



TTP'S RESURGENCE IN PAKISTAN: PROSPECTS, CHALLENGES, AND THE WAY FORWARD

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Abstract

Over the last decade, Pakistan has taken significant measures to combat terrorism and extremism. However, the U.S. frenzied retreat from Afghanistan altered Pakistan's security apparatus. The Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan has had a significant effect on Pakistan's security, leading to the resurgence of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). With the clear objective of implementing Sharia law in Pakistan, TTP has regained its strength and power. The militant outfit has emerged as a massive threat due to its potential for chaos, extremism, and instability. The article would explain the shameless and long record of rapacity of TTP in Pakistan. The research critically evaluates the factors contributing to the resurgence of TTP in Pakistan for instance withdrawal of US and NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) Forces, change of leadership, reconstruction of organizational structure, and socio-economic disparity. The research rolls in three sections; First and foremost, it critically evaluates TTP's evolution, rise, decline, and revival. Secondly, it examines the challenges and threats posed by TTP to Pakistan. After regaining its strength and support base, TTP intensified its operation activity and attacks on Pakistan's security, stability, and sovereignty. Lastly, this research paper would argue that the state must implement effective counter-terrorism measures and a de-radicalization plan to counter the reorganization of the militants. To protect the sovereignty of the state, militant groups like TTP must be eliminated by intervention, urgency, diplomatic engagement, and regional cooperation.

Keywords: Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Resurgence, Terrorism, Afghan Taliban and Pakistan Counter-Terrorism Strategy

Introduction:

The 9/11 attacks redefined the international security system and global political order. These terrorist attacks were coordinated and carried out by the Islamic militant organization; Al Qaeda, to weaken U.S. hegemony. Soon, after the attacks Bush administration initiated a military



campaign to target militant Islamic jihadist movements. In the initial phase, the main target of this military operation was al-Qaida. However, The U.S. administration extended the operation and decided to start a global war on terror. The purpose of this military-led operation was to invade Afghanistan and to eradicate the Taliban and its sympathizers from Afghanistan.

Following The US-led invasion, The Taliban government in Kabul disintegrated, and the Taliban Mujahids' started to escape into hiding in Pakistan. They initially settled down in South Waziristan and grew their support base. Later on, many other jihadist groups joined them to fight NATO Forces and the US. Being the U.S. ally Pakistan's armed forces started mass level crackdown to eradicate militant groups linked with Al Qaeda from the tribal areas as they started to penetrate there. All this created great resentment among Taliban and locals against Pakistan security forces. Which eventually brought many insurgent groups together to confront the Pakistan security agencies.

Among these insurgent groups, TTP emerged as a well-established and powerful militant organization with a strong presence on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. TTP also known as Pakistan Taliban was a by-product of AL Qaeda who were fighting U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan. TTP carried out devastating assaults on Pakistan such as on educational institutions, religious places, and on women. In 2012, they also attacked Malala Yousafzai in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK). TTP extremists attacked Malala Yousafzai because she opposed Taliban ideology and their attempt to stop women from receiving an education; however, she managed to survive the attack.

Nevertheless, Pakistani military forces managed to dismantle TTP from 2014 onwards. Pakistan military operations, counter-terrorism strategy, TTP internal fights, and drone attacks caused TTP to fall from 2018 to 2019. (Peshimam, 2023)

The jihadist group again started to re-emerge after the fall of Kabul to the Afghan Taliban in 2020. Post-Taliban rule in Afghanistan many splinter groups merged with TTP, to impose Sharia rule in Pakistan. Apart from this, many other factors also play an important role in TTP's strong resurgence for instance change of leadership, renouncing the policy of assaulting civilians, reconstruction of organizational structure, and internal political instability in Pakistan. As a result, TTP territorial expansion and operational activity have intensified. Moreover, The Afghan Taliban triumph has given strength to TTP, now they have Taliban support as many TTP commandants are sheltering in Afghanistan.

TTP rise, fall, and re-organization need to be studied as a case study. Moreover, TTP has connections and links with other militant organizations for instance Al-Qaeda and Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP), an alliance between these groups could have severe implications for Pakistan and the South Asia region. It is important to examine its origin, ideology, and resurgence to understand the growing threat of the militant outfit. Therefore, the government of Pakistan



should adopt a comprehensive strategy to eradicate TTP to create stability and peace in Pakistan. A wave of peace cannot be achieved unless these insurgent groups are completely wiped out. (Sayed, 2021)

Rise and Fall of TTP (2007-2018)

In December 2007, several tribal leaders and paramilitary groups decided to establish an umbrella organization, which led to the creation of TTP. The organization was created in response to Pakistan's military operations against militants in the Red Mosque and Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA). Their ultimate objective was to carry out Jihad against Pakistan's security forces to enforce the Islamic governance system. (Hussain, 2017)

Since its emergence, TTP declared to be a wing of the Afghan Taliban. TTP militants considered Mullah Omar as their spiritual leader and also announced their support for the Afghan Taliban in their war against the U.S. invasion.

Prominent Militant commander Baitullah Mehsud was elected as the first Emir of TTP with the consultation of a shura (Consultative Council) of 40 Taliban Leaders. The extremist Deobandi ideology of TTP helped them to form relations with other groups such as Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, and other Punjabi Deobandi extremists, to expand their reach beyond FATA (Akhtar & Ahmed, 2023). After the death of Baitullah Mehsud, in 2009, HakimUllah Mehsud became the new Emir of TTP. Under his leadership, TTP continued Baitullah Mehsud's offensive campaign and jihadist activities until his death. In 2013, HakimUllah Mehsud's successor, Mullah Fazlullah took over the charge of leadership. However, TTP under his command suffered immensely over leadership conflict as he failed to gather the support of the Mehsud tribe, eventually dividing TTP into different factions. (Khan, 2016)

The core ideology of TTP is based on the Deobandi School of thought as many TTP militants come out from Deobandi Madaris sponsored by Saudi Arabia during the Afghan war. These Radical Deobandi Madaris were strongly against Western, modern, and secular teachings. Moreover, many prominent Afghan Taliban leaders and militants were alumni of these Deobandi Madaris for instance, Mullah Omar was the alma mater of Pakistan's biggest Deobandi Madaris, Uloom-ul-Islamia, in Binori, in Karachi. (Templin, 2015). The radical and extremist ideas that encourage militancy and conservative Islamic beliefs were born out through these Madaris.

Consequently, TTP emerged as the most brutal force in Pakistan's history as they conducted multiple attacks on Pakistan's civilians and armed forces since its emergence. They recruited people from tribal areas and KP and empowered them by providing arms and weapons. The words Morality, ethics, peace, and humanity have never existed in the TTP dictionary. The group's vicious terrorist attacks have led to massive killings and deaths in Pakistan. Their offensive militant attacks not only on military forces but also on teachers, women, children, foreigners, Shia



Muslims, religious minorities, and political leaders. They implemented strict rules for women in FATA; banned their education, abducted female teachers, and abolished their educational institutions. (SIDDIQA, A. 2019).

TTP successfully conducted their activities by using different techniques for instance; abduction, torture, kidnapping, assassinations, and suicide bombings. Kidnappings and political assassinations were their main strategy to get political leverage at the bargaining table. They abducted many prominent political personalities including Shahbaz Taseer, Haider Gilani, and many other government officials. Besides, their dominant presence in federal disputed territory FATA converted the Afghan border into a no-go area. Tribal areas become training grounds and networking areas for TTP. (Khan, 2016)

Furthermore, on December 16, 2014, they surpassed all the limits and attacked the Army Public School (APS) in Peshawar, which resulted in the killing of more than 100 children. This attack was the turning point for Pakistan paramilitary forces as after it all the stakeholders sat in Islamabad to draw up a comprehensive plan to eradicate TTP once and for all. Sooner, the Pakistan government started a massive military Operation Zarb e Azab in North Waziristan to root out TTP bases and militants. This operation crushed the TTP dominion and forced them to take refuge in Afghanistan. However, it did not stop TTP from attacking Pakistan. (Jamal, n.d., 2015)

Nevertheless, Pakistan's security considerably improved, in 2017 and 2018, mainly due to the massive military operations including Zarb e Azab and Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad in 2017. Another decision, that helped to counter TTP, was the amalgamation of FATA into the KP Province in 2018. Following these steps, Pakistan witnessed a reduction in terrorist assaults. (SIDDIQA, A. 2019).

In addition, the inner fighting between various factions, after the death of Hakimullah Mehsud in 2013, disintegrated TTP into different groups. The new Emir Mullah Fazlullah hailed from the Buner district of Malakand, failed to get the support of the Mehsud tribe, which led to the factionalization of the TTP. The military operations and disintegration within the group forced many to seek shelter in Afghanistan. In late 2014, Many TTP commanders switched allegiance to the ISKP led by Hafiz Saeed.

However, despite these operational capabilities and obstacles TTP still managed to conduct periodic assaults on Pakistan. They started to re-emerge after the death of Mullah Fazlullah in 2016. The New Emir Noor Wali Mehsud managed to reorganize TTP. The organization under the command of new leadership again started its deadly attacks on different sections of society. For instance, the years 2018 and 2019, saw a significant rise in attacks targeting politicians, Health workers, polio teams, and police officers, although the casualties were generally low. Pakistan managed to control the activities of TTP and halted them from carrying out large-scale attacks



because of comprehensive military operations. (Akhtar & Ahmed, 2023).

Prominent leaders of TTP:

Baitullah Mehsud

Baitullah Mehsud, a soldier of peace, as called by a Pakistani general was the pioneer of TTP, who created havoc in Pakistan through his un-peaceful course of actions (AL JAZEERA, 2010). He was born in the Bannu region of North West Frontier Province (NWFP) in 1970. He got no formal education except religious teachings from the local Madaris. He went to Afghanistan frequently to help the Afghan Taliban as he was impressed by their ideology and later on he pledged loyalty to Mullah Omer in his war against the US invasion. He rose to power to lead the TTP by displaying his excellent military skills, especially in guerrilla warfare and warlord credentials. The life of the people of FATA under Baitullah was tough and strict. He enforced strict Sharia rules in FATA; forbade civil and basic human rights, banned music, and burnt movie stores, and implemented a strict adherence to the Taliban set of rules. (Abbas Zaidi, 2008)

Hakimullah Mehsud

Upon the assassination of Baitullah Mehsud two candidates contested for accession, Hakimullah Mehsud and Wali-ur-Rahman. Hakimullah Mehsud was more ruthless, radical, and extremist than his rival especially in his dedication to intensifying the violent campaign of TTP. Therefore, the leadership ultimately went to him and by all accounts, the militant outfit under his leadership grew and became more powerful. Under the command of the Mehsud tribe, TTP was tightly governed and exercised control over the group's various factions. (Sharifi, 2014)

Mullah Fazlullah

The reckless commander Mullah Fazullah also known as FM Mullah was born in 1974 in Swat District. He joined TTP in 2007 and became the De facto ruler of the Swat Chapter. During his reign, the entire system was based on fear, brutality, and oppression. He also used the power of FM radio to change the political and social fabric of the Swat Valley. He used to give sermons that were entirely based on Wahhabism, Jihad, anti-modernism, and anti-state. (Shah, 2020) He rose to the head of the TTP, after the killing of the Hakimullah Mehsud in 2013. It was the First time an Emir was elected from outside of the FATA region and from a non-Mehsud tribe since the inception of the TTP. (Basit, 2014). Therefore, a conflict started over leadership between the Mehsud tribe and the Punjabi Taliban which eventually resulted in the division of the TTP into different groups.

The Resurgence of TTP – Struggle for Survival

The TTP's resurgence is inspired by the fall of Kabul through the Afghan Taliban in 2021. The US long-scale war against the Afghan Taliban continued for years and ended after the U.S. and Taliban signed a peace agreement in 2020. The Afghan Taliban took control of Kabul on 15 August 2021 marking the end of this long brutal war.

(Choudhary et al., 2022)



With the 2020 US-Taliban deal and the fall of Kabul, TTP underwent several changes. Multiple factors contributed to its resurgence i.e. change of Leadership, a series of Coalitions, reconstruction of the organizational framework, full-blown insurgency, Territorial expansion, political instability, and socioeconomic disparity, etc. These developments have reinforced concerns about a potential TTP resurgence, as the group seems intent on rebuilding its operational capacity by consolidating various factions and groups.

Noor Wali Mehsud- the Alliance Maker

TTP under the leadership of Noor Wali Mehsud enhanced the group's strength and power. Noor Wali Mehsud became the Emir of TTP after the death of Former TTP Leader Mullah Fazlullah. The former Emir Mullah Fazlullah could not prevent the defections of various groups, which resulted in TTP internal fragmentation.

The new Emir Mufti Noor Wali alias Abu Mansour Asim is a writer, ideologue, and religious figure. Noor Wali Mehsud succeeded in uniting different factions under the TTP banner for which their leadership strived since 2010. (Khattak, 2020)

In 2020, TTP announced to reunite with many disgruntled groups. After that, many breakaway factions joined TTP, including Jammāt ul Ahrar (JuA), Hizb-ul-Ahrar (HuA), Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) and several other Punjabi Groups and pledged obedience to the current TTP Leadership. These groups strengthened TTP and reduced internal conflicts. (Zahid, 2023)

Policy Shift

Under the leadership of new Emir Noor Wali Mehsud the militant outfit revised the organizational policy to revive its status and power. TTP's indiscriminate and violent aggressive assaults on civilians deprived it of public support and ideological narrative. With the consultation of other members of the shura, TTP started a process of reviving itself, decided to abandon the killing of civilians and solely focused on territorial expansion and targeting Pakistan security forces.

The Afghan Taliban Factor

The TTP and Afghan Taliban have a strong history of ties as both share the same ideology. The TTP fought alongside the Afghan Taliban against the US invasion of Afghanistan and also sheltered them. Moreover, after the Pakistan army's massive military Operation Zarb-e-Azb, many TTP militants escaped to Afghanistan to seek shelter. Wherein, during exile, TTP managed to maintain close ties with the Afghan Taliban.

Therefore, The Taliban victory in Afghanistan further strengthened TTP and provided it significant operation leeway in Afghanistan. TTP effectively uses these safe havens to carry out massive attacks in Pakistan. Moreover, The Afghan Taliban released many TTP militants including the deputy Emir of TTP Maulvi Faqir Mohammad, from the Afghan prisons imprisoned by the former



Afghan government. Many Afghan Taliban militants also support the TTP agenda of implementing sharia law in Pakistan (Akhtar & Ahmed, 2023)

Internal Dynamics:

The other important factors that emboldened TTP revival were political instability, bad administration, and lower socio-economic status in Pakistan and more specifically in erstwhile Fata. The long-standing socio-economic issues and political instability force the people of Pakistan to support these extremist organizations and the alternative system of governance they provide.

Centralized Bureaucratic Structure

TTP also replaced its old bureaucratic structure with a new centralized structure similar to the Afghan Taliban. TTP aims to overthrow the Pakistani government, capture the land of pure like the Afghan Taliban, and implement Sharia rule. Thus, they have renewed organizational changes for expansion and resurgence in Pakistan. In the previous TTP's quasi-tribal structure, power was decentralized; local commanders used to enjoy unlimited powers, which led to internal conflicts and anarchy. The new system has established centralized training units and appointed governors in Provinces. The organization also introduced seven new departments for instance Suicide brigade, the court system, the Intelligence bureau, etc. The leadership council is vested with the highest supreme power and appoints ministers of different departments. (A. S. Sayed & HAMMING, 2023)

Apart from that, TTP also created a defense military department comprised of two commissions, North Zone and South Zone for their security. They also established a special unit in Baluchistan to expand their operation horizon in a non-Pashtun majority area. Another feature that increased the power of TTP is its news organization, Umar Media. They use this medium to sell anti-state narratives to gain the support of different communities. They produce audio, and videos in different languages to mobilize the Baloch and Pashtuns against Pakistan's security forces. In 2022, they started to release videos in the Balochi language to acquire the support of the Baloch people. TTP is trying to use their miseries as a tool to gain power and strength.

Additionally, they have also increased the number of publications in their magazine, Mujalla Taliban. TTP named their magazine Mujalla means Magazine or Journal in Arabic; to establish authority and legitimacy. The publication quality also improved; the main focus of these publications is to draw parallels between Pakistan's government structure and the Afghan Taliban's rule. (Firdous et al., 2023)

Full-blown Insurgency

Since the Afghan Taliban returned to power in 2021, the TTP created an upheaval in Pakistan and extended its terror attacks. They executed and increased their terror attacks in all provinces of Pakistan. In the years 2022 and 2023, they carried out attacks in Sindh, Punjab, and Baluchistan. However, they redirected their agenda to refrain from attacking civilians and religious minorities.



This time their main target of war is Pakistan paramilitary and security forces.

Hereinafter, Pakistan military forces pressurized the Afghan Taliban to rein in TTP haven in Afghanistan. The rise in these atrocities affected Pakistan's relations with the Afghan Taliban. The Afghan Taliban mediated and arranged negotiations between Pakistan and TTP in 2022. However, TTP unilaterally revoked the cease-fire agreement and resumed their terror activities. TTP demands, which include the restoration of the semi-autonomous status of the FATA, amnesty for their detained commanders, and the enforcement of Sharia laws, are ones they are not willing to back down.

(Chawla, 2023)

The overall statistics show that TTP between 2020 - 2022 average attacks per month rose from 14.5 in 2020 to 23.5 in 2021 and 45.8 in 2022. Furthermore, the evidence shows that TTP started using modern weapon technology to carry out these acts. In the year 2023, TTP conducted one of the deadliest attacks in recent history, leading to the killing of many police officers.

(A. S. Sayed & HAMMING, 2023)

In addition, Pakistan has witnessed over 190 acts of terrorism in 2023 in which at least 445 military personnel were killed. Pakistan claimed that over the past two years, the terrorist attacks have increased by over 60% (2023). Violent assaults have continued in 2024, targeting security forces and religious places. These acts of terror not only indicate Pakistan's security failure but also illustrate the extent of the TTP's present power and reach in Pakistan. Nevertheless, the Pakistani government has pledged to adopt a comprehensive strategy and military operation to combat terrorism.

The Resurgence of TTP and Challenges for Pakistan

The presence of TTP poses multiple challenges to Pakistan, threatening the country's internal security, stability, and development. Here are some of the key challenges:

Firstly, one of the serious threats TTP poses to Pakistan is terrorism and violence. Since its inception, the Islamic militant organization has targeted the people of Pakistan massively. Bombings and killings have been bloodied on the streets of many cities and erstwhile tribal areas. The militant outfit openly challenges the state's authority, sovereignty, and ability to maintain the law and order situation. All jihadi groups including TTP who trained and supported the U.S. during the Afghan War; have now turned their guns against Pakistan to implement Sharia rule. These trends have led to rising concerns that TTP has again become an active force in Pakistan.

Moreover, the TTP also has links with India which has a record of supporting insurgency in Baluchistan and other areas. The ability of India to be involved in subversive activities in Pakistan can increase the power of these non-state actors. The organization that has the support of other states and groups are difficult to eradicate. Pakistan is already struggling immensely to curb TTP



and if they gain India's support, the chances will certainly shrink. (Mir, Ph.D et al., 2023)

Ideologically, TTP uses its vicious propaganda to radicalize and instigate different groups against Pakistan. Their ideology is to instigate social, political, and ethnic tensions in Pakistan. Their propaganda machine is selling anti-state narratives to exploit the deprivation of Baloch and Pashtun nationalists to push their agenda. TTP's radical and extremist ideology is against Pakistan's social fabric and pluralist culture. Their ideology can create a division in society and hinder efforts to promote peace, tolerance, and national unity. However, the vast majority of Pakistanis have not been driven and moved by their ideology, and interpretation of Sharia and Islam.

At a global level, TTP has also created a strong nexus with other militant groups. It is reported that TTP has a rooted collaboration with other insurgent groups for instance Al Qaida Al, Majeed Brigade, and ISKP. Al Qaida provides training, fighters, and ideological mentorship to TTP militants. The Al Majeed brigade, a Baloch insurgent group, is also collaborating with TTP, posing serious global security threats. (Syed, 2024)

On the other hand, The ISKP does not share the same ideology with TTP and calls them misguided Muslims. They also accuse TTP as an agent of other regional players. Nevertheless, many scholars believe that some group members of TTP and ISKP have close ties and they work for both organizations and also often switch their allegiances. Moreover, ISKP members have shown a soft corner for TTP and its leadership. Therefore, their nexus could be dangerous for the security of Pakistan and the South Asia region. In this situation, it is reasonable to assume that Pakistan is required to deal with TTP and its other connected terrorist organizations such as al Qaeda, Al Majeed brigade, and ISKP on its own. (Hussain, 2021)

Economically, to undermine Pakistan's economic stability, TTP is also putting Pakistan-China strategic cooperation and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects at risk. Recently, The TTP militants have attacked the sites of Gwadar and Quetta where many Chinese nationals were killed. Chinese officials have also raised deep concerns about the safety and security of its citizens in Pakistan. Given the CPEC project's Economic importance, Pakistan cannot afford the delay. TTP activities hinder economic development, discourage foreign investment, and disrupt social progress in Pakistan. (Kugelman, 2023)

Internally, TTP also advanced to expand its territory beyond KPK. They also managed to retrieve their influence in FATA, KPK, and Lakki Marwat. The group is now able to plan and execute offensive operations across Pakistan. The latest evidence of its territorial enlargement includes the major attacks that occurred in Punjab, Sindh, and Baluchistan. Their active presence has been seen in Punjab where they managed to kill a senior official of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency. In addition, they managed to relocate to Baluchistan, where they carried out deliberate assassination attempts. The TTP's insurgency has undermined Pakistan's national security and sovereignty and also displaced thousands of people. Not only this, the TTP militants



also orchestrated their incursion into Chirtal. The Chitral region shares borders with not only eastern Afghanistan but also China and Tajikistan. Given Its geostrategic importance, the upsurge of TTP militants is a great security concern for Pakistan. All these incidents are a wake-up call for Pakistan's policymakers. (A. S. Sayed & HAMMING, 2023)

On the regional level, the presence of TTP in Afghanistan complicates Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan. Many TTP militants are located in Afghanistan and use their bases for the movement of weapons, and militants to attack Pakistan. These acts of terrorism have created a ground for extremism and distrust between both nations. Pakistan accused the Afghan Taliban of harboring TTP militants in Afghanistan as the majority of terrorists and suicide bombers are Afghan Nationals. Pakistan has several times complained to the Afghan Taliban but they denied these allegations and refused to force TTP out. (Hussain, 2021)

Therefore, in 2023, the government of Pakistan decided to expel 1.5 million undocumented Afghan refugees from Pakistan. On the other hand, the Afghan Taliban blames the failure of these attacks on Pakistan's security forces. The Afghan interior minister Sirajuddin Haqqani used harsh language against Pakistan and warned of any misadventure against Afghanistan. (Ahmad, 2024)

If the TTP continues attacking Pakistan, There are no chances of improving relations between Pakistan and the Afghan Taliban. There is a deadlock between them, which may break out potential war. The Taliban militants are well-trained and have a mass level of support from other jihadist groups. A war with these insurgent groups would cost Pakistan's fragile economy an arm and a leg and provoke ethical and cultural violence. In terms of Pakistan's war against terrorism, the militant outfits have proven lethal to the state, its people, and military personnel.

Way out:

With the resurgence of TTP, the internal security situation in Pakistan is getting worse. What is most alarming is that the militants are equipped with modern technology and high-grade weapons left behind by U.S. and NATO forces. On the other hand, the TTP and Afghan Taliban nexuses are also posing a great security threat for Pakistan as there is strong evidence of TTP and Afghan Taliban involvement in terrorist attacks in Baluchistan recently. Violence and attacks are likely to continue because TTP enjoys support from multiple groups and because of the limited capacity and internal political and economic instability of Pakistan. To undermine the TTP agenda, terrorism, propaganda, and attacks, Pakistan has to adopt a comprehensive strategy. The following recommendations are important for Pakistan to restore peace and normalcy in the country.

Explore Diplomatic Options:

First of all, Pakistan must explore its diplomatic options and try to engage regional and global powers to pressure the Afghan Taliban and TTP. The presence of TTP in Pakistan and Afghanistan is a critical and serious security concern for all regional states. Pakistan must raise this issue on an



international level to acquire the support of other states. Pakistan did try to negotiate with TTP in 2022 but TTP revoked the ceasefire agreement. It was not the first time the Pakistani Government tried to negotiate with TTP; in fact, it had tried several times, with the same outcome. Now the top leadership is convinced that TTP has no interest in negotiations, thus the government must activate other channels to annihilate TTP.

Counter-terrorism Cooperation

The Continued terrorist attacks of TTP have compelled the government of Pakistan to neutralize its relations with the U.S. Many policymakers are of the view that Pakistan should opt for security cooperation with the US to combat terrorism. However, to advance bilateral defense cooperation Pakistan must overcome the political turmoil, civil-military rift, and economic recession and also depoliticize the role of the US in Pakistan.

Nevertheless, counter-terrorism cooperation is a shared interest of both nations as instability in the South Asia region could also damage U.S. interests. Thus, many steps have been taken by the US administration in this regard for instance overturning the ban on the F-16 package. The need of the hour is that Pakistan should work with the US to increase intelligence-based cooperation, capacity building of paramilitary forces, and pressure the Afghan government to disrupt TTP.

Civilianize the Counterterrorism efforts:

Another possible solution to tackle TTP resurgence is to civilianize the counter-terrorism efforts. The military is spearheading the counter-terrorism efforts while the civilians have a lesser role. The Civilian authorities need to play a primary role in shaping counter-terrorism strategies. The legislature, executive, and civil law enforcement agencies can play a decisive role in curbing extremism and terrorism.

Increase the autonomy of the Police:

In addition, the other important step should be, to increase the power and autonomy of the police. Police forces are at the forefront and ground source of intelligence for combating terrorism. Many police officers have lost their lives in the war against terrorism. Therefore, the government should work to reform the police department and give them full authority to fight terrorism.

Fence the border:

Another proposed measure is to fence the Afghan-Pakistan border, to control and monitor the movement of individuals across the border which will reduce militant infiltrations and smuggling. Border management is a mutual issue for both Afghanistan and Pakistan, therefore comprehensive coordinated approach will help to prevent militancy.

De radicalization:

Furthermore, Pakistan needs to adopt a comprehensive strategy that helps to combat terrorism and extremities. The government of Pakistan should make a comprehensive de-radicalization program



to help citizens abandon radical and extremist views. The network of Madaris in the state should be properly monitored and regularized. Many Madaris were established during the Afghan war to recruit jihadists and to propagate extremist and radical views.

The previous de-radicalization program was not effective in eliminating extremist propaganda. A new comprehensive de-radicalization program must be announced to promote a modern narrative of the Islamic religion. There is a strong need to counter the conservative interpretation of Islam and to fight radical Deobandi ideology to create religious harmony in the state.

Remove the grievances of the locals:

The next important thing is that the government of Pakistan must reform the neglected erstwhile tribal belt. The tribal belts are widely neglected by the state; the state must prioritize economic and social development in these areas. The People of the Former FATA region have anger and resentment against the government because of their poor social life and lack of education and health facilities. In addition, the Afghan war and drone attacks also infuriated the locals against the military and the state. Therefore, the need of the hour is that the government must take steps to remove the reservations of the locals to reduce extremism and militancy in these areas. The government of Pakistan has taken a step in this regard by merging FATA into KPK province but still, the former FATA region needs attention and development.

Strengthen National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA):

To make effective counter-terrorism and sectarianism policies, NACTA should be strengthened to make it an effective organization. For the effective working of NACTA, all state stakeholders civilians, military, and ministries maximum coordination is required. If all state stakeholders are on the same page and there is no rift between them; then the decision-making would be easier and smooth. Simultaneously, Inter-Provincial coordination should be enhanced to achieve better objectives.

Brush away the good Taliban and bad Taliban policy:

A more likely option for Pakistan is to shun its good Taliban and bad Taliban policy, which led to more religious intolerance and sectarian violence. Pakistan's military used to refer to the Afghan Taliban as Good Taliban and TTP as Bad Taliban. Pakistan's government and military need to understand that there are no good and bad Taliban. They all are the same and have the same sinister agenda and ideology. In the past, many militants were given leverage by the state that they might help the military forces to battle anti-state elements. However, this policy was a major failure as TTP started to merge with these anti-state elements instead of fighting them. Therefore, Pakistan needs to strongly denounce the policy of Good Taliban and Bad Taliban and act indiscriminately against all militant groups, their financiers, and their sympathizers to end this violence and threat.

Democracy:

Good governance depends on successful democracy. Democracy and democratic institutions help



to eradicate anti-state elements and to curb terrorism. The main reason for political instability in Pakistan is the continued disturbance of the democratic system. Political unrest, polarization, and bad governance enable the insurgent groups to advance their sinister agendas. Therefore, to achieve peace and normalcy, Pakistan should end political turmoil and also let democracy grow. To achieve this, Pakistan has to counter jihadist narratives, de-radicalize the youth, and root out TTP extremism. The state needs to summon political courage and create political stability, and economic equality.



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