**A Journey from Terrorism to Tourism**

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After confronting prolonged terrorism and sacrificing more than 80,000 lives, Pakistan’s overall security environment has significantly improved in recent times. This achievement is attributed to the armed forces primarily due to their incredible counter-terrorism operations. Considering the security environment of the country, Pakistan Army conducted hundreds of operations including “Operation Al-Mizan” – the first major operation from 2002 to 2006 – to eradicate the menace of terrorism and ensure the national security of Pakistan.

Pak Armed Forces were confronting terrorists and extremist elements for the past two decades but after the terror attack on Jinnah International Airport in Karachi, Pak Army launched “Zarb-e-Azb” in June 2014. The operation intensified after the attack on Army Public School (APS) the same year in December. A comprehensive plan was made in a kinetic domain by Pak Army to hunt down all foreign, local militants and terrorists who had cloaked themselves in erstwhile FATA. The operation eloquently shattered the broad network of the militants in North Waziristan. Operation Zarb-e-Azb concluded with a significant number of accomplishments, including the dismantling of terrorist groups and the abolition of terrorist hideouts which is indeed an exceptional achievement in the Pak Army’s history.

Well along, Operation Radd-ul-Fasad was initiated in February 2017 under the paradigm of the National Action Plan (NAP). It was a full-fledged operation that spread all across Pakistan to root out the menace of terrorism. Pakistan Air Force, Pakistan Navy, Rangers and other Paramilitary Forces also participated in this operation and intimately supported Armed Forces’ efforts against terrorism. The aim of this operation was to indiscriminately eradicate residual and latent threats of terrorism from the country. Total 222,836 combat operations/IBOs were conducted whilst 72,364 weapons were recovered during these operations. While conducting pursuit operations across Pakistan, Operation Radd-ul-Fasad led to a 59% decline in terrorist activities in the country. To provide a safe and secure environment, Pak Army has sacrificed thousands of precious lives of brave sons of soil during these operations.

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In addition to hard-core strategic operations, some effective initiatives were taken by Pak Army to arbitrate harmony and reliability amongst the nation. A document named “Paigham-e-Pakistan” is one of those initiatives which was developed to address extremist behaviour instigating by inter-religious disharmony and sectarian discord. Every religious school of thought was taken on board in this project. Paigham-e-Pakistan has aroused great positive responses and received appreciation nationwide. It is considered a remarkable step in the right direction which can counter all such challenges posed by terrorism and extremism as a result of sectarian-based conflicts. To implement this exceptional initiative, various workshops, seminars and conferences facilitated by Pak Army have been organized with a special emphasis on building a peaceful and tolerant society and protecting the ideological borders of Pakistan from the menace of extremism.

In line with other pragmatic measures to provide an innocuous and secure environment, another incredible initiative taken by Pakistan Army was fencing a long and tough border along Pak-Afghanistan and Pak-Iran border. The total border to be fenced is around 2620 kilometer along the Pak-Afghan border, out of which nearly 2600 kilometre has been completed. Similarly, the total border to be fenced along Pak-Iran is nearly 830 kilometres and so far around 658 kilometres have been fenced completely. The purpose was to curtail the illegal movement of unauthorized persons, goods and activities which was a source of disturbance in the country. The tough terrain, whims of weather, attacks by terrorists and obstinate attitude of Afghanistan made it even more challenging for the troops of the Pak Army to execute the task. After sacrificing hundreds of lives of soldiers, Pak Army has completed almost 94% of the work along the Pak-Afghan border.

In the wake of terrorism, Pakistan has sacrificed thousands of lives and its economy has suffered a loss of around $150 billion. For a long time, various terror outfits including TTP and BLA have carried out militant attacks in Pakistan with the support of non-state actors. However, with the vigorous efforts and sacrifices made by Pak Army, a conducive environment for investors has been re-established to boost the economy of the country. CPEC project worth $62 Billion, is bringing immense investment to Pakistan which will boost the economy of the country. Pak Army has played a vital role in administrating and executing this project. Clearly, the successful implementation of the CPEC project largely depended on a safe and secure environment in the country thus, Pak Army took the responsibility for the security of CPEC and deployed thousands of soldiers and paramilitary troops to provide foolproof security to Chinese workers.

Undoubtedly, Pak Army has played the most significant role in stabilizing the security environment of the country through their effective measures and strategies. Pak Army has made the country safe for tourism as after a long time, tourists are pouring in from across the globe. Even international cricket has returned to Pakistan due to the Pak Army’s tremendous efforts for the security of the country. The people of Pakistan have also endorsed the sacrifices of the Pak Army and have commended their emblematic significance, pride and loyalty to the nation’s defence.

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