



RESEARCH PAPER

Resurgence of TTP in Pakistan: Implications for Peace and Security in Southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates the significant implications for peace and security in the southern region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan, of the resurgence of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). The paper endeavors to analyze the factors that contributed to the TTP's resurgence to elucidate the intricate dynamics that facilitated its acquisition of power, despite prior counterinsurgency efforts. This paper employed a qualitative philosophy-based explanatory approach. This study provides the root causes and hurdles behind the positive peace and security in Southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. We find that core ideological tenets and intricate organizational frameworks are indispensable for the development of effective counterterrorism policies and the promotion of enduring stability in regions affected by terrorism. This study suggests enhancing intelligence cooperation between national and regional security agencies and enhancing control over borders, especially from the Afghanistan side.

KEYWORDS Peace, Reemergence, Tehrek-e-Taliban, Challenge, Security

Introduction

The rise of TTP in the southern parts of Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa poses a danger to peace and stability. The economic and socio-political landscape has been shaped by the historical context of Talibanization in Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa. Terrorism in these areas is influenced by many factors i.e. internal and external. To address the intricate dynamics of extremism that have afflicted this region for decades, it is essential to thoroughly comprehend the recent resurgence of the Taliban in the area (Ahsan, 2015).

Talibanization in Pakistan started in 1990s with the withdrawal of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan. Afghanistan became a battlefield for several groups. During this tumultuous period, Afghanistan became a sanctuary for extremist ideologies, attracting combatants from several regions, including Pakistan (Yaseen & Muzaffar, 2018; Yoram, 2009; Muzaffar, et. al., 2017). Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa's economic and sociopolitical conditions and border with Afghanistan have helped TTP rise. Longstanding administrative concerns, low economic development, and a lack of basic services plague the region. These areas' poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy made a large portion of the population prone to radicalization and extremist recruiting. Tribal dynamics, historical grievances, and autonomy have interacted complexly throughout the region (Nawab, et. al., 2021; Muhammad, 2012).

The re-emergence of TTP in Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa's south presents a complicated and imminent danger to peace and security. Understanding the historical roots of Talibanization, its contemporary reemergence, outside sources like Afghanistan, military activities, and the complex economic and socio-political dynamics of the region is crucial. This article seeks to understand the TTP's reemergence and southern Khyber

Pakhtoonkhwa's problems. We intend to provide informed suggestions to fight extremism and promote the region's long-term peace and security.

Literature Review

Throughout the TTP's history, several events raised regional security concerns. Significant occurrences in the TTP's history included the killings of notable officials, attacks on military installations, and the audacious acquisition of territory. Analyzing these events offers a historical perspective on the group's rise and provides a foundation for comprehending the subsequent factors that contributed to its decline.

These terrorist organizations and their sources that facilitate TTP typically operate based on altered structures, donations (from domestic and international supporters), criminal activities, particularly kidnapping for ransom, theft, extortion, financial resources from other terrorist groups, and exploitation of natural resources and archaeological sites. Despite not benefiting the Pakistani government during its previous extended periods of negotiation, the TTP initiated peace negotiations in January 2014 with representatives of the Nawaz Sharif-led administration. TTP claimed the attack on Karachi Airport on June 8, 2014, which resulted in 36 fatalities, prompting the cessation of peace negotiations as the Pakistani military opted for a comprehensive offensive in North Waziristan (Ogden , 2013).

Motivational Forces behind Reemergence of TTP

Following the Russian invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, this area of Central and South-Central Asia has become safe havens for non-state actors. Following the events of 9/11, these entities intensified their operations, thereby becoming deadlier and being classified as terrorist organizations. Both the region collectively and individual governments have tried to address this new threat to their peace and stability. Counter-terrorism military operations have finally addressed the repercussions of these terrorist acts, with Pakistan serving as the primary entity.

There were many reasons for the lack of formal discussions between the TTP and the Pakistani government. One theory proposes the use of targeted drone assaults as a means of overthrowing the regime. This technique may have eliminated TTP's trustworthy negotiators, making securing agreements tougher for new and old leaders. Further repercussions include the TTP's inclination to abandon a peace process and the increased appetite of both new and existing members for a military option. An alternate viewpoint emphasizes the ramifications of drone strikes on human casualties and infrastructural destruction. This may have attracted discontented members to the TTP, bolstered its support base, and hindered "moderates" from advocating for a negotiated resolution. Moreover, some claim that Pakistan's alleged cooperation in the US drone program has compromised its credibility and legitimacy as a partner for the TTP in any prospective peace process (Farooqa, 2020).

The departure of US forces from Afghanistan created a power vacuum that allowed the Taliban to regain their standing. International and domestic backing, particularly from Pakistani advocates, significantly bolstered the Taliban's efforts. Due to weak government systems in Afghanistan and Pakistan's tribal areas, the Taliban readily established a foothold and exploited local concerns. The Taliban's recruiting and narrative were hampered by complex tribal dynamics and ethnic and sectarian conflict. The Taliban gained military skill and reputation via failed military campaigns and irregular peace deals. Their ideological allure and grievances against Western interventions bolstered the Taliban's resilience and ability to withstand foreign incursions (Abbas, 2014).

Nonetheless, the tribal community, which showed increased opposition to this expansion in the region, met the recent comeback with disapproval. The Swat Qaumi Jirga,

leading the residents of Swat, organized a series of demonstrations in response to the surge in terrorist activity in the Charbagh Tehsil. They expressed their dissatisfaction and asked that the administration take prompt measures against those jeopardizing peace in the region. Motivated by prior violent incidents, including a school van assault that resulted in many fatalities, hundreds of people engaged in protests around Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa. Participants demonstrated solidarity and warned of potential violent resistance should authorities neglect to promptly address their grievances. A series of rallies advocating for the eradication of terrorism and enhanced security measures in the region demonstrate the growing animosity among the inhabitants of Swat. Notable political figures have supported the demonstrations and underscored the need for peace in Swat, including Prime Minister's Advisor Amir Muqam. The protests have underscored the need for robust counterterrorism measures to achieve enduring peace in the valley (Bacha, 2022).

The Cross-Border influence

Pakistan possesses an extensive and permeable boundary with Afghanistan, a region that has recently come under the control of the Afghan Taliban. The principal factions of the Taliban are converging on significant aspects of their ideology, thereby fostering increased coordination and cooperation on a range of issues. The rise in TTP's assaults and operations in Pakistan following the fall of Kabul serves as clear evidence to examine the connection between these two distinct factions of a shared ideology. A multitude of regional and global dynamics intricately connect the resurgence of TTP, with cross-border support and influence playing a significant role. The porous border between Afghanistan and Pakistan has allowed militants to hide and build support. The Afghan conflict's insurgency and instability have helped the TTP recover and restructure. The historical ties between terrorist groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan, along with the geographical complexity, have allowed the TTP to exploit regional power dynamics. A complex network of regional dynamics exists, and numerous nations are responding to these changing conditions. Pakistan is one of them. Pakistan may have an advantage over India due to the changing geopolitical landscape after the Taliban took over Afghanistan. This tactical advantage comes with the potential for greater terrorism, notably from the TTP. Given these regional security dynamics, Pakistan must balance TTP security threats with strategic advantage over India following Kabul's collapse (Khan, 2021).

Pakistan-Afghanistan antagonism from territorial disputes to 9/11 claims of cross-border terrorism. It encourages the use of Jirgas, a Pashtun conflict resolution mechanism, to strengthen peace discussions between the two nations, which have been bungled with TTP from the start. Examining all prior efforts to bilaterally use Jirgas shows that Pashtuns on both sides of the border support them and gives policy recommendations for Afghanistan's reconstruction, emphasizing the Taliban's relevance as a local stakeholder. Jirgas' local legitimacy makes multi-track diplomacy more effective; thus, they are needed for higher-level bilateral conversations. Furthermore, reinstating the Jirga system as a means for negotiation and conflict resolution could empower the Afghan populace to engage in comprehensive dialogues, fostering a more peaceful future for both nation (Yousaf, 2018).

The TTP's resurgence in Pakistan coincided with the Taliban's conquest of Afghanistan in 2021. TTP, related to the Afghan Taliban, committed several Pakistani terrorist actions from 2007 to 2015. The TTP took advantage of Pakistan's perceived strategic advantage when the Taliban took power. The TTP was responsible for a significant portion of the remarkable surge in terrorist attacks that Pakistan experienced in 2021. The organization revised its 2018 manifesto to focus on military and intelligence entities instead of civilians, directing its efforts toward security personnel in the western border districts of Pakistan. While the frequency of assaults has diminished relative to the peak of the TTP insurgency, the surge in violence observed in 2021 indicates a potential resurgence. Upon Prime Minister Imran Khan's revelation of his clandestine discussions with the TTP in

October, there arose significant dissent regarding his apparent deficiencies in transparency and engagement. Following a brief cessation of hostilities declared in November, which concluded in December, the TTP resumed its assaults. The establishment of Sharia in Pakistan and the liberation of its detainees constitute the principal demands of the TTP; however, it is improbable that the Pakistani government will yield on the former issue. The TTP maintains a historical relationship with the Afghan Taliban, who have reportedly facilitated discussions between the TTP and the Pakistani government.

The TTP value internal cohesiveness above discussions with Pakistan, restricting the Afghan Taliban's ability to control the organization. Pakistan has changed its view of the TTP from a danger to a possibility of amnesty (Afzal, 2022). The state's inconsistency and lack of transparency often misinform and mislead the populace, thereby emboldening the rebels. Therefore, it is essential to emphasize the importance of addressing the TTP revival in Pakistan through transparency, accountability, and a coherent and steadfast strategy.

The Global Ideological Connections

Instead of existing in isolation, the TTP's resurgence exists within a broader global context of jihadist organizations and ideologies. Congruence with broader jihadist narratives and the interconnectedness of global jihadist networks bolster the ideological fortitude of the TTP. Acquiring insight into the TTP's global connections and theoretical underpinnings could enhance one's comprehension of the broader ideological currents shaping contemporary militant groups. Global jihadist ideologies influence the characteristics and scope of the TTP's activities. Contemporary communication networks facilitate the transnational dissemination of extreme ideologies, underscoring the necessity for a nuanced comprehension of the ways in which global jihadist movements influence and sustain regional insurgencies. We need to investigate the consequences of the TTP. TTP resurgence will confound Pakistan's categorization of Taliban between "good" (Afghan) and "bad" (TTP) groups. The TTP's close links to the Afghan Taliban make containment impossible. ISIS-Khorasan Province (ISKP) in Afghanistan hinders the Taliban's TTP rule. Pakistan has few strategic alternatives to confront the TTP if the Afghan Taliban refuse to cooperate. It highlights Pakistan's military and political divisions on Afghanistan policy and the need for a political accord to restrain the TTP (Kirithi, 2023).

Afghanistan has driven the TTP. The TTP initiated a robust offensive in Waziristan in recent weeks, following over 120 strikes in 2020 that indicated a potential revival. A more united structure under Noor Wali Mehsud has helped the group recover. Al-Qaeda's influence and legal counsel may have influenced the TTP's realignment and strategy change, particularly regarding Muslim mass executions. Haqqani and TTP ties are strained since the TTP has transferred its fighters southeast, where Haqqani guards them. The Haqqani network may be using TTP rhetoric against Pakistan. TTP's actions and combined operations with the Taliban against Afghan government troops indicate a partial realignment due to changing realities in Afghanistan. Uncertainty surrounds TTP funding, but reports suggest that Al-Qaida provides some of it. Although TTP predictions are challenging at the moment, the shifting geopolitical situation may have an impact on their future development (Giustozzi, 2021).

With an emphasis on escalating sectarian tensions, much literature analyzes foreign issues that gravely threaten Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's peace and security. Numerous studies examine how external influences feed sectarian violence and extremism, notwithstanding Pakistan's peace attempts. Foreign-funded insurgent groups use sectarian cleavages to foment religious prejudice and provide opportunity to orthodox religious non-state actors. This outside interference is evident in madrassa funding. This promotes radicalism and insurgency. Thus, understanding the complex interaction between external factors and regional security dynamics is necessary to understand and resolve Pakistan's present problems, which threaten its peace and stability (Karamat, et. al., 2019; Ali, 2015).

Challenges for Regional Peace and Security

The TTP disrupts security forces and instills fear via suicide bombers, guerrilla warfare, and targeted executions. A careful assessment of these ramifications reveals the TTP's geographical reach and informs security tactics that acknowledge interdependence. Diplomacy, information sharing, and coordinated security are needed to reduce the regional effects of the TTP's rise, which increases tensions between Pakistan and its neighbours, notably Afghanistan. Afghanistan's threats will grow and affect the region after the US leaves (Lobel, 2021). The Taliban's ascent has also alarmed India, China, Iran, and Central Asian states. Since Taliban rule in the late 1990s still affects India, a stronger and revived Taliban may pose comparable security threats (Wani, 2022).

The struggle against terrorism in Pakistan has intensified due to the Taliban's recent takeover of Afghanistan. The Taliban's association with terrorist groups antagonistic to Pakistan, such as the TTP, raises concerns over the nation's security. Due to changing circumstances in Afghanistan, Pakistan faces new dangers to resist terrorism and extremism, notwithstanding successful military operations that reduced TTP influence. Since August 2021, the TTP has increased activities, and organizations like IS-KP have emerged, highlighting the link between Pakistan's terrorist problems and Afghanistan's instability. Regional security requires prioritizing counterterrorism and resolving Afghanistan's fundamental problems, especially while Pakistan struggles with domestic politics. Current terrorism impacts a region, not just one state. Regional authorities should include coordinated counter-terrorism activities in their annual plans. China's CPEC initiative, India's concerns following the Taliban's rise in Afghanistan, Iran's sectarian disputes with the Afghan Taliban, and the apprehensions of other Central Asian countries regarding potential extremist and terrorist doctrinal infiltration into their territories are all regional issues (Ahmed, 2021).

To accomplish its objectives, the United States has solidified its position as a transregional player in West Asia. The political elite's intentional withdrawal from West Asian regions, along with China's economic transformation and the U.S. shale oil boom, has raised questions about the region's declining importance and the U.S. withdrawal's effects. West Asia is important to the US due to its geostrategic location, fossil fuel resources, and large consumer market. U.S. foreign policy in the region has a vigorous and ascending trajectory, with specific aims of curbing Iran's influence, ensuring Israel's security, and regulating oil flow. A notable shift toward a more cost-effective and technologically advanced deployment of US forces involves the use of mobile naval soldiers, drone technology, and essential strategies such as networking, alliances, and coalitions. The United States distributes security costs among its enduring allies and intervenes directly only when its interests in West Asia face threats (M. Javad Fathi, 2022). This position affects the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Taliban's rise, and South, Central, and West Asian effects.

The Taliban's ascent and the exit of American-led forces from Afghanistan threaten regional stability, especially for Pakistan and India, neighbors. Due to its strategic ties with the US, India supports American engagement in Afghanistan to combat Islamic extremism and protect its interests. Pakistan's security concerns center on territorial problems, mainly in Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa and Balochistan. Pakistan worries that unplanned events might destabilize Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa, Balochistan, and federally managed tribal areas, attracting illicit weaponry, narcotics, and migration. After approximately 57,000 war on terror deaths in the previous decade, Pakistan's security depends on Afghanistan's stability. Post-withdrawal Pakistan is unclear and complicated, requiring regional coordination and strategic actions for peace and stability. The disturbance increases the likelihood of a proxy confrontation between India and Pakistan in Afghanistan, amplifying security dangers and necessitating prudent and coordinated responses by regional powers (Jahanzaib, 2015).

Peace-Security Nexus in Southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Global post-conflict peace depends on social-governmental security. The Taliban's return has made southern KPK's position dire. Post-conflict settings emphasize security as essential to democracy, sustainable development, and peace. State security, primarily concerned with the preservation of the state and the physical welfare of its populace, is responsible for ensuring security in post-conflict contexts. The focus is on the state-driven security sector reform (SSR) strategy, which underscores the need for democratic governance and efficiency for the rehabilitated populace in post-conflict regions. Conversely, the concept of social security remains comparatively new and emphasizes societal resilience and identity in the face of perceived dangers. The Taliban's presence in the region affects societal harmony and state security due to the increasing significance of identity-based distinctiveness (Bacha, 2022). Social security concerns associated with external domination, migration trends, and intercommunal rivalry are prominent, especially in areas with considerable ethnic and cultural diversity such as Southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The securitization concept helps assess societal-state security associations. Understanding the state and society's securitizing capacity in post-conflict contexts is crucial due to risk perceptions.

Scholars shared views of threats and weaknesses raise the likelihood of possible disputes, which in turn raises the risk of security in the tribe and southern parts of KPK after recovery. In the past, the Taliban may have seen themselves as the right people to settle different kinds of complaints and neighbourhood problems. The securitization theory is what we want to look into to see how social security and government security are connected. Because people are more afraid of risk after a war, it is important to understand how both the government and society can make people feel safer. Potential conflicts arise from the public's dependence on risks and vulnerabilities, which enhances the capacity for securitization. Understanding the dynamics in Southern KPK is crucial, as the Taliban resurgence poses a danger to both societal and governmental security. Alongside physical safety, the state's efforts to restore security must include the identity-based concerns of local communities. All these aspects need a delicate equilibrium to attain enduring peace in post-conflict regions (Makki, 2022). However, the lack of robust contextual understanding and indigenous ties to the area hinders people's acceptance of the post-conflict advancements in tribal regions. Tight border limitations influence social norms and financial security, fostering hostility among citizens. There is skepticism regarding the effectiveness of de-weaponization, which is attributed to the cultural significance of weapons and concerns about a rise in terrorist activities. The administrative structures after war have gotten more complex due to opposition to judicial system changes and the transformation of Khasadar troops into regular police units.

The relationship between peace and security in the area is evident, particularly with the recent uptick in insurgent activity in Swat, KPK, after the TTP killed eight individuals. The TTP's assault on a former member of the peace committee heightens concerns of a resurgence of terrorism. The abduction of seven workers from a telecommunications company and the subsequent ransom demands exacerbate the security concerns. Former federal minister Murad Saeed emphasized the need for government intervention to prevent the TTP from reestablishing dominance in Swat, where residents embrace military operations to preserve tranquility. The Taliban's resurgence in Afghanistan exacerbates Swat's preexisting vulnerability to terrorist activities, as seen during the TTP's dominance from 2007 to 2010. This encourages cross-border militant migration. Despite government pledges and security agency collaboration, southern KPK highlights the interdependence of peace and security. Social media helps raise awareness of terrorism and mobilize the people against it. Rapid action and preventive measures are necessary to avoid instability and maintain peace (OCHA, 2022).

Results and Discussion

The region's historical and socio-economic context plays a critical role. Longstanding issues such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of infrastructure create conditions where extremist ideologies can flourish. Weak governance structures and historical grievances further enable militant groups to gain support by exploiting local grievances and tribal dynamics. Despite military operations like Operation Rah-e-Rast, Zarb-e-Azb, and Radd-ul-Fasaad, internal divisions and leadership challenges within the TTP have also contributed to its resilience and adaptability.

The porous border between Pakistan and Afghanistan has historically facilitated the movement of terrorists, providing opportunities for groups like the TTP to exploit. The increased violence and instability have disrupted daily life and affected the mental health of the local population. The TTP's activities have disrupted local institutions, affecting governance and civil liberties. Challenges to Governance and Civil Liberties: The resurgence poses significant challenges to governance, impacting the rule of law and civil liberties in the region.

Operations like Rah-e-Rast, Zarb-e-Azb, and Radd-ul-Fasaad have targeted the TTP's operational capabilities and hideouts, although internal conflicts within the TTP have also weakened the organization. The collateral damage and civilian casualties from military operations have fueled resentment among the local population. To address these issues, there is a need for a more comprehensive approach that includes improving socio-economic conditions and governance structures.

Conclusion

Complex organizational systems, lasting ideologies, and historical events revived the TTP. The group's adaptability, decentralization, and ability to exploit tribal and socio-political differences have helped it survive counterinsurgency efforts. Moreover, the TTP's violent ideology, based on a warped Islam, has persisted and served as a unifying foundation for recruitment and indoctrination. The group's mistakes and rearrangement show its ability to learn and adapt. Understanding and managing the TTP return requires identifying these components. TTP's rebirth affects Southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's local institutions, administration, and civilian population. Violence, disruptions to the government system, and neighbourhood concerns indicate a decline in stability. The TTP has permeated deeply, threatening state authority and peace attempts. Recognizing the interconnectedness of outcomes is crucial since one disruption impacts others, creating a fragile condition that needs prompt attention. The resurrection of TTP in southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa requires a broad and adaptable response.

Recommendations

This paper recommends, in light of the above-mentioned results, to establish fruitful peace and security in southern region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa a strong and effective intelligence system in the area. Secondly, it is necessary to enhance border security, especially at the Afghanistan border, in order to control the movement of terrorists. Lastly, nothing is possible without resolving political instability matters.

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