



RESEARCH PAPER

**Taliban 2.0: Implications for National Security of Pakistan**

Asma Akbar

Visiting Faculty Lecturer, Department of Politics and International Relations, International Islamic University Islamabad, Pakistan

\*Corresponding Author: asma.vt8484@iiu.edu.pk

**ABSTRACT**

This research examines the security implications of the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan for Pakistan, with a particular focus on the nexus between the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Afghan Taliban. The Pakistan-Afghanistan border remains an important source of instability in Pakistan, increased insurgency, human trafficking, and threats from non-state actors such as the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Islamic State of Khorasan Province (IS-KP). The Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan in 2021 has exacerbated these concerns, creating a more complex and unstable security environment. This research uses Qualitative research methods combining primary and secondary data. The research found strong substantiation of increased cross-border terror activity and revealed the nexus between the TTP and the Afghan Taliban, facilitating attacks in Pakistan. Moreover, based on these findings, the research recommends strengthening border security measures, diplomatic engagement with the Afghan Taliban, counterterrorism cooperation with regional partners, and addressing the root causes of extremism. Similarly, the theoretical framework employs constructivism.

**KEYWORDS** Afghanistan Taliban, Insurgency, ISKP, National Security, Pak-Afghan Border, Pakistan, Security, TTP

**Introduction**

Pakistan and Afghanistan are neighbors with a complicated history. Their relationship has not always been smooth despite their shared cultural heritage, religion, and customs. Tension has raised between the two countries due to territorial disputes and historical incidents (Muzaffar, Yaseen & Afzal, 2021). Security issues have resulted from this tension, particularly along the Pakistan and Afghanistan borders. It is crucial to comprehend why the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan is complex. Past grievances and current tensions impact Pakistan's security (Muzaffar, Nawab & Yaseen, 2021; Bibi & Muzaffar, 2023). The Taliban takeover in Afghanistan had a significant impact on security in the region, particularly in neighboring Pakistan. Pakistan's security has dramatically deteriorated after the Taliban takeover in August 2021. Earlier, Pakistan's role in the Afghan peace process was primarily to help bring peace and stability to the country. In this regard, it greatly facilitated the negotiation process and brought both parties to the table talks. After the Taliban government in Afghanistan, Pakistan facilitated and suggested to the international community the diplomatic recognition of the Afghan Taliban as the government. However, once the Taliban took power, unexpectedly, Pakistan faced more security risks and difficulties.

Initially, there was hope that Pakistan could benefit from the Taliban government in Afghanistan. It was believed that establishing the Taliban government would promote regional economic activity between the two countries. Similarly, it would increase trade between the two nations and improve security cooperation. But things have not worked out as expected (Mir, 2022). However, the deteriorating security situations encouraged Pakistani militant groups that have been sheltering in Afghanistan to intensify their activities across Pakistan. Pakistan faced severe security challenges in the aftermath of the re-emergence of the Afghan Taliban (Jan & Khan, 2023). These security challenges are

majorly associated with militant organizations based in Afghanistan. These groups, including the TTP and the IS-KP.

After the Taliban control in Afghanistan, TTP's attacks across the border have increased over the past two years. According to a report, an increase of 79 per cent in such attacks occurred in the year 2023 (PICSS, 2023). Similarly, in 2023 Chaman and Torkham border with Afghanistan, Pakistan came across several significant events in terms of cross-border firings and clashes. Furthermore, on the 6<sup>th</sup> of September, 2023 a large number of terrorists attacked from the Afghanistan border in the Chitral region of Pakistan. These are serious security challenges to Pakistan from Afghanistan. Moreover, Pakistan experienced a surge in terrorist attacks in 2023, with the TTP and ISKP the two main terrorist groups (Hussain, 2023). Most recently in the Bannu district of KPK, a number of terrorists form a TTP faction named Hafiz Gul Bahadur Group attacked on military cent and killed 8 security forces. These are some of the few examples; apart from these, various areas across Pakistan seriously face deteriorating security situations, which became worsen in the past 2, 3 years.

In 2023, Pakistan faced a series of devastating attacks, primarily by the TTP and ISKP. On 30 January 2023, a suicide bomber attacked a mosque in Peshawar, killing 100 people and injuring 225 others, mostly policemen. The TTP claimed responsibility for the attack. Moreover, on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2023, a suicide bomber attacked a police vehicle in Baluchistan, killing nine police officers ISKP claimed responsibility. On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023, TTP attacked Pakistani soldiers in the Kech area of Baluchistan province, killing four people. After that, on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2023, a suicide bomber attacked a political rally in the Bajaur District of KPK, killing over 50 people, including many children. ISKP claimed responsibility for the attack (Zahid, 2023). Similarly, on the 29<sup>th</sup> of September 2023, a bomb exploded at a religious procession in Mastone, Baluchistan, killing at least 10 people and injuring dozens more, but no one claimed responsibility. TTP continues to launch attacks in Pakistan, such as suicide bombings, assassinations, kidnappings, and committing violence and terrorism against civilians, military personnel, and infrastructure, causing harm and instability to the region (Nawab, Yaseen & Muzaffar, 2021). They attacks targeted civilians, security forces, and government officials, raising concerns about Pakistan's security situation and having a devastating impact on its people (Shahid, 2023).

Furthermore, The Afghan Taliban has a long history of supporting terrorist groups, such as TTP. There are concerns that the Taliban provide the TTP with safe havens in Afghanistan and the TTP is using Afghanistan as a base to launch attacks in Pakistan. Furthermore, The Taliban has also failed to stop the flow of weapons from Afghanistan to Pakistan (Donnell, 2023). As Pakistan shares a vast border with Afghanistan; therefore, it has severe worries regarding the neighborhood, and there are ultimate impacts on Pakistan as well. These impacts are highly connected with security concerns (Yousaf & Jabarkhail, 2022). The research aims to discuss these aspects in detail. Historically, Pakistan and Afghanistan have a strained relationship, which this study tends to describe, along with factors.

## **Literature Review**

The Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan in 2021 undoubtedly heightened security concerns in Pakistan. While Pakistan has long struggled with instability and threats from groups such as the Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP), the re-emergence of the Taliban in Afghanistan has significantly exacerbated these challenges.

Tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan have increased since the Afghan Taliban took over Kabul. Unexpectedly, there has been an increase in cross-border military conflicts and terrorist insurgencies across Pakistan. Since the Taliban takeover, other militant groups such as the TTP and the Islamic State Khorasan Province ISKP have increased their presence in Pakistan's tribal areas. When the Afghan Taliban took control of Afghanistan, Pakistan

was confident that the Taliban, which shared similar ideological beliefs with the TTP, could control or limit the TTP's actions against Pakistan. In his speech to the United Nations General Assembly in September 2022, Pakistani Prime Minister Sherbaz Sharif noted that Pakistan shares the global concern about the threat posed by major terrorist groups operating in Afghanistan, especially ISKP and TTP, as well as Al-Qaeda. , Pakistan urges the Afghan authorities to take important measures to prevent such terrorist groups from attacking Pakistan (Kaura, 2022)

TTP is a resurgent group that has been posing a huge threat to Pakistan's immunity. He believes that the TTP is a more dangerous and sophisticated organization than in the past and poses a serious threat to Pakistan's security. He details the history, ideology and tactics of the TTP. In addition, he explores the factors that contributed to the group's resurgence, such as the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan and the rise of ISKP. He concludes his book by arguing that the Pakistani government needs to take a more comprehensive approach to combating TTP. He called on the government to address the root causes of militancy, such as poverty and inequality. TTP is a group of Islamic militants who are committed to overthrowing the Pakistani government and establishing a Taliban-style Islamic state. The TTP has been responsible for several terrorist attacks in Pakistan, including the 2009 attack on the Pakistan Army Headquarters and the 2014 attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar. The Pakistani government has taken steps to combat the TTP but the group remains a strong threat. The government must do more to address the root causes of militancy, such as poverty and inequality. It must also improve its intelligence-gathering and counter-terrorism capabilities (Sayed, 2023).

The historical dynamics of Afghanistan-Pakistan relations, their future paths, and their impact on Afghanistan's stability. The Taliban is likely to become the most influential political party in Afghanistan if it takes over. These changes will affect the prospects for stability in Afghanistan and the wider region in Pakistan. She pointed out the many challenges that must be addressed to improve relations between the two countries. These challenges include a lack of trust between the two governments, perceptions of Pakistan interfering in Afghanistan's internal affairs, the presence of terrorist groups on both sides of the border, and the refugee crisis. However, regarding the Durand Line border dispute, she suggested that Afghanistan should try to build trust with Pakistan by cracking down on terrorist groups and working to improve governance. She also suggested that Pakistan stop interfering in Afghanistan's internal affairs and work to resolve the refugee crisis. The two countries must cooperate on counter-terrorism and border security to create a more peaceful and prosperous region (Threlkeld, & Easterly, 2021)

Afghanistan's importance in the region is based on military and security prospects. She said Afghanistan was growing in importance due to the military-strategic ambitions of the Soviet Union and the United States in Afghanistan. As a neighbor of Afghanistan, Pakistan is greatly affected by the situation in Afghanistan. Pakistan has a different nature of connection with Afghanistan. For example, Pakistan has religious and ideological ties with Afghanistan. Likewise, out of strategic interests, Pakistan has supported various war groups and militias in the past to safeguard its own interests. This shows that Pakistan has deep ties with Afghanistan, and it can be said that any situation in Afghanistan directly affects Pakistan. Moreover, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Afghanistan became even more divided. In 1996, the Taliban became an important political and military force. They received diplomatic and material support from Pakistan. Pakistan's decision to support the United States' war on terrorism policy means that Pakistan has officially launched a war against the Taliban. However, Pakistan's goal is to see a stable Afghanistan; now that US troops have withdrawn, Pakistani forces may once again be inclined to support the Afghan Taliban government. (Akhtar, 2008).

## **Material and Methods**

Research methodology is a contextual framework for research that designs the whole study. The methodology of the research is Qualitative. The nature of the research is based on primary and secondary data. Moreover, Qualitative research is highly detailed and descriptive (Elliott R. & Timulak L). The study uses qualitative research methods; it applies the exploratory and predictive data analysis approach to examine security challenges to Pakistan from Afghanistan and the role of the Taliban's 2.0.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **TTP and Afghan Taliban Nexus (Analyzing Through the Theory of Constructivism)**

The longstanding relationship between Pakistan and the Afghan Taliban has deteriorated due to the TTP and the Afghan Taliban nexus. Pakistan's security is facing several challenges due to the strong ties between TTP and the Afghan Taliban.

Afghanistan serves as a safe haven for the TTP strikes against Pakistan. Pakistan has serious concerns over the TTP attacks. Since the Taliban held power in Afghanistan in 2021, these attacks have been more severe. On the Pakistan-Afghan border, there have been an increased number of shootings, explosions, and violence. This makes it more difficult for the two countries to have a smooth relationship. The warm relationships that Pakistan had shared with the Afghan Taliban have been weakened by TTP and the Afghan Taliban Nexus (Ahmed 2023).

Pakistan political and security authorities believe that Afghanistan's Taliban are supporting anti-Pakistan groups, which raises security worries. Pakistani officials said that the Taliban-led Afghan government is giving the TTP safe havens (Iqbal S, 2023). As neighboring states, Pakistan and Afghanistan depend heavily on one another in several areas, most notably the economy and security. However, such dependency is greatly disturbing due to the recent developments discussed above.

Pakistan and Afghanistan are having trouble working together even though they are near neighbors with linked economies and security issues. One of the main issues is the strong relationship that exists between the TTP and the Afghan Taliban. Due to this relationship, both nations' policies toward one another are inconsistent and convey opposing messages. Because of this, establishing trust and addressing significant prevalent difficulties are challenging. Despite neighbors supposed to have strong security and economic ties, relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan are very uncertain. This is partially because of the Afghan Taliban's nexus with the TTP (Sattar, 2023).

Furthermore, most recently, after hosting Afghan refugees for several decades, Pakistan implemented a demanding policy of sending them back home. According to multiple observers, Pakistan's severe stance towards the Afghan refugees is a result of the Afghan Taliban denial strategy in terms of TTP Presence in Afghanistan. Tension has increased between the two countries; while Pakistan sees this as an essential security measure, the Taliban considers it to be unfair. Insignificant skirmishes and poor border administration underscore the issues between the two nations (Muzaffar, Shah & Karamat, 2020; Micinski, 2023).

Similarly, Pakistan's security is closely linked to lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan. The country is concerned about securing its borders with Afghanistan to prevent militants from crossing. The Pakistani security establishment is concerned about the Afghan Taliban gaining full power, fearing that this would strengthen the TTP and lead to an increase in armed activities in Pakistan due to its ideological and organizational ties. As mentioned earlier, TTP has become significantly more potent since the Taliban took control of Afghanistan in August 2021. Even though Afghanistan has historically backed the

Taliban, the group currently gives TTP commanders and fighters sanctuary (Kaleem, 2023). Because of this, the TTP has been able to strengthen and organize attacks in Pakistan by using Afghanistan as a base (Kaleem & Iqbal 2023). The Taliban has not compelled the TTP to flee Afghanistan despite their only offer to mediate. However, after the ceasefire broke down in November 2022, TTP attacks became more concentrated and regular. Within a month, 45 TTP attacks were reported; December 2021 saw the highest number of attacks in a single month in several years. April 2022: The record was broken again in April 2022, with the TTP claiming 54 attacks. In retaliation, Pakistan launched airstrikes on alleged TTP bases in Afghanistan on April 21, 2022, unintentionally harming civilians and souring ties with the Taliban (Sayed, 2023).

As mentioned earlier, Pakistan and Afghanistan depend heavily on one another in several areas, most notably the economy and security. Despite their mutual reliance on each other in economic and security matters, Pakistan and Afghanistan's relationship is marked by inconsistent policies, largely due to the strong ties between the TTP and the Afghan Taliban. Pakistan consistently voices its concerns to the Afghan government regarding the presence of terrorist groups, including TTP, on Afghan soil, which is used to launch attacks on Pakistan, posing a serious threat to Pakistan's security.

The theory of constructivism can best explain the overall situation that is arising due to the mentioned issue. This theory explains that how individuals and groups construct their reality through social interactions and shared knowledge. On one side the enmity between Pakistan and Afghanistan on various issues such as refugees, the Durand line and insurgencies always negatively impact the bilateral ties between the two states. On the other side, there are ideological factors, social norms, cultural identity, common cause, same ethnicity and religious thoughts which become a strong cohesive force to bind the TTP and Afghan Taliban. Due to the mentioned factors, both groups become natural allies; which has a strong adverse effect on Pakistan especially in terms of security. These factors are discussed in detail in the following paragraphs.

### **Common History and Ideology**

Due to their same ideologies and shared history, the Afghan Taliban and the TTP have a close relationship. Throughout the years, they have cooperated and supported one another in various ways while having separate organizations with different objectives and interests. Same Perspective according to a strict interpretation of Sunni Islam, the TTP and the Afghan Taliban have the same goal of establishing Islamic authority based on their interpretations of Sharia law. Furthermore, they have a similar worldview that rejects Western influences in the region. Similarly, both have historical connections as well. In the early 2000s, when the US attacked Afghanistan, many of the fighters of various ranks of Afghan Taliban took shelter in the tribal areas of Pakistan, where they were warmly welcomed by the ancestors of TTP (Khan & Durrani, 2024). Similarly, the TTP terrorists were fleeing Pakistani military operations, and the Afghan Taliban offered them protection and assistance in Afghanistan in the same manner. As a result, the two groups developed a friendship that has lasted over time. Moreover, the various factions of TTP greatly assisted the Afghan Taliban in the war against the Western forces in Afghanistan. Due to Pakistan's unsafe border, fighters, weapons, and supplies have been able to flow freely between the two countries. TTP members have allegedly received protection and assistance from the Afghan Taliban, enabling them to carry out attacks on Pakistan. The TTP and the Afghan Taliban have sometimes coordinated their operations, particularly in fields where their goals coincide. However, the TTP and the Afghan Taliban share a close relationship (Hussain, 2023).

### **Religious Views and Pashtun Identity**

Their tight religious beliefs, Deobandism, historical ties, and shared ethnic identity are the cornerstones of their close bond. The majority ethnic group in Afghanistan and a sizable minority of Pakistanis, the TTP, and the Afghan Taliban regard themselves as guardians of Pashtun customs and interests. The Taliban and TTP both adhere to Deobandism; they primarily aligned themselves with the Deobandi School, a specific branch of Hanafi Islam, a strict interpretation of Sunni Islam that emerged in the mid-19th century (Ayobi, 2023). This aims to return to what they consider the original Islamic practices. According to this understanding, Islam's core principles and practices should be revived. Establishing Islamic Governance as an objective, both groups want to create an Islamic state under Sharia law because they think it is the only acceptable system of government for Muslims. They believe that Islamic law should be the only source of legislation and reject secular forms of government. The TTP and the Afghan Taliban have similar ideologies and oppose Western presence in the area, seeing it as a danger to Islamic beliefs and values. As a result, they attempt to fight and balance Western influence by their acts. They regard themselves as participants in a larger regional struggle against Western imperialism (Mehlman & Hess, 2023).

Apart from ideological and spiritual factors, the majority of Afghan Taliban and TTP share the same ethnicity. As mentioned, most of them belong to the Pashtun ethnicity, which brings them closer together (Kurtzman, 2014). The reason behind sheltering the Afghan Taliban in the war on terror is because of the same ethnic identity as well as ideological grounds. It is the reason for showing honor and brotherhood; that made the TTP assist the Afghan Taliban remarkably in the war against the US. Thus, in return, the Afghan Taliban are also showing their loyalty and proof of mutual coordination by not expelling them from the soil of Afghanistan. The TTP has always had the full support of the Afghan Taliban, especially when they started occupying areas. TTP chief Noor Wali Mehsud said in an interview in late July 2021 that the group would continue its fight against Pakistani security forces to control border territories and establish independence. He said his group has close ties with the Afghan Taliban and hopes to benefit from the Taliban's success in Pakistan (PIPS, 2023).

"Pashtunwali, the Pashtun code of honour, is highly valued by the TTP and the Afghan Taliban. As fundamental Pashtun values, it highlights hospitality, fidelity to family, and even retaliation, called "Badal" in Pashto (Zahid, 2023).

As a result of the factors mentioned above and various aspects of the topic, there are substantial security implications for Pakistan in the post-Taliban takeover of Afghanistan. Uncertainty on the border line has increased to a shocking level, and the militant groups have become active again. Such circumstances pose substantial security consequences for Pakistan that are not only disturbing the law and order situations but have direct negative impacts on the bilateral relationships between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

### **The Re-Emergency of Militant Groups**

After the takeover of the Taliban in Afghanistan, terrorist groups like TTP and IS-KP became active. Currently, these Militant groups have posed a major threat to Pakistan's security. Pakistan is now highly concerned about security in light of this return of militant activity. The current increase in violence shows that things are more complicated than first believed. In this regard, the TTP has been a major security challenge for Pakistan. Similarly, the resurgence of TTP in the post-August 2021 situation has significantly impacted Pakistan's security. However, after the Afghan Taliban took control of Kabul, the TTP became the first insurgent group to celebrate the victory publicly (Abbasi, 2024). The TTP said in a statement on August 17, 2021, that the Taliban's return to power was a significant success for the Islamic Jihadi mission. However, the Taliban takeover also immediately strengthened the power of the TTP through the release of hundreds of TTP members held by the US military and the former Afghan government. During these times, the TTP began

armed activities. They used Afghanistan as a base to launch more and more militant attacks on security forces in particular and the Pakistani people in general (Mahmood, 2023). They expanded their influence inside Pakistan. Pakistan believed the United States withdrew its forces and the Taliban's return to power would reduce the potential threat to Pakistan from the TTP. After the Taliban took over Afghanistan, the TTP underwent four significant changes: mergers, centralized organizational structure, increased operational activities, and strengthening of media operations. Since the fall of Kabul, the TTP has absorbed 21 smaller militant groups and networks. The group's attacks have escalated dramatically, spreading from the tribal heartland into the country's major cities and specifically targeting security forces. On the contrary, the comeback of the Afghan Taliban intensified the TTP threat to Pakistan (Sayed, 2023).

Similarly, the ISKP also poses a serious threat to Pakistan. The group has proved its ability to carry out violent and destabilizing acts through numerous attacks against civilians, security officials, and religious minorities. Pakistan faces difficulties in dealing with the threat posed by the ISKP, which is active along its insecure border with Afghanistan (Khan R, 2023). Due to the increase in attacks launched by these extremist organizations, the security situation in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan provinces in Pakistan are impacting day by day. Security force losses increased significantly in 2023 after the collapse of talks between the TTP and the Pakistani government in November 2022 (Taylor, 2024). The brutality and complexity of these strikes have been noted, with terrorists allegedly utilizing brand-new weaponry that they received from American weaponry that was left behind in Afghanistan (Khattak, 2022).

According to SATP on September 8th, 2023, Pakistan's Foreign Office (FO) Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch expressed concern over the use of "advanced weapons" by terrorists operating in Afghanistan. She argued that these modern weapons had fallen into the wrong hands and urged the international community to take responsibility for the situation. The Foreign Office claimed that these weapons were being used to attack Pakistan and its security forces. On December 15, 2023, Pakistan urged a United Nations (UN) panel to investigate how TTP was acquiring modern weaponry to carry out terrorist attacks in the country. According to SATP statistics, 74 of the 929 deaths in the provinces in 2023 were caused by ISKP. According to a United Nations (UN) report presented at the Security Council meeting in New York on 25 August 2023, the TTP and other factions linked to the Taliban and Al Qaeda are also supplying NATO-caliber weapons to ISKP (SATP, 2024).

Moreover, the [then] Pakistan's interim Prime Minister Anwar Haq Kakkar criticized the Afghan Taliban regime and stated that the Taliban leadership supported the anti-Pakistani Taliban insurgency, which led to a significant increase in violence in Pakistan, killing 2,867 Pakistanis. Since the Taliban took control of Afghanistan in August 2021. Pakistan's special envoy to Afghanistan, Asif Durrani, followed up on former Pakistan Caretaker PM Anwar-ul-Haq Kakkar's criticism of the Taliban and urged that "peace in Afghanistan has become a nightmare for Pakistan". Tensions are rising between the leadership of the Pakistani and Afghan Taliban. Pakistan has urged the Taliban to take strict action against the TTP that launched attacks in Pakistan. However, the Taliban denies this responsibility, claiming that the TTP is an internal issue of Pakistan. The stance has frustrated Pakistan and further strained relations between the two countries (Mir, 2023).

The increasing attacks and the spread of advanced weapons among extremists highlight the complex security environment between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The failure of negotiation between Pakistan and TTP raises the possibility that military operations against terrorist organizations would continue, which could increase the level of tragedy and instability in the regions that were already impacted (Sayed, 2023). Overall, Pakistan is seriously concerned due to the presence of these terrorist organizations within the territory of Afghanistan, which has posed serious security challenges to the country.

## **Growing TTP Threats**

“Pakistan is facing multiple challenges as it struggles with a severe economic crisis that has led to hyperinflation and a political crisis described as “lastingly turbulent” One of these challenges is the growing threat posed by Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), especially with the support of the Afghan Taliban” (Mir, 2023).

As mentioned earlier, Pakistan faces a dangerous new phase in its war against the TTP, while Pakistan has been conducting military operations against extremists within its borders for years. However, the Afghan Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan in 2021 has strengthened the TTP and provided the militants with a new haven from which they can launch operations against Pakistani security forces (Taylor, 2024). However, if one sees the history of TTP from 2007 until 2014, several TTP terrorist attacks in Pakistan killed hundreds of people. But, the group showed signs of resurgence in 2021. Due to military operations in Pakistan between 2009 to 2014, these incidents were less frequent; but, in 2021, after the Taliban took control of Afghanistan, many prisoners in the country were released, including militants and senior leaders of the TTP. Pakistani security officials have described the two groups TTP and Afghan Taliban are the two sides of the same coin due to their recent allegiance to the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and their close ideological ties to the Afghan Taliban (Thomas, 2021).

In August 2021, the TTP resurgence re-emerged in Swat Pakistan with heavy weaponry (Jan, A., 2022). Meanwhile, the Pakistani military had pushed them out more than ten years earlier. People were reminded of the dangerous times in 2008 when the TTP was highly active in the Swat area and tribal belt of the country. However, Political analysts expect Pakistan's relations with the Taliban to worsen in 2022 due to border tensions, the Taliban's aggressive response to Pakistan's fence, and increased terror violence by the TTP and IS-KP (PIPS, 2023).

The re-emergence of TTP has raised significant concerns for Pakistan's security. On August 5, 2022, Liaqat Ali Khan, a member of the provincial assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, was attacked by unidentified militants in the adjacent Dir district, where he was severely injured. His three friends and brother were killed as a result of this attack (Asad H, 2022). On August 7 and 8, 2022, TTP terrorists allegedly attacked a police station in the Chupariyal area of Matta tehsil, Chupariyal Station House Officer (SHO) Tariq Khan. It is claimed that police then opened fire after seeing someone behaving strangely. Afterwards, tensions escalated in August 2022. A week later, a video surfaced online showing the TTP arresting an army major, a police officer, and a soldier. The prisoners were later released through negotiations. Moreover, after the Taliban took control of Afghanistan, the incident showed that the threat of the TTP to Pakistan was increasing. Furthermore, on August 9th, 2022, the “Swat Olasi Pasyon” protesting movement was formed to unite against militancy in Swat. Hundreds of protesters at Mingora Nishat Chowk support peace and warn against repeating past mistakes. Protesters said that Swat in 2022 is not as it was in 2007 and that they would not be deceived. They urged peace and warned against making the same mistakes again. The protest openly condemned and rejected the reemergence of militancy and urged the state authorities to take decisive actions (Khaliq, 2022).

In North Waziristan and Balochistan, throughout September and October, there were multiple attacks against Pakistani security forces, making the security situation difficult. The rise in attacks and deaths is correlated with the growing influence of the Afghan Taliban in the country, as well as the collapse of negotiations between the TTP and the Pakistani government. As the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's situation deteriorates, North Waziristan's people have been showing up for more than 26 days, calling for protection and peace (SCO, 2023).



Moreover, Pakistan's counterterrorism strategy has come under criticism due to the Taliban's recent surge in the region. In addition, a suicide bomb attack on a mosque inside a security compound in Peshawar killed at least 100 people, mainly police officers, and injured more than 225. However, the TTP claimed responsibility for the attack. The attack was Pakistan's bloodiest in a decade and highlighted a surge in attacks by armed groups (Hussain, 2023).

However, after the Taliban took control of Afghanistan, the TTP became more active, and they gained more power. They have a more relaxed environment at the border. This shows that TTP influence in Pakistan is constantly strengthening and expanding. The TTP has significantly benefited from the rise of the Afghan Taliban. After taking control of the Afghan Taliban, TTP became more confident. They view the government as more friendly, and Afghan attacks on Pakistan increase as confidence returns. The attacks targeted Pakistani security personnel as well as civilians, including the police and military (Ahmed, 2023). The situation is sinking the country into instability and uncertainty regarding law, order and security.

Additionally, Pakistan has long accused the Afghan Taliban of providing assistance and support to terrorist groups operating on its soil. Pakistan defends its actions as a defence against terrorist threats from Afghan soil. Relations are also at a weak point due to the return of the TTP and other armed groups to Afghanistan. Pakistan is aware of the TTP previous organizational and ideological ties with the Afghan Taliban leadership, which may give the TTP the ability to carry out cross-border subversive activities against Pakistan. In this context, the bilateral relations between the two neighbors are in profound uncertainty (Hussain A, 2023). Even though the situation is getting worse day by day.

### **ISKP; Emerging Extremism**

The Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) is a militant organization in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The ideology of the ISKP has its roots in the significant ideology of ISIS in the Middle East, majorly in Iraq and Syria. It has the beliefs of Salafi-jihadist ideas and acknowledges Takfirist teachings, which seek to create a worldwide caliphate ruled by its interpretation of Islamic law (Ali, 2020). ISKP aims to build its version of the caliphate in the Khorasan region, which historically covered parts of modern-day Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Central Asia, and, to some extent, India (Muzaffar, Khan & Yaseen, 2019; Beckmann, 2024). To further their objectives, they utilize terrible methods, including suicide bombs, assassinations, and mass murder. Their behaviour is characterized by violence, intolerance for human life, and targeted attacks on places of worship, political rallies, and even Pak-China infrastructure projects could be targeted. However, governments and Muslim academics worldwide have strongly condemned their ideologies and actions (Bakhsh & Rab, 2024).

The ISKP has strengthened its roots in the various areas of both Pakistan and Afghanistan (Sikandar, 2023). The ISKP is a majorly distinct group from both the TTP and the Afghan Taliban. Unlike the TTP, ISKP tends to implement its version of the caliphate and has refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Taliban caliphate. Since the Taliban took power in 2021, the security situation in Afghanistan has changed dramatically. Attacks by ISKP increased in the month after the Taliban took control in Afghanistan. The ISKP launched more attacks than ever. The Afghanistan Taliban have taken severe actions against ISKP and consider it as an existential threat to its Islamic Emirate (Zaidi, Abbasi & Hayat, 2024).

However, ISKP views the Taliban as an enemy because of ideological differences and because of the competing nature of their goals in Afghanistan. However, establishing territorial control is costly. ISKP lacks the economic resources and manpower to monitor the population and enforce the law (Palmer & Holtz, 2023). Furthermore, due to its operational success, it has become a prime target for airstrikes organized by the Afghan

Army and the U.S. Air Force aimed at driving ISIS out of its regional safe haven. Therefore, the Afghan Taliban keeps strong ties with the TTP to avoid any possible collaboration between the TTP and ISKP and keep the latter completely isolated. Such ties between the TTP and Afghan Taliban become further stronger in addition to their strong ideological, cultural, and ethnic connections, which have been discussed above (Khan, 2023).

## **Discussion**

The Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan has greatly aggravated Pakistan's national security. The TTP re-emerged with the support of the Taliban and launched numerous attacks on Pakistani security forces and civilians. Moreover, the presence of other terrorist organizations on Afghanistan soil, such as IS-KP, which poses security threats as well to Pakistan. Furthermore, the porous border between Pakistan and Afghanistan facilitates cross-border infiltration and terrorist activities, hindering effective counterterrorism efforts.

Furthermore, the close ties between the TTP and the Afghan Taliban pose a serious threat. Shared ideology, Pashtun identity and historical ties foster a strong alliance that allows the TTP to use Afghan territory as a safe haven from which to plan and carry out attacks against Pakistan. This has led to an increase in cross-border attacks, significant civilian and infrastructure losses, and tensions in Pak-Afghan relations. The Taliban's refusal to effectively resolve the TTP sanctuary issue undermines Pakistan's counterterrorism efforts and hinders regional stability.

Similarly, Pakistan has taken various counter-terrorism measures, including diplomatic engagement, military operations and attempts at peace negotiations with the TTP. However, these efforts have had limited success. The TTP continued attacks and the Taliban's reluctance to pressurize them pose a major challenge for Pakistan. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-pronged approach, including strengthening border security, strengthening regional cooperation and working together to address the root causes of extremism in the region.

## **Conclusion**

Worries about the security situation along the Pak-Afghan border have been highlighted after the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021. The problem has become worse as a result of the TTP and IS-KP activities against Pakistan. This makes it harder for Pakistan to control who and what crosses the border, which encourages violence and instability in the region. However, the Taliban may also find it difficult to maintain complete control over all Afghan factions, which would give these extremist organizations more freedom to operate and possibly even assistance. If one looks, the TTP has been more empowered by the Taliban control of Afghanistan. Afghanistan has become a safe haven for them. They can proceed to cross the border and carry out attacks on security personnel of Pakistan. As a result, Pakistan becomes less secure and is subject to more frequent and unpredictable cross-border attacks. The Afghan Taliban historically supports TTP, and currently, security threats and challenges in Pakistan are further strengthened. The TTP, based in Afghanistan, is a major threat to peace in Pakistan. However, the Afghan Taliban is reluctant to take any action against them. Moreover, the Taliban have also been unable to stop the supply of weaponry from Afghanistan to Pakistan. Pakistan is highly concerned about the neighborhood and the potential effects on it, as previously stated, because of its extensive border with Afghanistan.

Theoretically, this whole situation can be best explained through the lenses of constructivism. The core principles of constructivism highlight the role of identities, history, common grounds, ideas, and past experiences in shaping the relations among states. These factors can go either way, such as influencing the bilateral ties in both positive and negative

ways. The recent challenging and uncertain security situation between Pakistan and Afghanistan is a classic example. Past bitter events, historical border issues, and territorial conflicts have always deeply impacted bilateral ties. Such factors never allow both states to enjoy fruitful ties despite having plenty of potential to do so. More importantly, specific identities, shared ideas, and common objectives influence actors to act in particular ways. These can lead to both cooperation and confrontation. In the case of TTP and Afghan Taliban, it has led to deep understanding, long-lasting ties, and cooperation, which has ultimately impacted the bilateral relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan, especially in terms of security. Such security implications deeply impact other sectors of state affairs such as the economy and social aspects etc.

### **Recommendations**

- Pakistan needs diplomatic efforts to convince the Taliban to cut ties with terrorist groups like the TTP and prevent the use of Afghan soil for attacks. This includes negotiations, international pressure and regional diplomacy with countries such as China, Russia and Iran.
- Pakistan should strengthen border security, including increased military presence, enhanced surveillance, and cooperation with Afghan forces on border patrols and intelligence sharing. This will help reduce the chances of attacks and cross-border terrorist activities.
- Moreover, investing in Afghanistan's economic development through infrastructure, agriculture and industrial programs can reduce poverty, inequality and the refugee crisis. This promotes regional peace and economic interdependence between the two countries.
- Furthermore, developing counterterrorism capabilities, such as intelligence operations, international cooperation, and economic pressure on the Taliban, are critical to effectively combating terrorism.
- In addition, Pakistan should develop comprehensive counter-narratives to counter terrorist ideologies, including working with religious scholars and community members to develop counter-extremism measures and prevent the radicalization of vulnerable groups.
- Similarly, utilizing social and cultural channels, such as engaging tribal elders and promoting cultural exchange programs can build trust and understanding between the two countries and cooperation on issues such as TTP militancy and cross-border trafficking. to promote Pakistan and Afghanistan can improve their relations and cooperation by promoting positive narratives and reducing misunderstandings

## References

- Abbasi, M. A. (2024). Ttp's Resurgence In Pakistan: Prospects, Challenges, And The Way Forward. *Pakistan Journal of International Affairs*, 7(2). 1-436
- Ahmad, A., & Ahlawat, D. (2023). Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan: Emerging Threats and Pakistan's Counterstrategies. *Mankind Quarterly*, 64(2). 221-230
- Ahmed, S. (2023, March 29). The Pakistani Taliban Test Ties between Islamabad and Kabul. *Www.crisisgroup.org*.
- Akhtar, S., & Ahmed, Z. S. (2023). Understanding the resurgence of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan. *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict*, 16(3), 1-22
- AL Jazeera. (2023). Pakistan mourns as toll in Peshawar mosque blast rises to 100. *Www.aljazeera.com*.
- Ali, H. (2020). The rise and fall of Islamic State: Current challenges and future prospects. *Asian Affairs*, 51(1), 71-94.
- Asad, H. (2022, August 8). Suspect held over attack on MPA in Dir. *Dawn News*
- Ayobi, A. (2023). *Afghanistan under the Taliban rule: security implications for the region (with a particular focus on the Central Asia)* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Hamburg.
- Bakhsh, N., Rab, A., & Faiz, J. (2024). Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan's (TTP) Threat Spectrum: Assessing Pakistan's Counter-Terrorism Policy in Post-US Withdrawal Era. *Journal of Asian Development Studies*, 13(2), 169-180.
- Beckmann, M. (2024). A major threat for the future?: The mobilizing force of Islamic State Khorasan in Afghanistan between 2015 and 2023. *Studenttheses.uu.nl*.
- Bibi, M., & Muzaffar, M. (2023). The Rise of Taliban in Afghanistan: Opportunities and Challenges for Pakistan. *Pakistan Social Sciences Review*, 7(3), 1151-1162.
- Elliott, R., & Timulak, L. (2005). Descriptive and interpretive approaches to qualitative research. *A handbook of research methods for clinical and health psychology*, 1(7), 147-159
- Hussain, A. (2023, Jan 31). Peshawar mosque bombing survivors traumatized but undeterred. *Aljazeera*.
- International Crisis Group. (2022). Afghanistan's Security Challenges Under the Taliban. *International Crisis Group*.
- Iqbal, S. (2023). Comparative Analysis of Taliban Regimes to Assess the Global Challenges in Afghanistan: A Realist Perspective. *Global Foreign Policies Review*, 6, 76-86.
- Jan, A., Khan, A., & Nisa, Z. (2023). The Reemergence of the Afghan Taliban in Afghanistan and Its Impact on Militant Groups in Pakistan (A Case Study of the TTP). *Journal of Peace, Development and Communication (JPDC)*, 07(01), 77-87
- Kaleem, M., & Iqbal, S. (2023). Understanding the Nexus Between Afghan Taliban and TTP: Challenges and Opportunities for Pakistan. *Global Foreign Policies Review*, VI, 6, 21-36.
- Khaliq, F. (2022, October 24). Connecting the dots: What really went down in Swat. *Dawn News*

- Khan, A., & Durrani, A. (2024). The future of Afghanistan under Taliban-led regime: challenges and likely scenarios. *Liberal Arts and Social Sciences International Journal (LASSIJ)*, 8(1), 1-21.
- Khan, R. (2023). IS-K's growing threat and implications in Pakistan. *Weekly Cutting Edge*.
- Khattak, D. (2023). Clouds of war are gathering': Pakistanis brace for bloody year as TTP ends cease-fire, intensifies attacks. *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*.
- Kurtzman, J. A. (2014). Pashtunistan's Future: The Global Executive or a Regional Solution. *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies*, 21(1), 303-333.
- Mahmood, D. A., & Shah, D. S. S. H. (2023b). Resurgence of TTP and ISK: A Daunting Challenge to Pakistan's Counterterrorism Strategy. *Journal of Nautical Eye and Strategic Studies*, 3(2), 16-31.
- Mehlman, Y. Y., & Hess, J. H. (2023). A Comparative Analysis of the Afghan Taliban and the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan Ideologies Following the 2021 Takeover of Afghanistan. *Global Security & Intelligence Studies*, 7(2).1-97
- Micinski, N. R. (2023). Threats, deportability and aid: The politics of refugee rentier states and regional stability. *Security Dialogue*, 54(6), 529-547.
- Mir, A. (2023). In a major rift, Pakistan ramps up pressure on the Taliban. *United States Institute of Peace*, November, 16.
- Muzaffar, M., Khan, I., & Yaseen, Z. (2019). End Game or a New Great Game? Indo-Pakistan Rivalry and Post Withdrawal Afghanistan, *Asian Journal of International Peace & Security (AJIPS)*, 3, 1-11
- Muzaffar, M., Nawab, M. W. & Yaseen, Z. (2021). The US Exit from Afghanistan: A Way Forward, *Journal of Development and Social Sciences*, 2(2), 30-41
- Muzaffar, M., Shah, S. T. A., & Karamat, S. (2020). US Taliban Dhoha Accord: A Compromise, *Journal of Development and Social Sciences*, 1(2), 32-42
- Muzaffar, M., Yaseen, Z., & Afzal, N. (2021). US Exit from Afghanistan: Impacts on Pakistan and India, *Journal of Political Studies* 28 (2), 55-68
- Nawab, M. W., Yaseen, Z., & Muzaffar, M. (2021). South Asia and the US Global Counterterrorism Policy: Strategies, Challenges and Implications, *Journal of Indian Studies* 7(2), 313- 324
- O'Donnell, L. (2023, July 5). The Taliban Are Now Arms Dealers. *Foreign Policy*.
- Palmer, A., & Holtz, M. (2023). The Islamic State Threat in Pakistan: Trends and Scenarios. *Centre for Strategic and International Studies*.
- PICSS. (2023, July 4). Pakistan registers 79% spike in terror attacks in 2023 so far than 2022: *Report. India Today*.
- Sayed, A., & Hamming, T. (2023). The Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan After the Taliban's Afghanistan Takeover. *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point. CTC Sentinel*, 16(5), 1-12.
- SCO. (2023). Security situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces of Pakistan. *Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation*.

- Shahid, A. (2023). "Major attacks in Pakistan during 2023" *Reuters World Asia Pacific*.
- Sikandar, A. (2023). Assessing ISKP's Expansion in Pakistan. *South Asian Voices*.  
<https://southasianvoices.org/iskr-expansion-in-pakistan/>
- Thomas, C. (2021). *US Military Withdrawal and Taliban Takeover in Afghanistan: Frequently Asked Questions*. Congressional Research Service.
- Threlkeld, E., & Easterly, G. (2021). *Afghanistan-Pakistan ties and Future stability in Afghanistan*" (Vol. 175). United States Institute of Peace.
- Yousaf, F., & Jabarkhail, M. (2022). Afghanistan's future under the Taliban regime: engagement or isolation?. *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism*, 17(1), 117-134.
- Zahid, F. (2023). *Dealing with TTP and IS-K after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan: Challenges, prospects, and policy options for Pakistan*. Pak Institute for Peace Studies.
- Zaidi, S. M. S., Abbasi, S. N., & Hayat, M. U. (2024). Understanding the rise in violent extremism in Pakistan through the lens of securitization theory. *Asian Journal of Political Science*, 32(1) 1-25.