**Diplomacy and counterterrorism**

[**Abbas Raza**](https://www.nation.com.pk/columnist/abbas-raza)

November 03, 2022

According to the Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies (PIPS), Pakistan has witnessed a 51% increase in terrorist attacks in a single year after the Afghan Taliban took over power in Afghanistan. This has increased the challenges for the Pakistani government to tackle complex terrorist activities in the country. They have to not only strengthen but also maintain good relations with the Afghanistan government to preserve peace in the country. Therefore, diplomacy is an effective tool for counterterrorism in Pakistan.

The recent terrorist attacks in Pakistan show that there has become a nexus between Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA). Both are designated terrorist organizations and are based in Afghanistan. These organizations have posed a great threat to the state of Pakistan. The objective of TTP is to turn Pakistan into a self-defined Islamic state and have control over it by waging a war against innocent civilians and the government, while the objective of BLA is to separate Balochistan from Pakistan and to eliminate Chinese economic presence from the country.

[Sanaullah labels Imran as ‘political terrorist’, says no to negotiations](https://www.nation.com.pk/02-Nov-2022/sanaullah-labels-imran-as-political-terrorist-says-no-to-negotiations)

Their nexus can be witnessed through the following examples. Last year, the Pakistani Taliban claimed responsibility for the bomb attack targeting the Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan in Quetta, Balochistan. That resembles the BLA objective. BLA conducted a TTP-style suicide bombing at Karachi University that, unfortunately, killed 3 innocent Chinese teachers. The BLA had no history of using suicide bombs before that.

Now, coming to the point that how diplomacy can be used to counter terrorism in Pakistan. Firstly, having a good relationship with Afghanistan can enable the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through their Ambassador in Kabul to pressurize the Afghan government to eliminate safe havens of TTP as well as BLA from their country. Moreover, both countries can exchange useful information through cyphers to counter the presence as well as attacks of these terrorist organizations.

Secondly, on the local level, the government must give responsibility and some authority to the notables such as Sardars and Khans to negotiate with the terrorists recruited locally in Balochistan and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP). In this local-level diplomacy, the notables have a lot of influence, skills as well as knowledge regarding the culture and mindset of that particular area, therefore they are in a better position to convince misguided youngsters to come back to the normal path. Along with that, the state must enlighten as well as give opportunities to the middle-class citizens in these provinces through quality education and decent employment, so they do not get lured by terrorist organizations.

[NA speaker rejects disqualification reference against Asif Zardari](https://www.nation.com.pk/02-Nov-2022/na-speaker-rejects-disqualification-reference-against-asif-zardari)

Lastly, the state of Pakistan should engage in multilateral diplomacy on the security level by engaging Afghan, Iranian, and Chinese security and law enforcement agencies for the betterment of national and regional security. In this, they should share resources e.g. knowledge, skills, and finance as well as intelligence to counter terrorist organisations that are a threat to these countries. Moreover, they should exchange their best practices to enhance their capability to counter terrorism. In this way, they can greatly minimise terrorist attacks by TTP, BLA, and their off-shoots.

In short, diplomacy in tackling counter-terrorism is a very effective tool as, in many cases, other countries and local notables are in a better position to counter a particular terrorist group. Moreover, diplomacy multiplies the actions taken by security agencies.