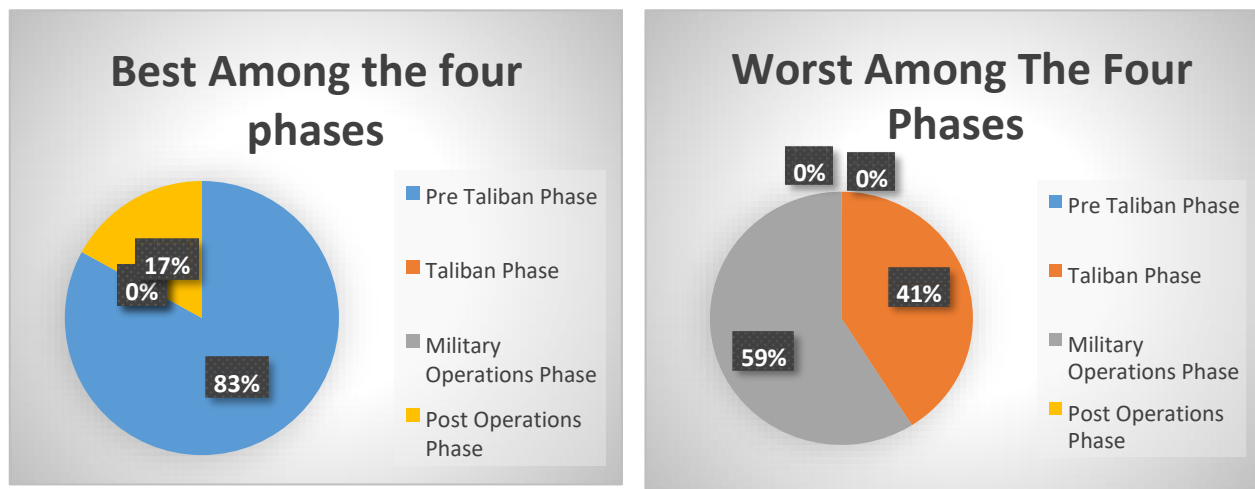
The experiences of the Taliban and military operations in Swat made the region more vulnerable for future terrorism. After the Talibanization and military operations, there have been many terrorist incidents in Swat. The terrorist and other violent activities are more likely to happen in Swat in the aftermath of Talibanization and military operations. One of the respondents said that “after the Taliban and military operations, the conditions of Swat have become better, but it is not better than the conditions before the Taliban and military operations. Before the experiences of the Taliban and the military operations, there were no violent activities happening in Swat, but now the terrorists and other violent activities happen in Swat. Recently (2023), two terrorist attacks have been done on the two schools in Swat in which several students were killed and injured.

In the period after the Talibanization and military operation, the conditions in Swat are getting better gradually. The conditions are much better than the Taliban and the operations period because Swat is not any more in a state of war. There is peace and prosperity in the region. The education has been restored,

the businesses are established once again, and the employment rate has risen. The social and economic conditions of the people became better. But the conditions are not better than the pre-Taliban and operations period.

One of the respondents said that “Indeed the Swat was a land of happiness and peace before it experienced the terrorism and counter-terrorism effects. In the pre-Taliban and operations phase, the conditions of Swat were much better; there was peace and prosperity in the region. In the post-Taliban and operations period, the conditions are getting better but not as good as the pre-Taliban and operations period.”

The survey and interview findings for this paper reveal that 83% of participants regarded the pre-Taliban phase as the most favorable among all phases while 17% considered the post-operations phase as the best one. Considering the worst among the four phases, 59% of the respondents considered the military operations period while 41% considered the Taliban phase as the worst among the four phases.



## 7. METHODOLOGY

### 7.1 Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods.

### 7.2 Study Area

The study primarily focused on Swat, Pakistan, the area badly affected by terrorism and counter-terrorism efforts.

### 7.3 Data Collection

#### 7.3.1 Interviews and Focus Groups

To gather the qualitative data on the impacts of terrorism and counter-terrorism, 5 focused group discussions were held and semi-structured interviews were conducted from 80 participants including community leaders, government officials, business owners, students, and females.

### 7.4 Ethical Considerations

1. Informed Consent: Participants are provided informed consent before participating in the study.
2. Anonymity: Identities of the participants are kept anonymous to ensure confidentiality.
3. Data Security: Data are stored securely to prevent unauthorized access.

## **8. STUDY FINDINGS**

This study aimed to analyze the socio-economic impacts of terrorism and counter-terrorism on the local people of Swat. Both terrorism and counter-terrorism efforts severely impacted the social and economic conditions of locals. The local people of Swat were interviewed and asked about their experiences during the period of terrorism and counter-terrorism, as well as their socio-economic life before, during, and after the terrorism and counter-terrorism period.

The interviews contained several questions; one question was asked of all participants: which phase they considered the best and worst (among four phases: Pre-Taliban Phase, During the Taliban Phase, Military Operations Phase, and Post-Operations Phase). This study found that, according to 59% of participants, the Military Operations phase was the worst, while 41% considered the Taliban Phase the worst among the four phases.

Considering the best phase among the four, 17% of participants voted for the Post-Operations Phase as the best, while 83% opted for the Pre-Taliban Phase as the best among the four phases.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

In summary, before the rise of terrorism, the Swat district was a peaceful and thriving region known for its natural beauty, cultural heritage, and tourism industry. However, the emergence of the TTP and subsequent insurgency drastically changed the landscape, leading to the decline in tourism, education, and overall security, impacting the social and economic lives of the local people. To counter the terrorism in the region, the government launched two major military operations, i.e., Operation Rah e Haq and Operation Rah e Rast. Although the military operations competed with the Taliban and evacuated the Taliban from the region and ended their rule, it impacted the local people even more than the Taliban rule. Because all the businesses were shut down, schools were closed, people became jobless, and most of the local people got displaced, which impacted the social and economic life of the local people.

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I hope that this research contributes to a better understanding of the socio-economic impacts of terrorism and counter-terrorism on local communities."

## **Conflict of Interest**

The author declares a potential conflict of interest. As a native of Swat, Pakistan, I have personal experiences and connections to the region, having lived through the terrorism and counter-terrorism efforts in Swat during my childhood. I want to assure that despite this personal connection, I have

strived to maintain neutrality and objectivity in this research, ensuring that my findings are based solely on the data and evidence. I have endeavored to minimize any potential biases through rigorous research methodology and data analysis.

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