



THE RAMIFICATIONS OF U.S. DRONE STRIKES ON PAKISTAN: AN IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF THE KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA REGION

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Abstract

The United States, in its pursuit to eliminate Al-Qaeda militants from the Pakistan-Afghanistan region, conducted drone strikes on Pakistani soil as part of the broader counterterrorism strategy initiated after the 9/11 attacks. Commencing on June 8, 2004, and concluding on January 24, 2018, these strikes primarily targeted the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), now integrated into the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, totalling 430 confirmed instances. This research examines the social and economic repercussions of U.S. drone strikes on the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region, investigating the area's social and economic transformations. Moreover, the study probes into the psychological trauma endured by the northern region's inhabitants, assessing the impact of drone assaults on their mental well-being. Notably, the Pakistani government did not authorize U.S. drone operations on its territory. The United States justified these actions on self-defence grounds, bypassing official consent from the Pakistani government. Widely perceived as misguided by both the Pakistani government and its populace, these drone strikes



resulted in pronounced social disruptions, economic instability, and psychological trauma in the FATA region.

Key Words: Drone strikes, Terrorism, Impacts, FATA region, Social, Economic, Psychological

Introduction

Drone strikes, involving aerial attacks carried out by unmanned combat aerial vehicles, have been extensively utilized by the United States of America (U.S.A), particularly within the borders of Pakistan. The focal point of these drone operations has predominantly been the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province (KPK), a northern region of Pakistan sharing its border with Afghanistan. The inception of U.S. drone strikes in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa can be traced back to the global war on terror initiated by the United States following the 9/11 attacks on September 9, 2001. In response to the 9/11 incident, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) identified Osama bin Laden and the Al-Qaeda organization as responsible for the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre, resulting in the tragic loss of 3,000 lives. (CIA Drone Strikes in Pakistan, 2004 to present, Bureau of Investigative journalism). The global war on terror, triggered by the 9/11 attacks, prompted the United States to address the Taliban government in Afghanistan, where Osama bin Laden was suspected to be harboured. Consequently, the United States sought military bases in Pakistan to combat terrorism, specifically targeting the Al-Qaeda network and militants in the Pak-Afghan regions. This period witnessed the introduction of a novel warfare approach, characterized by drone strikes, employed by the United States to eliminate terrorist militants. Commencing on June 8, 2004, and concluding on January 24, 2018, the United States conducted drone strikes in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), an integral part of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in Pakistan, as well as the eastern region of Afghanistan. The drone strikes were executed by the United States Air Force under the oversight of the CIA Special Activities Division. These operations were carried out in the context of the U.S. war against terrorism, with the primary objective of eliminating terrorist militants. (The Global on Terrorism, first 100 Days, 2001, US Department of State). The United States has employed drone strikes as a strategy to dismantle terrorist organizations while reducing the risk of injuries and casualties among U.S. military personnel. Between 2004 and 2010, a total of 409 confirmed drone attacks were recorded. These strikes resulted in the deaths of 288 civilians and 275 individuals whose identities remain unknown. The drone strikes conducted by the United States were specifically targeted at the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the eastern regions of Afghanistan. While President George W. Bush initially denied expanding drone strike policies, the Obama administration increased the frequency of these attacks during his presidency. Notably, four U.S. citizens were killed in drone strikes under the Obama administration. The Pakistani public vehemently opposed these drone strikes, leading to the National Assembly of Pakistan collectively passing a resolution in December 2013. The resolution condemned the U.S. drone strikes as violations of the United Nations Charter, international law, and humanitarian norms. Political leaders, including former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, strongly criticized the strikes, emphasizing that they not only infringed upon the sovereignty of Pakistan but also hindered the



country's efforts to combat terrorism. Former Interior Minister of Pakistan, Rehman Malik, asserted that U.S. drone strikes, or drone missiles, resulted in collateral damage. He contended that while the strikes targeted a few militants, the majority of those killed were innocent Pakistani citizens, leading to an increase in anti-American sentiments in Pakistan. The Peshawar High Court ruled against U.S. drone strikes, declaring them illegal, inhumane, and in violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, constituting a war crime. However, the Obama administration disagreed with these assertions, maintaining that the drone strikes did not violate international law. (BERGEN, PETER, 2010).

Related Literatures

Numerous scholars in the field of political science have contributed extensively through their articles and journals on the subject of the U.S. new warfare paradigm involving drone strikes. This section highlights the work of specific scholars who have made significant contributions to the understanding of this topic.

Patrick B. Johnston and Arook K. Sarbani (2015) conducted a comprehensive analysis of U.S. drone strikes on terrorism in Pakistan. Their research delved into the multifaceted impact of drone strikes, acknowledging the unpopularity of such operations among Muslim populations, which heightened emotions within these communities. However, the authors contended that drone strikes played a crucial role in disrupting and degrading terrorist organizations. Furthermore, they asserted that these strikes diminished the terrorists' capabilities to target U.S. soldiers and launch attacks against them. Focusing on the North West region of Pakistan and eastern Afghanistan, the article explored the negative associations between drone strikes, militant violence, and their repercussions on the local populace. While recognizing that drone strikes contributed to the elimination of terrorists, the authors also emphasized the unfortunate loss of innocent lives in the North West region of Pakistan.

Aqil Shah, (2016) research paper "Do US Drone strikes cause Blowback" conducted interview on the local and national level. The interview has been mostly conducted in the local regions of Pakistan especially in FATA, the peoples of this area has been highly affected by US drone strikes. Writer argued that the people' of South and North Waziristan have strongly opposed and rejected the drone strikes because it has violated the sovereignty of Pakistan and the writer has also argued in his interview that people said that drone strikes were the main cause of civilian deaths.

In her research paper titled "Are Drone Strikes Effective in Afghanistan and Pakistan? On the Dynamics of Violence between the United States and the Taliban," Zahra Siddique (2011) delved into the core policy of the United States against terrorist militants, focusing on drone strikes as a primary tool in countering terrorism. Siddique argued that while the impact of U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan has been noteworthy in the fight against terrorism, the same cannot be said for their effectiveness in the region of Afghanistan. The paper critically examined the limited success of drone strikes against Taliban violence in Pakistan, highlighting the negative repercussions of their ineffectiveness. Furthermore, Siddique analyzed the U.S. drone strikes policy specifically targeting the Haqqani and Mehsud factions in South Waziristan. The research provided insights



into the complex dynamics between the United States and the Taliban in the context of drone warfare.

In his thesis, "Analyzing the Attitudes of the People of Pakistan toward US Drone Strikes," William Miller (2012) explored the sentiments of the Pakistani population regarding U.S. drone strikes. Miller's analysis revealed that a significant majority of the people in Pakistan opposed drone strikes, primarily due to the substantial number of innocent civilian casualties. He argued that many perceived the drone attacks as a part of the broader war against Islam initiated by the United States. The thesis provided valuable insights into the complex and contentious attitudes of the Pakistani populace toward the controversial use of drone warfare in their region.

Anjali Sawh (2014) conducted an analysis of Pakistani elite opinions regarding United States drone strikes, specifically those occurring in the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA). In 2010 alone, 122 drone attacks resulted in 849 recorded deaths, comprising both civilians and militants. Sawh observed a divergence of opinions among Pakistani elites, with some favoring drone strikes, some expressing negative sentiments, and others maintaining a neutral stance. The writer argued that elite opinions were influenced by the impact on civilians and innocent lives in Pakistan. Sawh noted that during the 2010 timeframe, Pakistani elite opinions were presented in various media outlets, including TV channels and newspapers. The diverse opinions were categorized into four types, with business elites focusing on property damage, religious elites examining the actual locations of drone strikes, politicians condemning Pakistani government involvement, and military leaders emphasizing the effectiveness of drone strikes against terrorist militants.

Rafat Mahmood conducted an analysis of 420 United States drone strikes spanning from 2006 to 2016, categorizing individuals as insiders (members of terrorist organizations) and outsiders (those not affiliated). The analysis revealed a total of 2,964 terrorist deaths during this period. Mahmood noted that these drone strikes heightened the emotions and sentiments of Pakistani people against the U.S., particularly because outsiders sympathized with insiders impacted by the strikes. The writer argued that, counterintuitively, drone strikes increased the membership of terrorist attacks, as they didn't just target specific individuals but affected the broader community, fostering negative attitudes among both insiders and outsiders.

Despite empirical analyses suggesting that drone strikes could control terrorism, Mahmood contradicted these findings. He asserted that, according to his analysis, drone strikes encouraged terrorism, heightened anti-US sentiments among the Pakistani people, and contributed to radicalization, not only among insiders but also among outsiders. The author identified signs of radicalization and anti-US sentiments due to drone strikes, particularly in the FATA region. Overall, Mahmood concluded that US drone strikes inadvertently fuelled militant growth and increased negative sentiments in both insiders and outsiders.

Anouk S. Rigterink conducted an investigation in his research paper, exploring how counterterrorism, specifically through drone strikes and unnamed aerial vehicles, targeted terrorists. The paper focused on the impact of drone strikes on the leaders of terrorist organizations. Rigterink's analysis revealed that terrorist attacks increased when militant leaders were targeted and hit by drone strikes compared to situations where these leaders were missing. The writer



provided evidence suggesting that new drones not only undermined terrorist attacks but also exerted control over terrorist organizations, emphasizing the effectiveness of this counterterrorism strategy in the FATA region.

Research Methodology

This research paper adopts both qualitative and quantitative approaches, utilizing secondary sources of data for collection. Through a descriptive approach, we analyse, *The Ramifications of U.S. Drone Strikes on Pakistan: An In-depth Analysis of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Region* drawing from diverse opinions. Authentic books, magazines, newspapers, research theses, research articles, pamphlets, reports, and internet sources will serve as the basis for gathering information. The study employs a deductive method to analyse and interpret the collected data, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of the chosen topics.

Unravelling the Historical Nexus: US Drone Strikes, the 9/11 Attack, and the Global War on Terror

The notion of terrorism boasts a rich historical tapestry, far from a recent phenomenon in global affairs. Its roots do not lie in the contemporary world but stretch back through time. Some political scientists posit that the terms "terrorist" and "terrorism" trace their origins to the crucible of the French Revolution in 1789. However, the international spotlight on this concept intensified during tumultuous periods, notably the conflicts in Northern Ireland and the Basque region. The terminology of terrorism also became entwined with the Israeli-Palestinian struggles. Despite these historical cases, the concept has maintained its uniqueness on the global stage and has not been neatly categorized into distinct types. Nevertheless, a pivotal shift occurred in the 1970s, marked by a surge in suicide attacks worldwide. The landscape of terrorism underwent a seismic transformation with the infamous terrorist attack on the US World Trade Centre in 2001, commonly known as the 9/11 attack. This event catapulted the concept of terrorism into the common discourse, resonating across the globe. (Zeeshan, Hira 2014).

Political scientists have grappled with the multifaceted and expansive nature of the term terrorism, offering diverse definitions rooted in historical contexts. During the French Revolution, terrorism was intricately linked with tyrannicide, reflecting the perceived threats from monarchs and their absolute powers. In the anarchist movement, the term shifted to describe violence perpetrated by non-state actors rather than government entities.

The complexity of the term is evident in the multitude of definitions that have emerged. In 2006 alone, an estimated 109 definitions of terrorism were recorded, capturing the contemporary nuances of the concept. American political scientist Michael Walzer offers a modern perspective, defining terrorism as the deliberate killing of innocent civilians, utilizing randomness as a tool to install fear in society and coerce political leaders. Another American political scientist, Hoffman, contends that terrorism cannot be confined to a singular definition, emphasizing its multifaceted nature and the involvement of various agencies within government frameworks. (Bruce Hoffman 1998).

The term terrorism gained significant prominence following the 9/11 attacks and the



subsequent War on Terror. Western political philosophers, particularly in connection with Al-Qaeda, have extensively discussed terrorism in modern times. The Guardian Newspaper has categorized the evolution of the Al-Qaeda organization into five distinct stages, tracing its growth from its origin in 1980 through phases like the Wilderness period (1990-1996), the heyday period (1996-2001), and finally, fragmentation (2005-2009). The roots of Al-Qaeda are closely tied to the Soviet war in Afghanistan during the Cold War between the United States and the USSR. Seizing the opportunity to support Afghan resistance against the Soviets, the U.S. provided aid to the Afghan mujahideen through Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency. Financial support from the United States, totalling over \$600 million, was channelled to leaders like Gulbaddin Hekmatyar, founder of Hezb-Islami. Hekmatyar also received aid from Saudi Arabia during this period. (Farooq Yousaf 2018).

In 1990, the United States ceased its support to the Afghan mujahideen. During this time, Gulbaddin Hekmatyar collaborated closely with Osama bin Laden and the Arab world, rallying for the Afghan jihad against the communist and Marxist regime in Afghanistan. CIA Director George Tenet oversaw these affairs. With the robust support of Pakistan and the United States, the USSR faced defeat in the war against Afghan Taliban militants. Osama bin Laden, based in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, harboured strong resentment towards the United States due to its support for Israel against the Arab nations and the establishment of U.S. military bases in Saudi Arabia. The turning point came on September 11, 2001, when terrorists attacked the World Trade Centre in New York. CIA Director George Tenet promptly reported to President George Bush that the Al-Qaeda network was responsible for the attack. Within two weeks, the CIA Counterterrorism Centre and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) identified Al-Qaeda as a multinational organization of militant Salafist Islamists. The FBI conducted an investigation, codenamed Operation Penttbom, successfully identifying the 19 hijackers within days. The 9/11 attack triggered the initiation of the global war on terrorism, prompted by the significant event that compelled the United States to combat terrorism worldwide. The U.S. aimed its efforts at the Islamist Salafist militias and the jihadist organization Al-Qaeda. A militant and counter-terrorism campaign unfolded, targeting Islamic countries affiliated with the Al-Qaeda network. The global war on terror extended its reach to various regions, including Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen, Libya, Somalia, Iraq, and Syria. In Pakistan, the war on terror commenced during the presidency of Pervez Musharraf. The United States, under this initiative, sought military bases from Pakistan to eradicate terrorist roots, particularly in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region and eastern Afghanistan. (Patrick B Johnson, Anoop k sarbani 2015).

During the war on terror, insurgency erupted in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, also referred to as the war in the North West region or Pakistan's war against terrorism. The Pakistani government, with the support of the United States, initiated this war to eliminate groups like Tehreek Taliban Pakistan, Jundullah, Lashkar-e-Islam, and other Islamic militant organizations in the respective province. In tandem with the global war on terror, the United States conducted drone strikes. Between 2004 and 2018, a total of 430 drone strikes were confirmed, with a significant number targeting the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region and eastern Afghanistan. The U.S. Air Force operated these drone strikes under the supervision of the CIA's special activities division, justifying them



in the context of the war in Afghanistan against terrorism and the elimination of terrorism in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region. The roots of Al-Qaeda can be traced back to Maktab Al-Khidmat, also known as the Services Bureau, an organization affiliated with the Egyptian Islamist Kamal al-Sahanini. This network played an active role in the Afghan jihad and provided substantial financial assistance to Afghan mujahideen. Osama bin Laden joined Maktab Al-Khidmat in 1984, establishing camps in Afghanistan in 1987 and playing an active role in the Afghan jihad against the Marxist government. After the Soviet Union's withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, some Islamic organizations, including Al-Qaeda, aimed to expand their mission to Kashmir and Palestine. Osama bin Laden trained foreign Muslim volunteers for jihad, and Al-Qaeda was officially established as an organization with broader objectives. (Zeeshan, Hira 2014).

According to certain research, Al-Qaeda was formed in 1988 when two leaders, Abdullah Azam and Osama bin Laden, met and founded the Al-Qaeda network. Scholars suggest that the ideology of Al-Qaeda was inspired by the writings of Sayyid Qutb. Qutb argued that due to the absence of Sharia law, Muslims worldwide had reverted to a pre-Islamic period known as the Jahiliya period. According to Qutb, Muslims needed to restore Islam and establish a true Islamic state. Osama bin Laden, influenced by Qutb, formulated the Al-Qaeda organization.

Subsequently, the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) accused Al-Qaeda of the 9/11 attack. The incident, commonly known as the 9/11 attack, was organized by the Islamic militant extremist group Al-Qaeda. According to the CIA report, Al-Qaeda hijacked four commercial airline flights scheduled to travel from New England to California. The terrorists crashed the first two planes into the United States World Trade Centre and the third plane into the Pentagon. The fourth plane was intended to hit a federal government target in Washington, D.C. The attacks resulted in the deaths of almost 3,000 people, including 19 Al-Qaeda terrorists. Reports indicate that Osama bin Laden's main motive was outlined in a fatwa, where he called for the liberation of the Aqsa Mosque from Israeli and U.S. influence and sought to eliminate U.S. influence in the holy city of Mecca. (Farooq Yousaf 2018).

Delineating the Impact: U.S. Drone Strikes in the Regions of Somalia and Yemen

The initiation of U.S. drone strikes in Somalia lacks formal declaration, stemming from an intricate historical backdrop. In the Cold War era, Somalia stood as the second-largest beneficiary of U.S. funding, supporting a dictatorial regime. Post-Berlin Wall, the United States continued to back this regime, despite its oppressive governance during the civil war from 1991 to 1993. Amidst this turmoil, approximately one million people sought refuge in Yemen. Following the civil war, numerous peace conferences involving the United States, United Nations, and European Union were conducted, attempting to restore a central government in Somalia. The post-9/11 era witnessed a resurgence of U.S. military involvement in Somalia, shaping the trajectory of subsequent events. From 2001 to 2005, the United States and the Somali government-initiated operations against Al-Qaeda militants in Mogadishu, receiving international funds for the elimination of the Al-Qaeda network. The U.S. also waged war against Al-Shabaab in Somalia, conducting the first drone strikes during the Bush administration on March 19, 2003. A total of 289 confirmed drone strikes have occurred in Somalia, resulting in 33 to 120 civilian casualties



and 1552 to 1953 militant casualties. The U.S. drone strikes specifically targeted the Al-Shabaab militant network. Following the 9/11 attack, the U.S. conducted 12 military operations in Somalia for counterterrorism purposes. In 2011, it was confirmed that Al-Qaeda had roots in Somalia. The drone warfare in Somalia led to Al-Shabaab losing control over several cities. The U.S. continued to target Al-Qaeda, Al-Shabaab, ISIS, and other militant groups in Somalia through drone strikes, with the Trump administration's Pentagon conducting drone operations in 2017. (Katherine 2023, The Washington Post). The advent of new technological warfare extended beyond Pakistan, as the Bush administration directed the CIA to launch drone operations in Yemen. The first drone strike in Yemen occurred on November 3, 2002, in the Marib province, resulting in the demise of six militants affiliated with the Al-Qaeda network. The United States, concerned about threats from Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula originating from Yemen, particularly targeted this network through drone strikes. Drone activities significantly escalated during the Obama administration, spanning all affected countries, including Yemen. Between 2011 and 2013, drone attacks in Yemen led to the deaths of 599 to 832 civilians. The Obama administration intensified drone strikes during the Arab Spring years, granting more authority to the CIA and Joint Special Operations Command for drone warfare in Yemen. The Yemeni government perceived the US drone strikes as targeting mutual enemies, contributing to counterterrorism efforts. The CIA conducted drone programs globally to eradicate the roots of the Al-Qaeda organization, focusing on its key militants. Former CIA director John Brennan emphasized that drone strikes in Yemen aimed at specific strategic objectives, engaging in targeted assassinations rather than indiscriminate killings. The initial success of the drone strikes was exemplified by the assassination of Abu Ali al-Harithi, the mastermind of the terrorist network. (Katherine 2023, The Washington Post).

Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Operations: Analysing U.S. Drone Strikes in the Regions of Libya and Syria

CIA director George Tenet revealed that following the 9/11 attacks, the Bush administration issued orders to employ any necessary and feasible weapons globally, targeting regions where militants were situated. The directive included the use of all essential weaponry against nations supporting militant organizations. Furthermore, President Bush mandated the prevention of any threats posed by militants to the security of the United States. In President Obama's tenure, drone strikes were initiated in Libya under the guise of protecting civilians amid conflict. The frequency of US drone strikes escalated as part of military operations in the Libyan region, sparking numerous controversies. Criticism against US drone operations in Libya emerged from public interest groups, notably the International Committee for Robotic Arm Control, citing ethical, legal, and social concerns. Critics rooted in international humanitarian law argued that US drone strikes were justifiable solely in Afghanistan against Al-Qaeda and other terrorist entities. (Hamad 2023, AJAZEERA).

The New America Foundation reported that Libya became the most recent country where the United States initiated drone strikes. The authorization for US drone strike operations came under the Obama Presidential Policy Guidance (PPG), adopted to counter terrorism and combat militants globally. This policy empowered the US military to engage directly in counter-terrorism



operations across various countries, with a particular focus on Libya. The internationally recognized Government of National Accord, in collaboration with the United States, initiated a three-phase plan to counter jihadist forces in Libya. Under this strategy, the US launched two operations, namely Junction Serpent and Odyssey Lightning, utilizing drone strikes to target jihadist groups and Al-Qaeda members. These operations commenced in 2016 under the Obama administration, and in 2017, the US Air Force and AFRP conducted operations against ISPS, employing drone strikes to target militants. From 2011, the United States maintained a military presence and conducted drone strike operations in Libya until 2020. (New America Foundation Newspaper). The United States has engaged in military operations against Al-Qaeda, ISIS, and other groups in Libya over a nine-year period, conducting a total of 4,500 airstrikes. During the Odyssey Lightning operations in 2016, these airstrikes resulted in the deaths of 238 to 298 individuals, including 227 to 277 combatants and 11 to 21 civilians. Additionally, the US conducted drone strikes in eastern Syria against pro-Iranian militants. While the United States accused the Iranian government of launching drone strikes targeting US bases in Syria, it has also established the military base Al-Tanf in eastern Syria in 2016. This base has been a focal point for US-led and Special Forces' drone strikes against Al-Qaeda and ISIS, with several instances of the base being targeted by Iranian and Russian airstrikes. On August 24, 2022, President Joe Biden ordered the continuation of airstrikes against the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in Syria. (Hamad 2023, ALJAZEERA).

Unmanned Aerial Operations: Examining U.S. Drone Strikes in the Pak-Afghan Regions

Since the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, the United States has engaged in a global war on terror, specifically targeting Muslim-majority countries worldwide. Throughout this conflict, the U.S. has employed drone strikes to eliminate terrorist militants and protect its military personnel. These drone strikes have been concentrated in the North West areas of Pakistan, including the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), as well as the eastern region of Afghanistan. Initiated by the Bush administration in 2004, these attacks have been referred to by some media channels as drone warfare conducted by the U.S. The Pakistani populace has generally opposed U.S. drone strikes, citing the loss of numerous innocent civilians in the process. Despite public disapproval, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the United States contends that these strikes have successfully targeted and eliminated terrorist militants in the FATA region. According to the New America Foundation, approximately 80% of drone strikes have resulted in the deaths of identified terrorist militants. The United States initially conducted drone strikes with the support of the Pakistani government, particularly between 2004 and 2018. In this period, the U.S. utilized drone strikes in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region. The primary targets of these drone operations were Al-Qaeda, ISIS, Tehreek Taliban Pakistan, and the IMU group, with the approval and cooperation of the Pakistani government. (Zeeshan, Hira 2014). During the Obama administration, there was a significant escalation in drone strikes, with an estimated 2,000 to 3,500 militants of various terrorist organizations reportedly killed. However, this increase in drone activity also resulted in the deaths of a substantial number of innocent civilians in Pakistan, particularly those residing in



the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region, ranging from 158 to 965 individuals. The Peshawar High Court ruled against these drone strikes, deeming them inhumane and illegal. According to the court, these actions violated the universal declaration of human rights established by the United Nations (Patrick B. Johnson, Anoop K. Sarbani, 2015). Following the 9/11 attacks, the United States alleged that Osama bin Laden was residing in Afghanistan, leading to the initiation of drone strikes against terrorist militants. The George W. Bush administration conducted numerous drone strikes in the Afghan region, with a total of 13,072 confirmed strikes between 2001 and 2021. These operations were overseen by the CIA and the United States Central Command, with support from the Afghanistan Air Force (AAF), which also conducted drone strikes against internal enemies, totalling 41 operations. The U.S. drone strikes targeted the networks of Tehreek Taliban Pakistan and ISIL in Afghanistan, resulting in the death of five Pakistani TTP militants in 2016. The Obama administration not only increased drone strikes in Pakistan but also expanded their use in the Afghan region. According to CIA reports ordered by Obama, civilian casualties were acknowledged, estimating between 310 to 919 deaths, with 73 to 191 children among the casualties, and 661 to 1,772 people injured. The rising number of civilian deaths raised questions about the legality of drone strikes, with Amnesty International connecting them to potential war crimes. In 2022, the President of the United States confirmed that Ayman al-Zawahiri, the leader of Al-Qaeda, had been killed by a drone strike. (Zeeshan, Hira 2014).

Discussion and Analysis

The inhumane drone strikes conducted by the United States, initiated on June 8, 2004, and continuing until January 24, 2018, have cast a dark shadow over the northern areas of Pakistan, resulting in the tragic loss of innocent lives. Thousands of drone devices were deployed in this region, causing devastation among the civilian population. The Pakistan National Assembly has repeatedly condemned and criticized these drone attacks, asserting that they flagrantly violate the UN Charter and humanitarian norms. Furthermore, the Peshawar High Court ruled against the U.S. drone strikes, deeming them illegal and in violation of human rights and the Geneva Convention. The barbaric nature of these strikes has had profound and far-reaching effects on the people of the northern areas of Pakistan, impacting them socially, economically, and psychologically. President Bush initiated this new form of warfare through drone strikes, and his successor, President Obama, further extended this brutal policy, resulting in the deaths of a significant number of innocent citizens, while purportedly targeting labeled terrorists in the northern areas. A total of 430 drone strikes were confirmed between 2004 and July 2018, claiming the lives of 81 high-level terrorists and approximately 969 innocent Pakistani citizens. The economic disruption faced by affected families has thrown them into confusion, while the psychological trauma inflicted by these ruthless attacks has created a distressing environment. Social disruptions have permeated the FATA region, with people avoiding gatherings out of fear of drone strikes, underscoring the pervasive impact of this prolonged and controversial military strategy.

Socio-Economic and Psychological Impacts of US Drone Strikes on the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) Region



Social impacts of US Drone strike on Khyber pakhtun khwa

Following the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent initiation of the war against terrorism, the United States of America focused its efforts on various regions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) through drone strikes, with a particular emphasis on the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). When the United States invaded Afghanistan in October 2001, the population of the FATA region was estimated at 5 million, primarily comprising ethnically Pashtun inhabitants. This region was administratively divided into seven agencies. After the 9/11 attack United States of America has started globally war on terror, in which targeted specifically the Muslims countries throughout the world. During war on terror US has been conducted drone strikes to target the terrorist militants and saved the life of its soldiers. The US drone strikes has been delivered in the region of Pakistan, which targeted North West areas of the country and Federally Administrative tribal areas (FATA) and eastern region of the Afghanistan. The drone strikes attacks were started by Bush administration in 2004. Some media channels called for the attacks as drone warfare by US. The Pakistani peoples have been collectively disagreed with US drone strikes, because the drone strikes have been killed many innocent's civilians of Pakistan. But in generally, the intelligence agency of US central intelligence agency (CIA) has been claimed that the drone strikes have killed many terrorist militants in the region of FATA. According to the new America foundation the 80% of the drone strikes cause the death of terrorist militants. The United States was starting drone war against Al-Qaeda, ISIS and Tahreek Taliban Pakistan and IMU group the drones were conducted by the support of Pakistan government. In this perspective firstly, the US drone strikes were supported by the country government in the era from 2004 to 2018, the United States has been used drone strikes in the region of Khyber pakhtun khwa. Since the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, the United States has engaged in a global war on terror, specifically targeting Muslim-majority countries worldwide. Throughout this conflict, the U.S. has employed drone strikes to eliminate terrorist militants and protect its military personnel. These drone strikes have been concentrated in the North West areas of Pakistan, including the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), as well as the eastern region of Afghanistan. Initiated by the Bush administration in 2004, these attacks have been referred to by some media channels as drone warfare conducted by the U.S. The Pakistani populace has generally opposed U.S. drone strikes, citing the loss of numerous innocent civilians in the process. Despite public disapproval, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the United States contends that these strikes have successfully targeted and eliminated terrorist militants in the FATA region. According to the New America Foundation, approximately 80% of drone strikes have resulted in the deaths of identified terrorist militants. The United States initially conducted drone strikes with the support of the Pakistani government, particularly between 2004 and 2018. In this period, the U.S. utilized drone strikes in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region. The primary targets of these drone operations were Al-Qaeda, ISIS, Tehreek Taliban Pakistan, and the IMU group, with the approval and cooperation of the Pakistani government. During the Obama administration the drone strikes were increased highly. Estimated, the United States drone strikes were killed 2000 to 3500 militants of the terrorist organizations. But the drone strikes were also killed 158 to 965 innocents' civilians of Pakistan, especially the civilians belong to Khyber pakhtun khwa region.



The Peshawar high court has been ruled against United States drone strikes for the cause that the drone strikes have inhuman and illegal. According to the Peshawar high court ruling the United States drone strikes have been violated the universal declaration of human rights of the United Nations. (Patrick B Johnson, Anoop k sarbani 2015). The United States has been alleged the Taliban government in Afghanistan, after 9/11 attack that Osama bin Laden has been living in the region of Afghanistan. So, United States was started drone strikes against terrorist militants. The George W. Bush administration has been conducted a lot of drone strikes in Afghanistan region.

From the era of 2001 to 2021 total 13,072 drone strikes have been confirmed that conducted on the Afghan region. The drone operation has commanded by CIA and the United States central command, the Afghanistan air force (AAF) was also supported the US drone strikes operation against terrorist militants and Taliban. The Afghanistan air force has been conducted themselves drone strikes in their region against internal enemy. The AAF was conducted 41 drone strikes operations. The United States drone strikes have been targeted the network of Tahreek Taliban Pakistan and ISIL in the region of Afghanistan. During 2016, five Pakistani TTP militants have been killed by the drone strikes in Afghanistan. Similarly, the case of Pakistan that Obama administration has increased the drone, the administration was also increased the drone in Afghan region. By the ordered of Obama CIA public the civilian's deaths that hit by drone strikes which estimate, total deaths of civilians appeared 310 to 919 and children have been killed 73 to 191, injured 661 to 1772 peoples. The civilian's deaths in Afghanistan region by drone strikes has been rises many questioned on United States that there is no legality of drone strikes. Amnesty international connected drone strikes with war crimes. In the year of 2022, the president of the United States has been confirmed that the Al-Qaeda leader Ayman Al Zawahiri was killed by the drone strikes. During the Obama administration, there was a significant escalation in drone strikes, with an estimated 2,000 to 3,500 militants of various terrorist organizations reportedly killed. However, this increase in drone activity also resulted in the deaths of a substantial number of innocent civilians in Pakistan, particularly those residing in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region, ranging from 158 to 965 individuals. The Peshawar High Court ruled against these drone strikes, deeming them inhumane and illegal. According to the court, these actions violated the universal declaration of human rights established by the United Nations (Patrick B. Johnson, Anoop K. Sarbani, 2015). Following the 9/11 attacks, the United States alleged that Osama bin Laden was residing in Afghanistan, leading to the initiation of drone strikes against terrorist militants. The George W. Bush administration conducted numerous drones strikes in the Afghan region, with a total of 13,072 confirmed strikes between 2001 and 2021. These operations were overseen by the CIA and the United States Central Command, with support from the Afghanistan Air Force (AAF), which also conducted drone strikes against internal enemies, totalling 41 operations.

The U.S. drone strikes targeted the networks of Tehreek Taliban Pakistan and ISIL in Afghanistan, resulting in the death of five Pakistani TTP militants in 2016. The Obama administration not only increased drone strikes in Pakistan but also expanded their use in the Afghan region. According to CIA reports ordered by Obama, civilian casualties were acknowledged, estimating between 310 to 919 deaths, with 73 to 191 children among the



casualties, and 661 to 1,772 people injured. The rising number of civilian deaths raised questions about the legality of drone strikes, with Amnesty International connecting them to potential war crimes. In 2022, the President of the United States confirmed that Ayman al-Zawahiri, the leader of Al-Qaeda, had been killed by a drone strike. Inhumane drone strikes of the United States had been started since 8, June 2004 and extended to 24, January 2018, thousands of drone gadgets quarry in the northern areas of Pakistan which kill the innocent citizens of Pakistan. US drone attacks where several times condemn and criticized by the Pakistan national assembly which stated that the drone attacks hugely violate the UN charter and humanitarian norms. Peshawar high court was also ruled against US drone strikes and stated that the drone attacks war illegal and violate the human rights and Geneva Convention. Barbaric strikes of US were badly affected the people of northern areas of Pakistan socially, economically and psychologically. President Bush started new warfare in the form of drone strikes and his successor Obama more extended his brutal policy of drone strikes which killed great number of innocent citizens and less US labelled terrorists of the northern areas. Total 430 drone strikes have confirmed from 2004 to July 2018, that killed 81 high level terrorists and just about 969 innocent citizens of Pakistan. The effected families throw into confusion economically. Psychological traumatic milieu was made there due to ruthless attacks. And social interruptions were spread in the FATA region people did not gather due to the fear of drone strikes. The inhumane drone strikes conducted by the United States, initiated on June 8, 2004, and continuing until January 24, 2018, have cast a dark shadow over the northern areas of Pakistan, resulting in the tragic loss of innocent lives. Thousands of drone devices were deployed in this region, causing devastation among the civilian population. The Pakistan National Assembly has repeatedly condemned and criticized these drone attacks, asserting that they flagrantly violate the UN Charter and humanitarian norms. Furthermore, the Peshawar High Court ruled against the U.S. drone strikes, deeming them illegal and in violation of human rights and the Geneva Convention. The barbaric nature of these strikes has had profound and far-reaching effects on the people of the northern areas of Pakistan, impacting them socially, economically, and psychologically. President Bush initiated this new form of warfare through drone strikes, and his successor, President Obama, further extended this brutal policy, resulting in the deaths of a significant number of innocent citizens, while purportedly targeting labelled terrorists in the northern areas. A total of 430 drone strikes were confirmed between 2004 and July 2018, claiming the lives of 81 high-level terrorists and approximately 969 innocent Pakistani citizens.

The economic disruption faced by affected families has thrown them into confusion, while the psychological trauma inflicted by these ruthless attacks has created a distressing environment. Social disruptions have permeated the FATA region, with people avoiding gatherings out of fear of drone strikes, underscoring the pervasive impact of this prolonged and controversial military strategy. After the 9/11 attack and war against terrorism the United States of America has targeted many regions of kpk by drone strikes, and especially the federally administrative tribal areas (FATA) have targeted. When United States has invaded in Afghanistan in October 2001, this time the populations of FATA area were estimated 5 million. Most of the FATA inhabitants have ethnically Pashtun. The FATA region has consisted on seven agencies. According to some scholars the South and North Waziristan of the FATA region has been sanctuaries of the terrorist militants.



The Pakistan and Afghanistan both countries bases have been settled in these two districts. The South and North Waziristan have been the sanctuaries for training of terrorist militants. The Pak-Afghan terrorist militants have launched their attacks from these areas. Following the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent initiation of the war against terrorism, the United States of America focused its efforts on various regions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) through drone strikes, with a particular emphasis on the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). When the United States invaded Afghanistan in October 2001, the population of the FATA region was estimated at 5 million, primarily comprising ethnically Pashtun inhabitants. This region was administratively divided into seven agencies. According to scholars, the South and North Waziristan districts within the FATA region served as sanctuaries for terrorist militants. Both Pakistan and Afghanistan had established bases in these districts, which became significant training grounds for terrorist activities. The South and North Waziristan areas served as launching pads for attacks carried out by Pak-Afghan terrorist militants, making them pivotal in the complex geopolitical landscape of the region. The strategic importance of these districts in facilitating the training and coordination of terrorist activities underscored the challenges faced by both Pakistan and Afghanistan in combating the persistent threat of terrorism in the border areas. According to scholars, the South and North Waziristan districts within the FATA region served as sanctuaries for terrorist militants. Both Pakistan and Afghanistan had established bases in these districts, which became significant training grounds for terrorist activities. The South and North Waziristan areas served as launching pads for attacks carried out by Pak-Afghan terrorist militants, making them pivotal in the complex geopolitical landscape of the region. The strategic importance of these districts in facilitating the training and coordination of terrorist activities underscored the challenges faced by both Pakistan and Afghanistan in combating the persistent threat of terrorism in the border areas. (Muhammad Amjad 2016). According to researchers Pakistan army has been build up its strategic location in the region of South and North Waziristan to prevent terrorist militants from the all type of threats. Pakistan army first time has been deployed its army in South and North Waziristan in 2002-3. United States has been pressurized the Pakistan army to deployed its army and prevent all security threats from terrorist militants. United States was also pressurized the Pakistan government to counter the Al-Qaeda militants in South Waziristan. It was threat to US led coalition troops in Afghanistan. (Raymond Kuo 2015).

According to scholars, the South and North Waziristan districts within the FATA region played a critical role as sanctuaries for terrorist militants. Both Pakistan and Afghanistan established bases in these districts, transforming them into significant training grounds for terrorist activities. The South and North Waziristan areas functioned as launch pads for attacks carried out by Pak-Afghan terrorist militants, thus holding a pivotal position in the intricate geopolitical landscape of the region. The strategic importance of these districts in facilitating the training and coordination of terrorist activities highlighted the challenges faced by both Pakistan and Afghanistan in addressing the persistent threat of terrorism in the border areas (Muhammad Amjad, 2016). Researchers have indicated that the Pakistan Army strategically positioned itself in the South and North Waziristan regions to counter various threats posed by terrorist militants. In 2002-3, the Pakistan Army deployed its forces in these areas for the first time. The United States exerted



pressure on the Pakistan Army to take preventive measures against all types of security threats posed by terrorist militants. Furthermore, the U.S. urged the Pakistan government to counter Al-Qaeda militants specifically in South Waziristan, considering them a threat to the U.S.-led coalition troops stationed in Afghanistan (Raymond Kuo, 2015). This collaborative effort underscored the complex and interconnected nature of regional security concerns, necessitating coordinated actions to address the challenges posed by terrorism.

In 2004, the Pakistan Army launched an operation in South Waziristan due to the losses and suffering caused by terrorist militants to local people and civilians. In an effort to establish peace, the Pakistan military pursued a policy of appeasement and signed a peace accord with Nek Muhammad, the leader of the terrorist militants, in April 2004. However, Nek Muhammad was subsequently killed by a CIA drone strike in June 2004. Initially focused on South Waziristan, United States drone strikes targeted the bases and homes of terrorist militants. The focus later shifted to North Waziristan, particularly targeting the Al-Qaeda network in the region. In North Waziristan, the Pakistan Taliban initiated a mission against the state of Pakistan. The United States drone strikes targeted two main militant groups in North Waziristan: The Tehreek Taliban Pakistan and its umbrella group created by Mehsud in 2007. These groups were targeted because they emerged to eliminate the security forces of Pakistan. The Haqqani network, aligned with the Afghan Taliban against the United States military in Afghanistan, was also a focus of U.S. drone strikes. Interviews with local people in Waziristan revealed a predominantly negative sentiment towards drone strikes. The impact of drone warfare, including civilian casualties, military operations, mental distress, militant recruitments, and people displacement, has had severe consequences on the lives of Waziristan's residents. The drone strikes resulted in the loss of homes, damage to property, and exposure to brutal military attitudes. The CIA intensified its campaign in the FATA region against Al-Qaeda militants. (Zeeshan, Hira 2009).

The drone strikes campaign has resulted in a significant number of civilian casualties, causing deep concern and anxiety among the people of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). The ongoing drone strikes have not only led to the loss of innocent lives but have also generated a sense of insecurity among the local population. These strikes have introduced delusions and complexities among terrorist militants, affecting their strategies and operations. Even Osama bin Laden, the leader of Al Qaeda, acknowledged the strong impact of drone strikes on his organization. Several studies and research efforts have highlighted the physical destruction and mental distress caused by drone strikes, fostering negative sentiments towards the United States in FATA. Particularly in South Waziristan, the local population has experienced adverse effects due to drone strikes, leading to psychological tensions, stress, and anxieties, especially among children. The constant perception of threats has created a pervasive atmosphere of fear and unease among the people of Waziristan, contributing to a challenging and strained social environment. (Muhammad Amjad 2016).

Origination of Suicide Bombing Culture Through U.S. Drone Strikes

It is evident that the United States initiated drone strikes in the regions of FATA and eastern Afghanistan, with the primary targets being terrorist militants and their locations. These strikes,



while aimed at addressing security concerns, have had significant repercussions on public sentiment in Pakistan. At times, these drone strikes have led to clashes between the public and the government, fostering opposition against the United States. Notably, the United States conducted drone strikes with the consent of the Pakistani government, signifying an agreement between the two nations on addressing shared security concerns.

According to Tahreek Taliban Pakistan, the increased frequency of U.S. drone strikes has fuelled resentment among the local population, as these strikes resulted in the loss of innocent civilians in the FATA region. This has prompted individuals to demand retribution for the casualties, leading some to join Tahreek Taliban Pakistan. It is crucial to note that while Pakistan has not officially declared war, the government has granted permission to the United States to carry out drone operations against terrorist targets within its borders. This complex dynamic reflects the intricate relationship between the United States, the Pakistani government, and the sentiments of the local population affected by these military actions. (Patrick B Johnson, Anoop sarbani 2015).

The state of Pakistan, while informally engaged in the war against terrorism, also faced internal complexities involving state terrorism. To address these challenges, Pakistan entered into secret cooperation with the United States, seeking assistance in eliminating Al-Qaeda presence within its borders. As part of this collaboration, Pakistan actively supported U.S. drone strikes targeting terrorist militants. Notable instances include the killing of Nek Muhammad, the chief of Tahreek Taliban Pakistan, on June 17, 2004, and Abu Hamza Rabia in 2005. Between 2007 and 2009, U.S. drone strikes claimed the lives of 12 top leaders of the Al-Qaeda organization, but these operations also resulted in civilian casualties. Public condemnation of U.S. drone strikes intensified when the United States initiated a search for Al-Qaeda leader Ayman Al Zawahiri in the Waziristan village of Damadola in Bajaur district. Numerous drone attacks in the region led to a significant number of civilian casualties, prompting public outrage against these brutal activities. The people of Pakistan demanded that the government condemn the civilian casualties resulting from U.S. drone strikes. The use of drones by the United States raised questions among the Pakistani population, questioning the reasons behind U.S. intervention in Pakistan and the utilization of drone strikes. The United States consistently portrayed its intervention and drone strikes as responses to perceived weaknesses in Pakistan's intelligence agencies' investigation and strategy against terrorism. Allegations were made against Pakistani agencies, claiming leaks of secret information and plans against terrorist militants, further complicating the intricate dynamics of the relationship between the two nations. (Patrick B Johnson, Anoop sarbani 2015).

The United States maintained a dual policy towards Pakistan during the war against terrorism, exemplified by the Bush administration's clandestine authorization of drone strikes against Al-Qaeda militants on one hand, and a lack of trust in the Pakistani government and agencies on the other. The U.S. believed that Pakistan had granted permission and consent to the CIA for drone operations, considering it a collaborative effort to achieve the success of self-launching operations. According to the Brookings Institution, the United States' single strikes against individual militants often resulted in the unintended killing of additional civilians in the region. The Washington Post reported on October 4, 2008, that Pakistani authorities had entered into a secret deal with the U.S. to allow drone strikes in the region. However, this claim was



rejected by the foreign minister of Pakistan at that time. In response to such statements, Pakistan requested the United States to provide drone strike technology and training. However, the U.S. rejected this request, citing concerns about information leakage regarding terrorist militants.

The consequences of U.S. drone strike from 2005 to 2012 were significant, with 2,193 civilians killed, 251 injured, and a total of 230 drone attacks occurring during these years. The civilian casualties raised international and domestic concerns, highlighting the complex and contentious nature of the U.S.-Pakistan relationship during this period. The FATA region, particularly South and North Waziristan, has been profoundly affected by US drone strikes, causing distress and victimization, especially among children who bear the psychological burden of air strikes. The negative impact of drone strikes has reverberated across KPK, affecting FATA socially, economically, and psychologically. One detrimental consequence has been the emergence of a suicide bombing culture in response to the drone strikes, with terrorist militants adopting this deadly tactic. The practice of suicide bombing, initiated by terrorist militants in response to the targeted killings of important personalities by US drones, has inflicted significant harm on civilians. Suicide bombings, aimed at civilians in public places, have become a common strategy employed by extremist militants. After the 9/11 attacks, the soil of Pakistan became a battleground against terrorism, leading to terrorist militants targeting civilians and important personalities through suicide bombings. This form of attack became the most common and devastating weapon for extremists, especially in light of Pakistan's collaboration with the United States against militant groups. Osama bin Laden, the leader of Al-Qaeda, acknowledged the substantial weakening of Al-Qaeda members in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region, particularly in FATA, due to US drone strikes. Initially focused on security forces, suicide bombings evolved over the years, increasing in both quantity and quality from 2001 to 2012. Extremist militants targeted security forces, worship places, processions, and educational institutions, posing a grave threat to societal stability. Researchers and scholars have sought to understand the motivations behind suicide bombings, examining the reasons that lead individuals to carry out such attacks. The complex interplay of factors contributing to the rise of this destructive practice continues to be a subject of investigation and analysis. Analysts and scholars have identified several reasons behind the rise of suicide bombing, shedding light on the complex motivations that drive extremist militants to engage in such acts of violence. Firstly, the analysts suggest that a distorted and false interpretation of religious commitments fuels the emotions of individuals, prompting them to conduct suicide bombings. The deeply emotional nature of these acts is rooted in a misguided understanding of religious teachings. Secondly, scholars highlight the strong hatred that extremist militants harbour towards the West, coupled with a sense of solidarity with fellow Muslims.

This sentiment drives them to target Western entities and their allies. In the context of Pakistan being a non-NATO ally of the United States post-9/11, extremist militants have directed suicide bombings towards both foreign and local targets, resulting in the tragic loss of innocent lives. A third reason, as outlined by analysts, is the desperation felt by extremist militants to engage directly with superior authorities. The perceived weakness of these militants, unable to engage in conventional one-on-one warfare with Pakistan or U.S. military forces, leads them to resort to suicide bombings as a means of asymmetric warfare. This tactic allows them to inflict damage on



their perceived adversaries despite their military inferiority. The multifaceted nature of these motivations reflects the intricate dynamics underlying suicide bombings, emphasizing the need for comprehensive efforts to address the root causes and prevent the recurrence of such devastating acts of violence. (Muhammad Amjad 2016). Researchers have found that suicide bombings are often carried out by boys aged 12 to 18, and scholars have offered various explanations for the involvement of teenagers in these acts of violence. Firstly, many teenagers involved in suicide bombings are affiliated with madrassas. Parents often send their children to madrassas because they provide free Islamic education, along with food and clothing. The accessibility of teenagers, coupled with the relatively unnoticed status of young children, makes them vulnerable to extremist training for suicide bombings. Scholars argue that teenagers, being more emotional than adults, are easily manipulated and brainwashed into conducting suicide bombings in targeted areas. The emotions of these young individuals are quickly aroused, particularly in response to the perceived injustices inflicted on their blood relatives and the killing of siblings during U.S. drone strikes and military operations. The primary motive behind extremist militants employing teenagers in suicide bombings is often revenge against drone strikes. The impact of U.S. drone strikes and extremist suicide bombings has had a profound effect on the people of FATA. Between 2001 and 2008, extremist militants conducted a total of 280 suicide bombing attacks, resulting in the deaths of 4,324 innocent people in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Additionally, 8,622 civilians were injured in these suicide bombing attacks. The cycle of violence involving drone strikes and retaliatory suicide bombings has inflicted immense suffering on the local population, especially on the youth who are manipulated into participating in such tragic events. (Zeeshan, Hira 2014).

The Impact of Drone Warfare on Population Migration

The impact of United States drone strikes in the FATA region extends beyond their intended targets, affecting both terrorist militants and innocent civilians in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. While the drone war has sought to counter extremist bombers and masterminds, it has also raised concerns about its morality and legality, eliciting negative attitudes from lawyers, think tanks, and the general public in the region. The drone strikes have been criticized for crossing ethical boundaries and legal limitations. Christine Fair highlights the dual nature of the impact, acknowledging that the U.S. drone war has successfully targeted extremist militants but has also resulted in the unintended casualties of innocent civilians. The controversial nature of the drone war policy is underscored by the detrimental effects on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's society, leading to anti-American sentiments in the region. The consequences of the U.S. drone war have been far-reaching, destabilizing FATA society and prompting mass migration of residents from their homes to other cities in Pakistan. This upheaval has not only disrupted the social fabric but has also fuelled anti-American sentiments, contributing to the complex and contentious relationship between the affected communities and the United States. (Muhammad Amjad 2015).

The United States drone strikes have significantly disrupted the peaceful environment in the FATA region, leading to adverse economic consequences for local businesses and causing a surge in internal displacement. The impact of the drone war has been particularly pronounced in South and North Waziristan, areas already grappling with challenges such as food scarcity, lack of



medical resources, and threats from Taliban and extremist militants. The internal displacement commenced in 2004 but reached its peak between 2008 and 2010. Official reports indicate that nearly two million people were displaced from the region, with the main catalyst being the initiation of military operations in FATA in 2007. The first military operation alone displaced 80,000 people, marking the beginning of a significant challenge in managing the migration of affected populations. As these displaced individuals migrated to other provinces, such as Punjab and Sindh, concerns arose regarding the potential threat to the cultural identity and traditions of the Pashtun population. Security forces in these provinces implemented stringent measures to control the influx of displaced individuals, leading to further challenges for the affected communities. Researchers and analysts have extensively studied the issues of internal displacement and external migration resulting from the drone war in FATA. The use of double-tap drone strikes, which target not only the initial victims but also those who come to aid the wounded in the aftermath, has added another layer of complexity to the humanitarian crisis. The collateral damage and disruption caused by these strikes have compounded the challenges faced by the people of FATA, leaving a lasting impact on the region's socio-economic fabric and contributing to the larger discourse on the ethics and consequences of drone warfare. (Muhammad Amjad 2015).

The impact of U.S. drone strikes in the FATA region extends beyond immediate casualties, affecting cultural and religious practices, communal gatherings, and social trust. According to a report by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, in 2012, at least 50 civilians were killed in drone strikes while trying to assist victims of the initial attacks. The use of double-tap drone strikes has not only targeted religious and non-religious traditions but has also affected the predominantly Muslim population in FATA. When civilians are killed in drone strikes, the FATA Muslim community fulfils its religious duty by organizing communal funeral services. However, the U.S. drone campaign has created a climate of fear, threatening the cultural and religious practices of the tribal areas. Attending funeral prayers has become risky, with the TBU data indicating that dozens of people have been killed during such gatherings. The consequences of drone strikes go beyond loss of life; they also damage the properties of poor individuals in the FATA region. The destruction caused by drone strikes not only provokes emotional distress within affected families but also leads to long-lasting instability. Key family members are often targeted, as they may gather at work sites and other specific locations, intensifying the impact on the affected families. The collateral damage caused by U.S. drone strikes has eroded community trust, as neighbours may begin to view one another with suspicion, potentially branding someone as a U.S. spy. Allegations of locals being hired to set chips at main targets further contribute to the breakdown of trust within the community. The multifaceted consequences of drone strikes highlight the complex challenges faced by the people of FATA, extending beyond immediate casualties to the social fabric and cultural practices of the region. (Bureau of Investigative journalism).

Public Perceptions of US Drone Strikes

The use of United States drone strikes in Pakistan has been a highly contentious and controversial issue, leading to public protests and multiple debates in the country's parliament. The



controversy stems from the extensive coverage of drone attacks by Urdu and English-language TV channels and newspapers, which have sparked opinions and discussions among both the general public and private citizens. Drones have become a unique and prominent topic in Pakistani media, with news coverage focusing on the destruction of ground targets and specific mission objectives carried out by drone strikes. The primary basis for the controversy surrounding U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan is their reliance on targeted killings, which has raised significant objections from various groups and individuals. One of the main concerns voiced against drone strikes is the collateral damage caused by these attacks. Critics argue that, given Pakistan's stance against terrorism, the government should not justify drone strikes that result in the deaths of innocent civilians. The concentration of U.S. drone strikes in the FATA region has intensified these concerns, leading to widespread public dissatisfaction and objections to the perceived violation of Pakistan's sovereignty. The controversy surrounding U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan reflects the complex ethical, legal, and geopolitical challenges associated with this form of warfare, and it continues to be a source of tension both domestically and in the broader international arena. (Karl kaltenthaler, William Miller 2012). The majority of drone strikes in Pakistan have been concentrated in South and North Waziristan agencies, with 73 percent in South Waziristan and 27 percent in North Waziristan, according to Peter Bergen. The use of drones in these regions has generated varied opinions within Pakistan, particularly in the FATA region. From an American perspective, drone strikes have been justified as targeting only extremist militants and jihadist groups, with the assurance that civilians are not the primary focus. However, in Pakistan, anti-American sentiments have risen, fuelled by the belief that the U.S. employs drones for malevolent purposes. The U.S. government's assertion that "good country does good, and bad country do bad" has not alleviated concerns among the Pakistani public. The coverage of U.S. drone strikes in Pakistani media has largely been negative, with a strong focus on civilian deaths rather than militant casualties. Urdu and English-language newspapers have played a significant role in shaping public opinion against drone strikes. The media's portrayal has contributed to the negative perception of drones among the Pakistani populace. Elite opinions also play a crucial role in shaping public sentiment regarding drone strikes. The trust placed in the opinions of the Pakistani elite, who often have influence and access to information, contributes to the overall stance on whether drone strikes are viewed as beneficial or detrimental to Pakistan. The role of elite figures in disseminating information and influencing public discourse is a key factor in shaping the narrative surrounding U.S. drone strikes in the country. The Pakistani elite, equipped with substantial information about the U.S. drone strikes, plays a pivotal role in shaping public opinion by sharing their perspectives with the masses. Within the elite class, there exists a spectrum of opinions on the U.S. drone program, leading to divisions among different groups. Some political and military elites have expressed support for the drone program, despite public opposition. On the other hand, there are those who oppose drone strikes, while others maintain a neutral stance. Religious elites in Pakistan have been unequivocally against the U.S. drone strikes program and have actively advocated for its cessation. This sentiment is reflected in political actions, as religious elites have formed coalitions and political parties, such as Difa-e-Pakistan in the national assembly, which consistently condemn drone attacks and call for an end to the program. In the



FATA region, various groups of refugees from Afghanistan have taken refuge, some of which have transformed into extremist militant groups opposing the mutual interests of both the United States and Pakistan. Public attitudes toward these groups have generally been positive, with many supporting the use of drone strikes to eliminate these threats. The complexity of elite opinions and public attitudes reflects the multifaceted nature of the U.S. drone program's impact on Pakistani society and its role in addressing security concerns in the region. (Karl kaltenthaler, William Miller 2012).

The Economic Ramifications of US Drone Strikes on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

It is indeed a fact that drone strikes have resulted in the deaths of numerous terrorists and extremist militants. From 2010 to 2020, United States drones are estimated to have killed between 8,500 and 12,000 people, including civilians (with civilian casualties estimated at 1,700 to 400). While the use of drones has been effective in targeting militants, it has also caused unnecessary deaths and societal damage. In 2004, Pervez Musharraf approved the use of unmanned aerial vehicles by the United States in the FATA region, citing the increasing presence of militants in the area. The impact of drone strikes goes beyond economic issues, also contributing to significant humanitarian problems in the region. The ethical and legal implications of such strikes have been widely debated, as the effectiveness in targeting militants has been accompanied by concerns about collateral damage and the toll on civilian lives. (Fakhr Alam, Mohsin Kamal 2018). Ahmad Raza Kauri emphasizes the imperative to cease the U.S. drone war, contending that drone strikes egregiously violate human rights, international law, and Pakistan's sovereignty. The detrimental impact of drone strikes extends beyond physical deaths and damage, encompassing psychological and health issues. When a key member of a family is killed in a drone attack, the repercussions affect the entire family. In 2009, Pakistan's economy faced challenges due to the influx of over three million internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the FATA region. The mass displacement was a consequence of the post-9/11 attack and the subsequent U.S.-led war on terror. The people of FATA had to abandon their economic activities in their regions, driven by the increased frequency of drone attacks and concurrent Pakistan military operations. The combination of drone strikes and military operations created a complex and challenging situation, exacerbating economic difficulties and displacing a significant portion of the population. (Ahmad Raza).

The Pakistan Army initiated several operations against terrorism, beginning with Operation Enduring Freedom in 2001-2002, followed by operations such as Al-Maizan, Zalzal, Sher Dil, and others. These military operations significantly impacted the economic activities of the people in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), leading many to migrate to other regions of Pakistan. The combination of military operations, terrorist attacks, and U.S. drone strikes became primary factors influencing the economic hardships faced by the residents of FATA. The military operations, in conjunction with terrorist activities and drone strikes, compelled local residents to abandon their homes and businesses, resulting in internal displacement. The individuals displaced by these conflicts are referred to as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) as they leave their homes and livelihoods within the country to seek refuge in other regions. The complex interplay of military actions, terrorism, and drone strikes has had profound economic and social consequences



for the people of FATA. (Muhammad Amjad 2016). Drone strikes have had a profound impact on the infrastructure and social fabric of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) region. The people of FATA have borne the brunt of these attacks, experiencing job losses, the abandonment of businesses, and a direct reduction in incomes. Analysts estimate that 56 percent of males and 43 percent of females have been affected by military operations and drone strikes, leading to the abandonment of various businesses. The economic, political, and social structures of the FATA region have been significantly disrupted by a combination of drone strikes, military operations, and terrorism. The region was traditionally governed by Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR) and the Jirga system, with political agents playing a crucial role. However, the Jirga system has been heavily affected by U.S. drone strikes, as they specifically target key personalities. The socio-economic and political landscapes of FATA have undergone substantial changes due to the rise of terrorism and the use of drones against these threats. The goals pursued by the U.S. and Pakistan governments, as well as the objectives of terrorist groups, have reshaped the region's dynamics. As a result, the local population has been deprived of their homes and infrastructure, leading to a loss of normal business activities in an environment that was once stable and peaceful. The ongoing struggles in the region have left a lasting impact on the lives and livelihoods of the people of FATA. (Matthew Bolton 2022). The lifestyle of the people in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) has been severely disrupted due to the ongoing rivalries and conflicts. Civilians in the region have expressed a strong preference for economic stability and a peaceful environment. Some individuals in the area have colloquially linked drone strikes to the name "ababeel" (swallow), as they were perceived to be helpful in conducting spying missions. Two types of drone strikes were prevalent in the FATA region: personality strikes and signature strikes. Personality strikes, a term used during President George W. Bush's administration, were considered less aggressive and targeted specific individuals, particularly prominent leaders among extremist militants. These strikes were more specific in nature. In contrast, signature strikes, introduced during President Barack Obama's administration, had a broader impact on society, affecting various aspects of life, including the economy. President Obama authorized the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to carry out signature drone strikes. These strikes targeted groups of people rather than individual personalities, resulting in a more widespread impact on the local population in FATA. (Matthew Bolton 2022). The nature of signature drone strikes differed significantly from personality strikes, as signature strikes were characterized by a more aggressive approach. Unlike personality strikes, which were specific and targeted individual leaders, signature strikes aimed at entire terrorist groups. These strikes also hit groups of civilians who were perceived to resemble the targeted terrorist group in the eyes of the CIA.

The use of double-tap strikes was another tactic employed by the United States to block any aid to the target, ensuring the elimination of dangerous places. While some individuals held positive attitudes toward U.S. drone strikes, believing they eliminated terrorist groups in the region, the affected people in FATA strongly opposed these strikes. The detrimental effects on jobs, businesses, and economic stability led to widespread discontent among the local population. Analysts conducted interviews and research to collect responses toward U.S. drone strikes, particularly focusing on economic aspects. The regions of South and North Waziristan experienced



significant impacts on economic, educational, and health activities. Internally displaced people from South and North Waziristan suffered greatly due to drone strikes. Displacement shattered economic activities, education, and infrastructure in these regions. The health problems caused by drone strikes, coupled with the closure of businesses and destruction of infrastructure, exacerbated the challenges faced by the people of FATA. Markets, educational institutions, and other businesses in South and North Waziristan were closed or destroyed, further contributing to the economic and social disruptions in the affected regions. (Manhood Ahmad 2015). The impact of drone strikes in FATA has prompted people to relocate their businesses to other cities, presenting a significant challenge for the Pakistani government. The lack of basic facilities for health in South and North Waziristan has added to the difficulties faced by those affected. Injured individuals from drone strikes have been transported from these regions to places like Banu and Peshawar for medical treatment. Negative sentiments against U.S. drone strikes have intensified in the FATA region, where people constantly lived under the threat of drones. Socio-economic issues have permeated local communities, creating challenges that extend beyond the immediate physical damage caused by the strikes. The destruction of hospitals, roads, schools, and houses in the region has further exacerbated these challenges. Additionally, drones have had a profound impact on the cultural fabric of FATA, affecting traditional elements such as hujra (male gathering places), Jirga (traditional assembly of tribal elders), and funeral services. (Muhammad Amjad 2016)

The Deep-Seated Psychological Trauma Inflicted by US Drone Strikes in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

The emotional wounds inflicted by United States drone strikes in FATA have had lasting effects on the psychological well-being of its inhabitants. While the physical damage caused by drones is evident, the psychological harm and trauma have had a more profound impact on the emotional attitudes of the people. The use of predator drones targeted terrorist militants in the province of KPK, and scholars highlight the psychological trauma as the second impact of U.S. drone strikes, with direct civilian deaths being the first. This psychological trauma has given rise to anti-American sentiments and has sparked conflicts between the Pakistani government and its citizens. The lack of trust in the government and military leadership has intensified, and people's emotions and sentiments have become increasingly negative towards both the Pakistan and United States governments. (Anjali Sawh 2014).

It is evident that the US government received praise from the Pakistani government for its collaboration in the fight against terrorist militants. The Pakistani government actively cooperated with the United States in its drone war operations in the FATA region, initiated for security reasons. However, this collaboration had significant consequences. According to Kilcullen, drone strikes introduced a new form of destruction that posed a threat to the livelihood of FATA residents. The psychological impact of drone strikes on the people of FATA led to increased anti-American sentiments and slogans against both the US and the Pakistani government. Public support waned, and the drone strikes contributed to the rise of extremism, turning some FATA residents against the Pak-US government. The strikes not only affected individual emotions but also had a profound impact on the entire society. Protests against US drone strikes and the perceived subservience of



the Pakistani government to the US were widespread. The slogan "No more drone attacks" resonated, and people accused the government of being a puppet of the US, criticizing its compliance with American policies. The government's restrictions on access to FATA hindered efforts to voice the concerns and helplessness of the local population. Protests were held outside the parliament house, particularly against the US drone strikes in South and North Waziristan regions, where civilians were heavily affected. The psychological trauma prevalent in KPK, particularly in the FATA region, has led to peaceful protests rather than resorting to violence. The affected people have chosen to express their grievances through non-violent means, likely aiming to draw attention to their plight and advocate for change in policies that have adversely impacted their lives. This reflects a civil and non-confrontational approach in seeking redress for the psychological trauma caused by factors such as drone strikes. (Manhood Ahmad 2015). The United States drone strikes have not only caused physical harm but have also significantly increased mental health problems and stress among the people in the FATA region. The negative impact on the mental well-being of the affected individuals has led to a collective sense of grievance against both the U.S. and Pakistani governments. The perceived injustice and loss of innocent lives have fuelled resentment and a desire for revenge among the local tribes and clans. This has manifested in some individuals joining militant groups, such as the TTP, to carry out acts of violence, including suicide bombings, targeting security forces and educational institutions as a form of retaliation against the perceived oppressors. The complex interplay between the psychological trauma caused by drone strikes and the subsequent rise in violence underscores the multifaceted consequences of such military actions on affected populations. (Vijay Luhan 2015).

Conclusion

The drone warfare in Pakistan unfolded during three consecutive U.S. presidential administrations, spanning the terms of George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and Donald Trump. Despite the partnership between the U.S. and Pakistan in combating terrorism, the Pakistani government did not officially grant permission for U.S. drone operations on its soil. The U.S. justified these strikes on the grounds of self-defence, initiating them without explicit consent from the Pakistani authorities. The repercussions of these drone attacks, perceived as a violation of human rights and humanitarian norms by many analysts, have left a profound impact on the FATA region. The strikes resulted in social disruptions, economic instability, and significant psychological trauma within the affected communities. Furthermore, the ratio of civilian casualties to the relatively fewer deaths of targeted terrorists raised concerns about the ethical implications of such military actions.



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