

**THE IMPACT OF THE RE-RISE OF TALIBAN IN AFGHANISTAN ON  
PAKISTANI POLITICS: A CASE STUDY OF KP AND BALOCHISTAN**



**Researcher**

Noorshed Bin Azim

Reg No. 118-FSS/MSPS/F20

**Supervisor**

Dr Husnul Amin

Assistant Professor

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY ISLAMABAD PAKISTAN

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## **Declaration**

I, Noorshed Bin Azim, son of Azim, Registration No. 118-FSS/MSPS/F20, hereby declare that the MS thesis entitled “**The Impact of the Re-Rise of Taliban in Afghanistan on Pakistani Politics: A Case Study of KP and Balochistan**” is my original work carried out under the supervision of Dr Husnul Amin, in the Department of Politics and International Relations, International Islamic University Islamabad.

The research work presented in this thesis has not been submitted for any degree or diploma at any other institution or university. All the sources of information and data used in this thesis have been duly acknowledged in the bibliography and references. I further declare that any work of others used in this thesis has been appropriately acknowledged with citations and references following the standard academic practice.

I understand that any act of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, may result in the revocation of my degree.

Date

Noorshed Bin Azim

Reg No. 118-FSS/MSPS/F20

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## ABSTRACT

*Afghanistan's recent developments have several social and political repercussions for the wider region. Pakistani society is expected to be impacted by the Taliban's rise to power, the emergence of a conservative worldview, and the repression of progressive social movements in Afghanistan, particularly in the neighbouring provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan. One of the most important questions is: what is the overall impact of the re-rise of Taliban in Afghanistan on Pakistani politics specifically in the Pashtun belt? This study is theoretically informed by the Motivated Reasoning Theory, which clarifies how people evaluate and react to political events depending on pre-existing beliefs and motives. This study is confined to investigating the effects of the Taliban's resurgence in Afghanistan on Pakistani politics; it focuses on the political methods, discourse, and ideologies of the Pashtun belt, which includes KP and Baluchistan. This study looks at the political and ideological changes that have occurred in Pakistan's Pashtun belt as a result of the Taliban's rise in Afghanistan, as demonstrated by changes to party manifestos, language, and slogans. The research methodology employed involves a comprehensive analysis of political party manifestoes, programs, slogans, discourse, rhetoric, and language in the Pashtun belt of Pakistan after the recapturing of power by the Taliban in Afghanistan during 2021–2022.*

# CHAPTER – 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

The last couple of years in Afghanistan, notably the revival of the Taliban and the installation of their leadership, which has yet to be acknowledged by the international community, have had a dramatic impact on the geopolitical landscape of South Asia. Waves of shock from this comeback have shaken South Asia, especially Pakistan, a neighbour. Rising tensions in the area, growing worries about terrorism, and changes in the relative influence of important players like China, India, and Pakistan have all been brought on by the ascent of the Taliban (East-West Center, 2021; Wani, 2022). Beijing has viewed Kabul's stability as strategically crucial for protecting its economic interests, especially those associated with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and has worked to maintain it in reaction to the Taliban's ascent (Sattar & Yaqin, 2023). Concerns over the safety of its residents and building projects in Afghanistan have also been raised by Beijing. The Taliban's return is a strategic win for Pakistan over India, but there are hazards as well because the Pakistani Taliban may profit from the unrest in Afghanistan. Pakistan also has to deal with the issue of controlling the migration of Afghan refugees (East-West Center, 2021). Even though the Taliban administration has not received official international recognition, the effects of its authority have already been felt throughout South Asia, underscoring the intricate geopolitics of the area and the significance of Afghanistan.

The region's geopolitical situation has changed significantly because of the Taliban's quick capture and installation of a fresh government in Afghanistan. As a neighbour, Pakistan is at the centre of these developments, which have a big impact on its security, socioeconomic stability, domestic politics, and ideological and geopolitical dynamics, especially in the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan. India, a competitor, has suffered a strategic setback as a result of the Taliban's comeback, but there are also hazards since it may strengthen the Taliban in Pakistan (Mir, 2022b, 2023). There are greater implications for regional countries like China and India from the changing situation in Afghanistan. While India is worried about terrorist activity and Pakistan gaining influence in the India-Pakistan tension, China is worried about the security of its infrastructure projects in Afghanistan. The global community is

confronted with issues about political turmoil, rising tensions, terrorism, and the inflow of refugees from Afghanistan (East-West Center, 2021). South Asia's geopolitical dynamics have changed as a result of the Taliban's comeback in Afghanistan, with Pakistan leading the way. The peace and security of the region will continue to be impacted by the changing dynamics between Pakistan, the Afghan Taliban, and other regional players.

Pakistan is in talks with high-ranking Taliban representatives and is demanding that the existential danger to Pakistan be removed from Afghan territory by Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), Al-Qaida, and the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP). The Taliban is demonstrating its will to drive out terrorist groups from Afghanistan (Gul, 2024; Mir, 2023). Given that India's influence in Afghanistan was a serious issue for Pakistan, the country saw the resurgence of the Taliban as a positive regime shift. Pakistan is attempting to persuade the world community to support the Taliban government in combating the ISKP and the humanitarian catastrophe (Abbasian, 2022; Kumar & Kumar, 2022). Pakistan seeks a stable, inclusive administration in Afghanistan, which is essential for regional connectivity, the eradication of terrorist organizations, the resolution of border-related disputes, the issue of refugees, and the promotion of commerce (Mir, 2023; Waheed, 2022). One of the factors contributing to the rise of terrorism in Pakistan was the ideological divide between the state and the US during the invasion of Afghanistan following the 9/11 attacks. This allowed religiously motivated individuals to wage jihad against the state because Pakistan was a part of the secular coalition that overthrew the Sharia regime (Riedel, 2013). Since both Pakistan and Afghanistan are Muslim nations, their shared religious identity has an impact on each other's internal politics. The Taliban now controls Afghanistan after the US withdrew from the country. With an emphasis on the Pashtun belt, this study aims to investigate the complex interactions between the Taliban's resurgence in Afghanistan and its effects on Pakistani politics.

Pakistan continues to have close ties with Afghanistan due to shared ethnic, cultural, and religious ties, especially in the regions that border Afghanistan, like KP and Baluchistan. Pakistan was a major player in the Afghan peace process, including mediating talks between the US and the Taliban (Ahmad, 2021; Kousar *et al.*, 2023). The Taliban's rise to power in Afghanistan has sparked new conversations and debates in Pakistani political circles, leading to a reassessment of alliances, methods, and frameworks for policy in reaction to the changing



circumstances on the other side of the border. The Doha Agreement of 2020, which called for the departure of Americans and allies from Afghanistan, cleared the stage for the Taliban to quickly seize control of the nation (H. Abbas, 2023; Beaud & Dagorn, 2023; Shams, 2023; Tayeb & Noursin, 2023). Concerns over religious extremism, regional security, and the future course of Afghan-Pakistani ties have been raised by the fall of the Afghan National Security Forces and the installation of an interim Taliban administration. Understanding the complex forces that have defined Pakistan's dealings with Afghanistan may be gained by looking at the relationship's historical background, which spans from the Soviet invasion to the post-9/11 era. Pakistan's engagement in the Afghan jihad against the Soviet Union and its status as a frontline state during the Cold War has had a lasting impact on the internal political and security landscape of the nation (Ali & Alqama, 2023; Kosar, 2021). Pakistan has a distinct perspective on the Taliban's resurgence in power in Afghanistan. Some see it as a possible counterweight to Indian dominance and a means of gaining strategic depth against perceived threats; others worry about the ramifications for cross-border terrorism, internal security, and refugee inflows (Felbab-Brown, 2023; Rehman, 2023). Its geopolitical backing of the Taliban rule, especially in areas like KP and Balochistan that have sizable Pashtun populations, impacts Pakistan's domestic politics.

Historically, Pakistan's Pashtun belt has served as a centre for political action, ethnic identity, and intellectual variety (Khan *et al.*, 2020; Kukreja, 2020). The emergence of the Taliban in Afghanistan possesses the capacity to transform the political terrain in these areas, affecting the beliefs, dialogue, and tactics of political factions and movements. Given how deeply ingrained Pashtun nationalism is in Afghan-Pakistani ties, it may change in reaction to developments occurring on the other side of the border.

According to scholarly research on the interactions between the politics of surrounding nations, notable occurrences in one country frequently have an impact on the socio-political climate of other territories. Policymakers, academics, and stakeholders must all comprehend the ramifications of the Taliban's comeback to power in Afghanistan for Pakistani politics, ideology, and security. Thus, the Taliban's comeback in Afghanistan is a sobering precedent that casts a deep shadow over Pakistan's political future. Given this, stakeholders, scholars, and politicians must understand the profound effects of this revival on Pakistan's politics, ideology, and security. Understanding the complex structures of accommodation, opposition, and change that emerge in

Pakistani politics in reaction to the Taliban's comeback is the main goal of this research. Examining the minute changes in party manifestos, language, and slogans after the Taliban's comeback is at the heart of this investigation. The research attempts to shed light on how political players manage the constantly shifting terrain in the aftermath of outside pressures by providing a thorough analysis of these changes and illuminating the dynamics of Pakistani politics as they evolve.

This research also aims to provide insights into Pakistan's socio-political trajectory as well as to understand the immediate consequences of the Taliban's return by exploring the domains of ideology, rhetoric, and political strategy. By doing this, it aims to provide stakeholders with a thorough grasp of the intricacies at hand and the information they need to take advantage of the possibilities and challenges that lie ahead.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Recent changes in Afghanistan have several regional socioeconomic and political implications. The rise of the Taliban to power, the ascendance of a conservative ideology, and the rollback of progressive social forces in Afghanistan are likely to impact Pakistani society, especially in the neighbouring areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan. Drawing from academic literature on neighbourhood effects on politics and society, this research explores the potential short-term, medium-term, and long-term impacts on Pakistani politics in the Pashtun belt, various political parties, their ideologies, and party programs.

## **1.3 Significance of the Study**

The Islamic Emirates, known as the Taliban, has re-emerged as a dominant force in Afghanistan and formed an interim government under Sharia for the whole of Afghanistan. The developments in Afghanistan directly and indirectly affect Pakistan. The regime change in Afghanistan is likely to have an impact on Pakistani politics and society. Therefore, there is a need to find out how the regime change in Afghanistan will affect Pakistani politics and suggest ways forward for future Pakistan-Afghan relations.

In the past, we have observed the discourse of Jihad and anti-Americanism, which shaped the politics in the neighbouring country in the form of Mutahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA). The developments in Afghanistan are observed regionally and globally, and there is a looming peril for the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) in Pakistan. Pakistan is on the grey list of FATF

allegedly assisting non-state actors in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Therefore, there is a need to know how Pakistan looks to FATF and how the re-emergence of the Taliban influences Pakistani politics.

#### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The following are the objectives of the study.

- To explore the impact of the re-rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan on Pakistani politics, especially in the Pashtun belt.
- To examine the influence of the Taliban government in Afghanistan on the ideologies, discourse, and political strategies within the Pashtun belt, including revisions in party manifestoes, rhetoric, and slogans following the resurgence of the Taliban.

#### **1.5 Research Questions**

This study seeks to answer the following questions.

1. What is the overall impact of the re-rise of Taliban in Afghanistan on Pakistani politics specifically in the Pashtun belt?
2. What are the ideological shifts and political implications within the Pashtun belt in Pakistan following the resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan, as evidenced by revisions in party manifestoes, rhetoric, and slogans?

#### **1.6 Delimitation of the Study**

The research work is limited to looking at the impacts of the re-emergence of the Taliban in Afghanistan on Pakistani religious and other political parties' politics only in the Pashtun Belt, by which the researcher means the political forces in KP and Baluchistan. The researcher only focuses on ideologies, discourse, manifestoes, and party programmes of the political parties in the Pashtun belt of Pakistan after the re-rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan. The researcher investigates the development in Afghanistan and its impacts on Pakistani politics during 2021–2022.

## 1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1.7.1 Review of Literature

There is no substantial work that covers the topic's explication in its entirety. Nevertheless, it has been needlessly explored in numerous literature. Despite the abundance of literature on the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan, no unique article titled *The Impact of the re-rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan on Pakistani politics concerning KP and Balochistan* is readily available. The majority of academic literature discusses the problems of terrorism in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, but the fundamental concepts of how the Taliban's resurgence has threatened regional security in the Pashtun belt—particularly in Pakistan's KP and Balochistan—are covered.

The scholarly works, that provide some relevant information about the Taliban, include Gilles Dorronsoro's book *The Taliban's Winning Strategy in Afghanistan*. This book makes an argument that the main cause of the difficulties the International Coalition is facing in Afghanistan is a misperception of the Taliban uprising. The Taliban are a well-coordinated and organised movement, not just a loose alliance of regional factions. They are portrayed as a revolutionary force that is devoted to reconstructing the Islamic Emirate and is vehemently opposed to the tribal system in Afghanistan. Because their field commanders have autonomy, they can operate with flexibility and coherence while utilising effective propaganda and intelligence methods. Through the establishment of a parallel government, marginalisation of the local Afghan administration, and isolation of the Coalition, the Taliban have succeeded in achieving their goals in the country's south and east. To get support, they take advantage of ethnic divisions, the Afghan people's hatred of foreign troops, and the lack of a local government. The book emphasises how the Taliban has been successful in attracting members from non-Pashtun populations, suggesting that they have a wider appeal than their traditional base. This presents a serious threat to the Coalition's plan, especially its emphasis on strengthening the South, along with its strategic gains in several provinces. The book makes the case for a shift in the Coalition's approach, arguing that resources should be reallocated to stop and reverse Taliban gains in the North and to strengthen and protect the Kabul area. Should this not be done, there is a chance of losing national authority (Dorronsoro, 2009).

In an article titled *As Pakistan's Afghanistan policy fails, the Afghan Taliban moves against Islamabad*, the author explores the intricacies of Pakistan's interventionist policy in Afghanistan. The author focuses in particular on the difficulties presented by the ruling Taliban regime and their affiliation with the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Pakistan's security and territorial integrity are seriously jeopardised by the Taliban's support for the TTP, which is demonstrated by their release of TTP members and rejection of the Durand Line boundary. The article recommends Pakistan use a multifaceted strategy to address these issues. This entails stepping up border security to stop terrorists from infiltrating, holding separate talks with the TTP from the Afghan Taliban to better handle domestic concerns, and resolving Pashtun concerns to promote regional stability. The article also emphasises how crucial communication with India is to lowering tensions and advancing regional peace. Pakistan might strive to strengthen its ties and improve security cooperation with its neighbours by encouraging economic integration. In the final section, the author emphasises how Pakistan must immediately re-evaluate its strategy in Afghanistan to increase security and seek cooperation with its neighbours. Pakistan may enhance regional stability and protect its national interests by using a more strategic and sophisticated approach (Qazi, 2022).

In another research paper titled *Afghanistan under the Shadows of Taliban and Implications for Pakistan and Regional Security*, the researchers explore how Pakistan and other regional actors might be impacted by the Taliban's possible comeback in Afghanistan. They also provide light on the ideological and historical foundations of the group and how these elements may influence the larger region. The paper examines the diverse policy strategies that several nations, particularly Pakistan, may implement if the Taliban seize control again. A government run by the Taliban may potentially incite discontent and intensify terrorist activity, but a power-sharing arrangement with the existing government is thought to be a possible stabilising alternative. The paper delves into the possible consequences for surrounding countries as well as the participation of foreign powers including the US, China, and Russia. The paper highlights the roles that several regional powers, including China, Russia, and Pakistan, have had in helping the Taliban and the possible fallout for the area, while also analysing the present state of affairs in Afghanistan and its implications for Pakistan and regional security. It describes the intricacies and ambiguities surrounding the Taliban's possible comeback to power in Afghanistan, including the dangers of internal strife and the necessity of setting up an all-encompassing and inclusive administration.

The research also discusses terrorism and how it can affect Pakistan inadvertently. To successfully address the impending problems, it emphasises in its conclusion how important it is to promote stability in Afghanistan through a cooperative, multilateral strategy. In summary, the article explains how the changing situation in Afghanistan poses a danger to regional security, highlighting the urgent need for coordinated, determined measures to meet the difficult challenges that lie ahead (Khan & Syed, 2021).

According to another scholarly work titled *The Taliban's Ascendance in Afghanistan: Implications for Pakistan*, Pakistan is in a precarious position because of Afghanistan's quickly changing circumstances. Pakistan believes that if the Taliban are unable to form an orderly democratic administration through the inclusion of other Afghan ethnic and political groups, there may be an increase in militant violence. Pakistan anticipates that the Taliban would uphold their commitments to minorities and women's rights and address the concerns of the international community on transnational terrorism. An increase in terrorism in Pakistan, a significant refugee inflow, heightened regional proxy conflicts, and a deterioration in US-Pakistan ties are all consequences of the unrest in Afghanistan. South Asia's regional peace and security depend on a secure Afghanistan (Noor, 2021).

Increased militant activity in western Pakistan is described in another academic work titled *Islamist militancy in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region and US Policy*. It highlights three main challenges to national security: the possibility of significant attacks against the United States, a growing danger to the security of Pakistan, and an impediment to U.S. efforts to stabilise Afghanistan. It charts how ties between the United States and Pakistan have changed after 9/11, highlighting both cooperative and contentious times. Pakistan's continued cooperation has been commended, but questions remain over its dedication to fundamental U.S. objectives. This scholarly work goes on to articulate that terrorist organisations have become more powerful despite Pakistani military operations in the formerly Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). The administration, which is governed by civilians, promises to use a combination of economic growth, diplomacy, and military power to quell militancy. The U.S.-led stabilisation effort in Afghanistan is harmed by the uptick in insurgent activity, and increased infiltration from Pakistan exacerbates the decline in security. Redefining the Afghan battlefield to include areas bordering Pakistan, stepping up firepower from the Afghan side, and re-establishing military

cooperation between Afghan, Pakistani, and U.S./NATO forces are some of the measures taken to resolve these issues (Kronstadt & Katzman, 2019).

According to a different academic study titled *Major Powers' Interest in Afghanistan and the Impact on Pakistan*, the Afghan problem has caused anxiety and unrest in the area for the past forty years. It continued to be the cornerstone of both regional and international countries' interests. Moscow's impregnable weakness was exposed by its error in intervening in Afghanistan. Following the fall of the Soviet Union, Kabul has once again come under scrutiny due to the 9/11 terror attacks and the significance of US policies in the area. There are various alleged sanctuaries in Pakistan from which extremists might strike the US and its allies, and the US's constant set of interests and concerns in Afghanistan are in flux. Pakistan was threatened by militancy and extremism in many forms and was still embroiled in the Afghan war. The competition amongst the regional powers—especially India, Iran, and Pakistan—as they pursue their divergent interests further exacerbates the problem. The study looks at the interests and worries of the main powers in the ongoing war in Afghanistan (Nagra *et al.*, 2019).

### **1.7.2 Theoretical Framework**

The philosophical basis of a study endeavour is maintained or supported by the theoretical framework. The concept that justifies the investigation of the study is described and introduced in the theoretical framework (Johnson *et al.*, 2020).

### **1.7.3 Motivated Reasoning Theory**

Parties mobilise, influence, and structure choices among political alternatives to affect the attitudes of the public. However, the response to the question of whether and how political parties affect the thinking and attitudes of the public depends on the interaction of the public's motives, their efforts, and the information derived from the political environment (especially from competition between parties). As we define motivated reasoning, its contribution is to offer a logical theoretical framework for comprehending the impact of partisanship on the political beliefs of the public (Leeper & Slothuus, 2014). In a democracy, groups compete with one another and conduct conflicts to gain power and influence. Political parties are frequently the most significant organisations, as they use public opinion to win elections and justify their policy initiatives. Political elites soon saw the necessity for coordinating group action and established

political parties, even though parties were not originally associated with democratic politics (Aldrich, 1995).

Using the idea of motivated reasoning, the researcher has been able to investigate how political parties are changing their party manifestos, language, and rhetoric, as well as their programmes and narratives, in response to public sentiment towards Afghanistan. Competition amongst groupings, primarily political parties, is a fundamental feature of democratic politics. However, the inevitably partisan character of political dispute has not had a significant impact on political psychological work. The most suitable theoretical framework for examining and reconciling the researcher's approaches to political parties and public opinion is motivated reasoning theory.

Motivated Reasoning Theory is a concept that has its roots in social psychology and rational psychology. It clarifies how people make decisions and interpret information based on their pre-existing emotions, desires, and beliefs (Kunda, 1990). Fundamentally, this idea suggests that humans participate in reasoning processes that are frequently driven by psychological considerations rather than being fully rational agents. People often analyse new information or data in a way that supports their own ideas or intended results, which results in biased thinking and decision-making (Carnahan, 2015; Cho, 2024; Stanovich, 1999).

The deliberate interpretation of information is a fundamental component of motivated reasoning. People tend to discard or ignore information that contradicts their pre-existing notions, and favour information that confirms their aims or views (Nir, 2004). This kind of selective processing lessens the psychological pain brought on by irrational thinking and assists in maintaining mental coherence. Furthermore, motivated reasoning has an impact on several cognitive functions, such as memory, perception, and evidence evaluation. When faced with unclear information, people may choose to bend the facts or ignore contradicting evidence to support their own opinions or preferences (Braman, 2009; Cacioppo *et al.*, 1996; Friedman, 2012). Concisely, the theory of motivated reasoning emphasises the complex relationships that shape human reasoning and decision-making processes between emotion, motivation, and cognition. The argument highlights the significance of psychological elements in directing people's assessments of data, which in turn influences their decisions and actions.



Motivated Reasoning Theory posits that people in the Pashtun belt may evaluate events and developments through the prism of their pre-existing political ideas, identities, and connections in light of the Taliban's resurgence in Afghanistan and its influence on Pakistani politics.

The Taliban took back control of Afghanistan. Since both Pakistan and Afghanistan are Muslim countries, their shared religious and cultural identities have an impact on each other's internal politics. There are several instances of how political developments in Afghanistan influence Pakistan, particularly in the Pashtun Belt. The developments in Afghanistan are one of the factors contributing to the party's support in the Pashtun Belt. In the Pashtun Belt, several parties have substantial support and base their party manifestos and programmes on ethnic and religious grounds. The political parties must revise party manifestos and programmes for political reasons to reconcile the public's linguistic and religious inclinations towards Afghanistan.

Based on my analysis, I believe that people who support particular political parties or ideologies could interpret information concerning the Taliban's rebirth differently to reinforce their position or criticise other people's opinions. In addition, people may justify their political opinions in light of the changing landscape in Afghanistan because of a desire to uphold a good self-image or to support their social groupings. Motivated reasoning can take many forms, including the rewriting of political history, the shaping of political discourse, or the adoption of particular political tactics to fit in with popular perceptions of the Taliban's power. All things considered, motivated reasoning theory offers an invaluable framework for comprehending how people in the Pashtun belt could view and react to the Taliban's resurgence in Afghanistan in the context of Pakistani politics.

## **1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The qualitative technique forms the basis of the study. Various sources of data and information have been gathered to investigate the predetermined goals of the research work. For completing the thesis, the researcher has consulted several sources. The researcher has also discussed how the Pashtun Belt's neighbourhood affects Pakistani politics and looked at how party manifestos have changed in response to the recent developments in Afghanistan.

### **1.8.1 Research Design**

Research design refers to the framework or plan that researchers use to conduct a study. It involves making decisions about the methods and techniques that have been used to collect and analyse data to answer a research question. The design of a research study is crucial as it determines the overall approach and structure of the study (Sileyew, 2019). It helps researchers organize their research process and ensures that the study is conducted systematically and rigorously.

The study is exploratory and qualitative, and it used qualitative data for analysis. The study's goal is to investigate how the Taliban's resurgence has affected Pakhtun Belt politics in Pakistan. To investigate the modification of political parties' manifestoes, slogans, rhetoric, language, and programmes in light of the current developments in Afghanistan, statements made by prominent politicians in KP and Balochistan have been subjected to a critical analysis. The researcher has studied the effects of Afghan developments on Pakistani politics in the Pakhtun Belt in 2021–2022. To investigate the effects of the Taliban's resurgence in Afghanistan on Pakistani politics in the Pakhtun belt, the researcher has studied media reports, party manifestos, comments made by leaders, speeches given in public, and interviews with politicians. The investigator has also utilised the inductive approach to gather information and facts. The result has been reached after a generalisation analysis of the pertinent data.

### **1.8.2 Population**

The subject of political party manifestation adjustment due to the neighbourhood impact and public opinion is quite broad. The population of this research consisted of the possible list of speeches, declarations, press releases, writing, research, and debates about the influence of neighbourhood and public opinion on party manifestations made by party leaders. Press statements from major political parties, expert opinions on election analysis, member speeches at provincial assembly floors, and party manifestos discussing the influence of the Taliban's resurgence on Pakistani politics in the Pakhtun belt are all examples of this.

### **1.8.3 Sampling**

The most suitable sample technique is purposive sampling, considering the nature of the present study, its thematic focus, goals, and objectives. To choose experts for interviews, the researcher employed purposive sampling and relied on his judgment. The experts in the field have provided detailed and in-depth information on the phenomena being studied. With the use

of purposive sampling for content analysis, the Provincial Assembly speeches of the main political parties have allowed the researcher to examine revisions to party manifestations.

#### 1.8.4 Operational Definitions

- **Politics:** by politics, the researcher means, political parties, their electoral manifestoes, slogans, language, discourse, programs, and rhetoric.
- **Party Program:** A political party platform, often known as a party program or party manifesto, is a formalized set of guiding principles and ideological goals that a political party or a single candidate has agreed to. This compilation has been painstakingly designed to appeal to voters, with the primary objective being the acquisition of public support and electoral votes—especially when it comes to complex and divisive matters.
- **Rhetoric:** the strategies used to construct persuasive arguments in political debate.
- **Political Party:** a group of persons, more or less organized, who hold the same or nearly the same opinion on issues confronting the state and who seek to obtain control of government by winning elections to realize their aims and interests.
- **Motivated reasoning:** emotional biases lead to justifications of decisions based on desirability rather than an accurate reflection of the evidence in the phenomenon.

#### 1.8.5 Instruments

Talk shows, documentaries, books, articles in the newspaper, journals, investigative reports, statements of the leaders of the political parties, online sources, and public gathering speeches.

The researcher has consulted with the manifestoes of political parties in the Pakhtun belt from the official websites of the parties to explore revisions in the manifestoes of parties due to recent developments in Afghanistan. The researcher has also relied on newspapers, talk shows, public gathering speeches, interviews, and statements of the leaders to highlight revisions in party discourse, language, and rhetoric in the last year. Articles from newspapers have been critically analysed to identify the impact of the resurgence of the Taliban on the political parties' programs in the Pakhtun belt. The researcher has conducted face-to-face interviews with experts for insights and qualitative analysis. The opinions of the experts have been recorded for analysing data, facts, and information.

| <b>Source of Data/Information</b>  | <b>Unit of Analysis</b>   | <b>Tools/Instruments of Data Collection (Interviews, FGDs, Observations, Case Studies, Surveys and Questionnaires)</b> | <b>Sampling Techniques</b> | <b>Extracted Information to Respond to Question #</b> |
|--|---|--|----------------------------|---|
| Political Parties (ANP, PKMAP, JUI-F, JI, PTI)                             | Party leaders   | Interviews available online/speeches/statements/ Press releases/Responses to relevant queries and observations         | Purposive and relevance    |   |
| Party Manifestoes  | Manifestoes   | Content Analysis   | Purposive and relevance    |   |
| News Content   | Statements of Party Leaders<br>Articles<br>Editorials<br>Talk shows | Content Analysis   | Purposive and relevance    |   |
| Face to Face Interviews with experts for insights and qualitative analysis | Interview questionnaires  | Content analysis   | Purposive and relevance    |   |
| Press releases   | Statements  | Content analysis   | Purposive and relevance    |   |
| Speeches of the leaders in the Provincial Assembly recently                | Archives of Provincial Assembly of KP and Balochistan               | Content analysis   | Purposive and relevance    |   |

### **1.8.6 Procedure/Data Collection**

The researcher has collected data and information to support his problem statement. Data has been gathered from various sources including political party programs, leaders' statements, party slogans, press releases, rhetoric, manifestos, political language, party symbols, discourse, and TV interviews. The relevant data has been collected to investigate the impact of recent developments in Afghanistan on political party manifestos and programs in the Pashtun belt in Pakistan. If these parties are influenced, the question arises as to the extent and manner of the influence.

The researcher has gathered relevant statements from political leaders from newspapers, TV interviews, talk shows, and public gatherings at different times during 2021 and 2022. Official manifestos, programs, and press releases of political parties have been obtained from reliable sources to examine any revisions in their manifestos, party programs, and slogans following the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan.

### **1.8.7 Data Analysis**

The researcher has examined the information or contents related to the research topic.

- First, the researcher has looked at the political party manifestoes, programs, slogans, discourse, rhetoric, and language in the Pakhtun belt of Pakistan after the recapturing of power by the Taliban in Afghanistan.
- Secondly, the researcher has organized the recent revision in political parties' manifestoes and programs along with the previous one.
- Thirdly, the researcher has investigated what has been identified regarding the revision of political parties' manifestoes, slogans, programs, and discourse.

The relevant data has been analysed for generalization and a conclusion has been drawn from them.

### **1.8.8 Ethical Consideration**

The researcher has not allowed his values or inclination to distort the facts and has been careful regarding comparing his values with the values of other individuals and groups. The researcher has remained modest in enunciating his conclusion and is ready to revise his goals and

conclusion, whenever the need arises to do so. The researcher has also devised a strategy for achieving his objectives.

## CHAPTER – 2

# TALIBAN RESURGENCE: UNRAVELING POLITICAL DYNAMICS IN PAKISTAN'S PASHTUN BELT

### 2.1 Introduction to the Taliban's resurgence and its implications

On the perilous Pashtun belt of Pakistan, where the powers of change are accompanied by the echo of history, a complex game of politics and power is being played out. As the world watches the Taliban's resurgence in neighbouring Afghanistan, particularly in the districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan, the focus inevitably turns to Pakistan. For a long time, KP and Balochistan have been integral parts of Pakistan's political discourse due to their complex histories of conflict. But the Taliban's return creates new forces that interconnect the destiny of cultures and civilizations. Here, ideas clash, relationships shift, and visions emerge between the rocky peaks and the beautiful valleys. As we navigate the corridors of history and contemporary politics, we witness the relationship between modernity and tradition, the past and present. In this volatile setting, the true impact of the Taliban's return on Pakistani politics is demonstrated, providing a timeless and pertinent account of how the past shapes the present. The goal of this chapter is to examine the profound implications of the Taliban's return to the political landscapes of these areas. This chapter further delves into the complex structure of relationships, illuminating various aspects of influence and authority via thorough research and insightful case studies.

### 2.2 Historical context of Pashtun politics in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Baluchistan

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan are part of the Pashtun belt, which has a rich and complicated history characterized by several invasions, cross-cultural exchanges, and political conflicts. This region's Pashtun population has a unique identity and culture that has developed over generations (A. Khan, 2022; Malik, 2015; Ullah & Bano, 2019). For centuries, the Pashtun area has been the centre of human civilizations, with the Khyber Pass acting as a vital conduit for invasions and commerce between South and Central Asia. The area has been a part of several empires, such as the Islamic, Mauryan, Greek, Persian, and Kushan. The

language, customs, and culture of the Pashtun people, who are primarily Sunni Muslims of the Hanafi School, all demonstrate their profound sense of heritage and culture (Akrami, 2019; Minority Rights Group, 2018).

The Pashtun people and their lands were significantly impacted by British colonial control, which persisted in the area from the middle of the 19th century until 1947. The Durand Line, drawn by the British in 1893, was the boundary between British India and Afghanistan (Shah, 2017). British colonial diplomat Henry Mortimer Durand was sent in 1893 to negotiate a boundary deal between Afghanistan's Amir, Abd al-Rahman Khan, and British colonial India, which would eventually become Pakistan. Abd al-Rahman grudgingly accepted this deal, which established the Durand Line—a boundary that passes across the Pashtun ethnic group's historic heartland. The Pashtun people and their regions were split apart by the Durand Line, which continues to this day to cause tension and war. Additionally, the British "divide and rule" strategy was implemented, which made ethnic and tribal conflicts in the region worse (Rouland, 2014; Shah, 2017; Ullah & Bano, 2019).

While "Pathan" is still the favoured name for Pashtuns among Indians and many non-Pashtun Pakistanis, the term "Afghan" used to refer to Pashtuns, but now it mainly refers to people of Afghanistan (Siddique, 2014; Tarzi & Lamb, 2011). The Pashtun people are divided between Afghanistan and Pakistan by the Durand Line, which has remained a problematic subject despite never having been legally accepted by consecutive Afghan authorities (Tarzi, 2012). Since Pakistan's creation in 1947, this unsettled boundary has fueled animosity between Kabul and Islamabad.

Despite the Anglo-Afghan Wars, Pashtun-led movements have been important in the last century. Particularly, in the 1950s, a nationalist movement arose intending to establish Pakhtunistan, a self-governing country (Jawad, 1992; Malik, 2016). This movement, rooted in discussions from the 1940s, was supported by Kabul but fiercely opposed by the Pakistani state (Baqai & Wasi, 2021). During the late 1970s and 1980s, Pashtun areas of Afghanistan suffered brutal attacks by Soviet forces and their Afghan allies. Pakistan became a host to Afghan refugee camps and supported the Afghan resistance, aided by Pakistani and American intelligence agencies. The aftermath of the Soviet withdrawal saw Afghanistan engulfed in civil war, leading to the rise of the Taliban, mainly comprising Pashtun religious students, who seized control by the late 1990s.



However, their alliance with Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda drew opposition from the United States after the 9/11 attacks (Grare & Maley, 2011; Halliday & Tanin, 1998; Rubin, 1996; Williams, 2014). Following their ousting from power, the Taliban regrouped along the Afghan-Pakistani border, continuing insurgency against Afghan and international forces, with Pakistan serving as a sanctuary, a situation that persists today.

The portrayal of the Pashtun people in the English-speaking world largely stems from a violent historical narrative, primarily shaped by accounts from British soldiers, colonists, and later, American and European perspectives. This narrative depicts Pashtuns as fierce, warlike, and bound by ancient traditions such as honour killings and the subjugation of women. However, it also acknowledges their courage, pride, and hospitality, emphasizing their resilience against invaders. While rooted in historical truths, this portrayal, influenced by colonial and contemporary narratives, may not fully capture the nuanced reality of the Pashtun society today (Tarzi & Lamb, 2011).

The Pashtun people have a history of resistance to foreign occupation and domination. During the British colonial rule, the Khudai Khitmatgars or Servants of God, a non-violent movement led by Abdul Gaffar Khan, who was a Pashtun nationalist, challenged British rule in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), inspiring Pashtuns to lay down their arms and resist in non-violent ways. The Khudai Khidmatgar movement initially aligned with the Congress Party of India in opposing the partition of India into two separate states. However, when the Congress Party and the Muslim League agreed to the two-state solution, creating India and Pakistan, the Pashtuns within British India shifted their support away from the Congress Party. Instead, they advocated for the creation of Pakhtunistan (Shah, 2017; Tendulkar, 1967). After winning the 1937 and 1946 provincial elections, the Khudai Khidmatgar movement established provincial administrations in the then-Northwest Frontier Province (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa). Since Pashtun nationalists campaigned for India's full independence before 1930, they opposed the Two Nation Theory put out by the All-India Muslim League. Rather than embracing Pakistan, they wanted to create an autonomous country for Pashtuns, and they opposed the British proposal to integrate the former NWFP into Pakistan. They made an effort to persuade Lord Mountbatten, the Governor General, to take into account a third option—that is, a self-governing state. With a swift dismissal, the Governor General denied their request for the third alternative.

As a result, they did not take part in the referendum. The All India Muslim League gained the vast majority in the plebiscite as a result of this boycott, supporting the establishment of Pakistan (Khan *et al.*, 2020). After Pakistan's formation, Pashtuns advocated for self-determination through the Pakhtunistan or Pakhtunistan policy. The Afghan government, leading to a cultural awakening among Pashtuns on both sides of the border, supported this. Consequently, two interconnected narratives emerged on each side of the Afghan-Pakistani border (Tarzi & Lamb, 2011).

In Afghanistan, Pashto literature from the 1950s to the late 1980s reflected nationalistic themes, including the idea of Pakhtunistan, social injustices, and resistance against perceived cultural domination (Caron, 2009; Hosseini & Aslam). Despite leftist inclinations among Pashtun intellectuals, the Afghan government tolerated dissent, viewing Pakistan as the primary threat. Conversely, in Pakistan, Pashtun nationalism has been suppressed, with the government perceiving it as a danger. Pashtun communities in Pakistan, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA, have undergone significant changes, including the introduction of Islamist ideology in the 1980s due to the Afghan conflict (Bibi & Khan, 2020; Mir, 2018; Siddique, 2014; Yousaf, 2019). This shift has disrupted traditional Pashtun leadership in both secular and religious spheres. These nuances are often overlooked in contemporary discussions about Pashtuns.

The Pashtun community in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province of Pakistan has endured profound adversities over the past few decades, grappling with multifaceted challenges that have left indelible scars on their societal fabric. Foremost among these tribulations has been the relentless onslaught of the Taliban insurgency, a menacing force that has plunged the region into a vortex of violence and upheaval, triggering mass displacement and untold suffering among the populace (Shahid, 2022). One of the darkest chapters in this harrowing saga unfolded on December 16, 2014, when the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) perpetrated a heinous attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar. This brazen act of terror claimed the lives of 141 individuals, a staggering toll that included 132 innocent children whose promising futures were ruthlessly snatched away (Akhtar, 2022; Wahab, 2021). The shockwaves of this barbaric assault reverberated not only across Pakistan but also resonated on the global stage, serving as a stark reminder of the perils posed by extremist ideologies and the urgent imperative to confront them resolutely.

Amidst the turmoil and anguish, a beacon of hope emerged in the form of the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM), a grassroots initiative that crystallized in 2018 with a resolute mission to safeguard the rights and dignity of the Pashtun people. Fuelled by a deep-seated commitment to justice and equity, the PTM swiftly garnered momentum, galvanizing communities and amplifying their voices in a steadfast call for an end to the cycle of militarization and repression plaguing the region (Aslam & Neads, 2021; Ganapathy *et al.*, 2022; Mahsud, 2024; Shah, 2017). With unwavering determination, the PTM has emerged as a formidable advocate for Pashtun rights, spearheading impassioned pleas for accountability, transparency, and inclusive governance. At its core, the movement embodies the collective aspirations of resilient people who refuse to be silenced or marginalized, steadfastly asserting their inherent right to dignity, security, and freedom from oppression (Jafri, 2021). As the Pashtun community continues to navigate the complex terrain of conflict and uncertainty, the PTM stands as a testament to the enduring spirit of resilience and resistance, offering a glimmer of hope amidst the shadows of adversity. In their quest for justice and empowerment, the Pashtun people exemplify the profound resilience of the human spirit and the transformative power of solidarity and collective action in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds.

The Balochs are a distinct ethnic and historical group living in a 375,000 square mile area (about the size of Egypt) bordering the Persian Gulf in Balochistan, the largest and least populous province of Pakistan. This area includes portions of modern-day Afghanistan, Pakistan's southwest, and eastern Iran. The military coup that brought Pervez Musharraf to power in 1999 made the Baloch people feel even more marginalised. This feeling is a result of the alleged exclusion of Balochs from the armed forces, which is mostly driven by the Punjabi community, Pakistan's largest ethnic group, which makes up around 45% of the country's population. One of the main grievances of the Baloch people is the ongoing development of the massive Gwadar port, which was started in 2002. An ethnic insurgency reappeared in 2004, with the violence escalating after the military death of Baloch leader Nawab Akbar Bugti in 2006. The Pakistani government's illegal disappearances of many more Baloch leaders and unlawful detention of others worsened the state of affairs (International Crisis Group, 2022). The transition from the military government of Musharraf to the civilian government of President Zardari in 2008 did little to assuage Baloch's discontent. Indeed, in 2009, 792 attacks resulting in 386 deaths were recorded; approximately 92% of the attacks were linked to Baloch nationalist militants. Violence

increased in 2010, with 730 attacks carried out resulting in 600 deaths (Pak Institute of Peace Studies, 2010, 2011).

A unique ethnolinguistic community spread in Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan is known as the Baloch people. They have historically experienced structural marginalisation inside these countries' socio-political structures. Elements from the past and present have contributed to the Baloch insurrection in Pakistan, which has ramifications for South Asian stability. Balochistan, however, is frequently disregarded or neglected entirely due to Pakistan's more pressing internal and regional problems. The headlines are dominated by the conflict in Kashmir, the war in Afghanistan, concerns about nuclear safety, and the internal conflict with extreme religious groups. Long-simmering issues erupted into a new insurrection in 2004. Part of the reason for the dispute is that the central government forced an ethnically diverse group of Baloch people to adopt a historical account of Pakistan's founding as a religiously homogeneous nation (Kupez, 2012).

The violence in Balochistan has been triggered by several historical patterns, including the shaky tribal confederation, systematic economic subordination, and competition with neighbouring ethnic groups. Baloch nationalists have periodically insured because of the entrenched and intricate character of these historical drivers, which has made a comprehensive conclusion problematic. The origins of the unique national identity of the Baloch people may be traced to the pre-colonial era of Balochistan, which was marked by extreme social disintegration. One of the most important figures in Baloch mythology, Nasir Khan, was the first leader to effectively unite the Baloch tribes in the middle of the eighteenth century. He organised a 25,000-man army and formed the first administrative government in the area (Harrison, 1980; Khan, 2003; Kupez, 2012). Nevertheless, Khan's fragile tribal connections continued to be unstable. This division has made Balochs more susceptible to Punjabi dominance, hampered the province's economic growth, and intensified issues with adjacent Pashtuns in northern Balochistan and Afghanistan. Although the Pashtuns and Punjabis have never allied against the Balochs, they have both posed unique challenges for them.

Using a deliberate divide-and-rule tactic, the British skillfully managed the shaky tribal associations in the last years of the nineteenth century. By dividing Balochistan into seven separate areas, this tactic allowed the British to maintain control over the province and ensure

unhindered entry into Afghanistan. Balochistan was officially included in British India in 1884 (Khan, 2003). Unfortunately, Balochistan's infrastructure and economic growth were stunted as a result of the tribal conflict exacerbated by this split, which left it behind other parts of British India. This difference has persisted long into the twenty-first century.

Baloch society's tribal makeup made it difficult for a cohesive nationalist movement to emerge in the years before Pakistan was founded in 1947, which led to the province's absorption. When the British were about to leave the country in the middle of the 1940s, some Baloch leaders hurriedly tried to foster a sense of ethnic unity by pushing for the independence of Balochistan. However, Baloch separatism did not develop into a coherent ideological movement and was primarily spearheaded by a small number of tribal chieftains (Cohen, 2004; Khan, 2003). Thus, on August 15, 1947, the day after India and Pakistan were divided, Balochistan was compelled to be taken by the newly established government in Islamabad. The state's civil and military administrations continued to be dominated by Punjabis after partition, which furthered the marginalisation of the Baloch people.

A persistent source of conflict is the deeply ingrained economic oppression. Pakistan's poorest and least developed region, Balochistan, has long been a source of frustration. According to Jetly (2012), Khan (2003), and Kupecz (2012), it has the greatest rates of newborn mortality among mothers, the worst levels of poverty, and the lowest rates of literacy in the country. Government initiatives to appease the Baloch people through development projects have been made time and time again, but they have never resulted in real improvement.

The plundering of natural assets continues to be the top worry for the Baloch people, even though economic progress usually dominates the conversation in Islamabad. This long-standing source of conflict dates back to the British colonial era when they began extracting coal in Baluchistan (Khan, 2003). Since its discovery in 1952, not long after the British left, the province's natural gas exploitation has continued as a major grievance for the Baloch people (Aslam, 2011). Balochistan is the most gas-rich province in Pakistan, although compared to Sindh and Punjab, it has not benefited much from its gas resources. The 1973 constitution, which set provincial gas royalties at a meagre 12.5%, is to blame for this discrepancy. On the other hand, each province's the drilling site gas price varied in 1953 according to the per capita provincial income. Balochistan was severely handicapped by this, but they had no other options

when the provincial parliament was dismissed in February 1973. Baloch receives fewer royalties as a result, with the wellhead price being five times lower than in Sindh and Punjab. In addition, the government has not reimbursed the province for much of the royalties due, claiming that operations expenses must be covered. Balochistan is hence deeply indebted (Ahmed, 2010; Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2006; International Crisis Group, 2022).

The historical division between the Baloch and Pashtun communities, which was made worse by the complex workings of British colonial policies in the area, served as a key impetus for the emergence of Baloch nationalism. Motivated by their geopolitical aspirations, the British fought several wars in Afghanistan to strategically place the country as a barrier to Russian plans for expansion. They carried out massive infrastructural projects to achieve this goal, building a network of roads and trains throughout the northern regions of modern-day Pakistani Balochistan, which is mostly home to Pashtuns. Previously a part of British India, this area became crucial to their strategic planning until Pakistan was created at the 1947 split. The socioeconomic gaps that are still there now are a direct result of these colonial-era endeavours. Because of the infrastructure and trade routes established during the British era, the Pashtun population in the northern regions of Balochistan has experienced more economic growth than their Baloch contemporaries (Kupecz, 2012). Fears of Pashtun domination among the Baloch people were intensified by the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. The Afghan Pashtuns were seen by the Balochs as invaders who were encroaching on their land, especially as they were fleeing to Pakistan. Concerns about political predominance appeared validated by the rise of the Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party, a Pashtun nationalist organisation founded in 1989 (Khan, 2005). The two main causes of Baloch ethno-nationalism are a sense of being left out that was heightened by the migration of Pashtuns during the Afghan war and the impediment to economic development brought about by colonial-era policies.

A further significant element contributing to historical conflict, which has its roots in the colonial era, is Punjabi predominance. Due to their preference for Punjabi control over Baloch sovereignty in the early years of colonial administration, the British established an administrative structure that mostly served their own needs, excluding the Baloch people. The Baloch population was marginalised to the furthest extent possible since Punjabis were primarily given control over the military and administrative machinery of government (Roy, 2001). Due to their

small size and dispersed population, the Baloch people suffered an unfair share of the negative effects of British rule. The structural remnants of this government persisted even after the British emigrated in 1947 and the division took place (Talbot, 2009). Following the decolonization of the Indian subcontinent, the British left behind two independent states: India and Pakistan. Pakistan is distinguished by its largely Hindu population in contrast to India's majority Muslim population.

The Baloch Rebellion of 1955 was sparked by the One Unit Scheme and was prompted by a general mistrust of Punjabis. The plan was hatched by Punjabi interests and was first intended to unite the ethnically diverse regions of West Pakistan, including Balochistan, under a single administrative authority. This calculated move was intended to offset the unified and numerically superior East Pakistan, which was largely populated by Bengalis and which gained independence as Bangladesh in 1971. Divided from West Pakistan by more than a thousand miles of Indian land, East Pakistan had a population larger than all of West Pakistan's ethnic groups combined (Cohen, 2004). Likewise, the Balochs, the Bengalis have always felt excluded from civilian life and the military establishment, even though they number in the millions. Though their political affiliation is limited to those feelings, both tribes have an intellectual bent for more autonomy and despise Punjabis.

However, the One Unit Scheme's introduction provoked a fierce response from Baloch nationalists for reasons completely unrelated to the Bengali complaints. This plan led to a decrease in the number of Baloch representatives in the federal government and prevented the creation of a provincial assembly—a proposal that is still awaiting approval from the central government over ten years after the division. As such, the Khan of Kalat could incite other tribal chiefs against the One Unit Scheme on the grounds that they saw it as restricting provincial autonomy and too centralising authority within the federal government (Harrison, 1981). In 1958, the rebellion was put down by harsh government crackdowns and the arrest of several nationalist leaders. Balochistan therefore suffered for ten years of being treated more as a colonial possession than as an essential part of the Pakistani political system. Punjabis and other non-Baloch groups had sway over the province's administration. In addition, the area was plagued by widespread impoverishment, low literacy rates, and resource exploitation by the central government (Khan, 2003).

Even after Balochistan became an autonomous state in 1970 when the One Unit Scheme was abandoned, Punjabi predominance continued. When the newly formed civilian federal government approved Balochistan's first-ever provincial elections in 1972, the fiercely ethno-nationalist National Awami Party (NAP) emerged as the winner. However, the NAP-led provincial administration was overthrown by Pakistani President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in early 1973 on the grounds of alleged foreign collaboration. This sparked the fiercest Baloch insurrection to date (Khan, 2009; Titus & Swidler, 2000). Selig Harrison, a researcher, estimated that throughout the four years of ensuing bloodshed, there were 55,000 Baloch fighters and 80,000 Pakistani military. Of those killed, 5,300 were Baloch insurgents and 3,300 were Pakistani forces (Harrison, 1996).

The Baloch's animosity with the Punjabi was a major factor in their violent reaction. First, it was believed that the provincial assembly's expulsion was motivated by ethnicity. The nationalist NAP's demands in Balochistan posed a danger to the PPP's authority and its base of support among Punjabis, which had brought the party into power at the federal level under Bhutto (Khan, 2005). Second, ethnic considerations motivated the severe reaction from the Punjabi-dominated force. Following Bengalis' triumphant 1971 secession from Pakistan to create the nation of Bangladesh, the army had grown more hesitant to accede to ethno-national claims (Talbot, 2009). The army attempted to put an end to the conflict because they believed that the independence of East Pakistan would happen again in Balochistan.

Bhutto was executed in 1977 as a result of a military takeover that installed General Muhammad Zia in office. Zia struck a tense 25-year ceasefire with Baloch nationalists, beginning with the release of Baloch prisoners, but he made no compromises on the question of autonomy. This is mostly due to three factors. Initially, many radical Balochs were disillusioned by the brutal insurgency's collapse in the 1970s. Second, these radicals lost outside assistance when the Mohammed Dawood regime in Afghanistan collapsed in 1978 (Khan, 2010). Finally, Zia permitted Baloch separatists to compete for office in elections throughout the 1980s as long as they were independent of a political party; as a result, provincial assemblies that the election victors established needed more real authority (Khan, 2009). Even though there was a lot of quiet in Balochistan in the 1980s and 1990s, the conflict's historical origins remained unresolved, which made it possible for violence to erupt again in 2004.



For a large segment of the Baloch populace, nationalism is frequently limited to narrow tribal affiliations. The three main tribes—the Marri, Bugti, and Mengal tribes—are able to muster significant military might and resources, but they still harbour a great deal of mistrust toward one another. Furthermore, a 2006 cable released by WikiLeaks from the US Embassy in Islamabad made clear that not all tribal chieftains have taken a hostile attitude against the government. In particular, it noted that "the current insurgency appears to have little support in the province, outside of the Bugti tribe" (Bodde & Dawn, 2011). This assertion seems to be supported by the Pakistani military's activities, which concentrated their efforts mostly on Bugti territories and explicitly targeted Nawab Akbar Bugti, the tribal head of the Bugti people (Aslam, 2011).

In the days of colonialism, British Balochistan included Pashtun-majority areas, the tribal territory of the Bugti-Marri, the state of Kalat, and the states of Kharan, Makran, and Lasbella. The independence of the Kalat state was declared by its ruler, Mir Ahmad Yar Khan, on August 15, 1947, one day after Pakistan was formally established. Both houses of the Kalat Assembly supported this proclamation, which rejected merging with Pakistan. Still, the Khan of Kalat was forced to sign accession forms, bringing Kalat under Pakistani jurisdiction. Baloch nationalists resisted this decision, which resulted in an armed uprising in Kalat's Jhalawana area spearheaded by Prince Abdul Karim (Ahmad, 1990; Khan *et al.*, 2020).

Mir Noroz Khan Zahri initiated a campaign against the federal government's centralizing strategy after the One Unit plan was put into effect. He vigorously defended the rights of Baloch nationalists but ultimately consented to surrender when the army gave him a secure departure. But he and his friends were taken into custody, and he subsequently passed away there. Balochistan had to wait a long time to become a province. Following the breakdown of the one-unit plan in 1970, Balochistan was granted province status. Under the National Awami Party (NAP), Baloch and Pashtun nationalists ran in the first-ever general elections in Pakistani history in 1970. The Baloch nationalists were able to form their own government in Balochistan with great success. Still, Attaullah Mengal's government was overthrown in February 1973 on charges of widespread chaos and disregarding orders from the national government. The nationalists and the central government engaged in a fierce struggle following this dismissal, which culminated in a revolt that peaked between 1973 and 1977. With 11,500 organized warriors and fifty-five thousand fighters, the Baloch rebel army faced out against eighty thousand regular military men

who had been sent to put an end to the insurrection. As to media accounts, this rebellion claimed the lives of a minimum of 10,000 people from both groups (Khan *et al.*, 2020).

General Zia-ul Haq released the Baloch leaders who had been arrested during the military takeover of 1977, demonstrating a somewhat more lenient stance toward the Baloch people. He declared the nationalist insurgents to be generally granted amnesty. He would not, however, order the military to leave Balochistan. Those who suffered because of military activity in Balochistan received no recompense. Even though the Balochs were persecuted and ostracized, the 1990s representative democracy in Balochistan seems to have lessened nationalistic sentiments there (Najam, 2009). But following the 1999 military coup, there was yet another insurgency that questioned the authority of the national government. The militants have taken up arms, despite the fact that leaders and regional parties are still working to democratically win economic, social, and political rights inside a federal legislative framework. In Balochistan, military action and appeasement tactics persisted at the same time. The military's participation in the matter prevented the parliamentary committee from carrying out its approvals. The matter became more complicated because of Nawab Akbar Bugti's (a Baloch politician who served as Balochistan's governor and chief minister before being assassinated) (Khan *et al.*, 2020).

In Balochistan, the Pashtun people have been facing identity and power-sharing issues. The Pakhtun question, which encompasses both an identity element and a power-sharing aspect, has been a significant source of tension between the Pashtun and Baloch populations in Balochistan. The Pakhtuns are seeking either a separate province or an equitable share in the allocation of resources and authority within the existing system. They argue that they constitute a distinct national unit and should be treated on an equal basis regardless of population differences. This demand reflects the desire of the Pashtun community to have their cultural identity recognized and to have a fair representation in decision-making processes that affect their lives and resources (Kakar, 2015). The call for a separate province or equitable resource distribution underscores the Pashtuns' aspiration for autonomy and a more balanced distribution of power and benefits within the region.

The influx of Afghan refugees into Balochistan has further complicated the Pakhtun question. Baloch nationalists allege that a conspiracy is being hatched to convert the Baloch majority into a minority, while Pakhtun nationalists maintain that the Afghans have shifted location within

their homeland and should not settle in the Baloch areas (Borthakur, 2017; Yaseen *et al.*, 2021). Despite these challenges, the Pashtun people in KP and Balochistan have shown resilience and determination in preserving their identity and culture.

The Pashtun movement, for its part, has been fighting for the creation of an independent state of Pakhtunistan, while the PTM has been advocating for the protection of Pashtun rights and demanding an end to military operations in the region (Ahmed & Khan, 2022; Harrison, 2008). The Pashtun people in Balochistan continue to assert their identity and demand a fair share of power and resources, despite facing opposition from Baloch nationalists.

### **2.3 Impact of the Taliban's re-emergence on Pakistani politics**

Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan's (TTP) insurgent activities against Pakistan markedly increased after the Afghan Taliban took control of the country in August 2021. They increased their insurgency attacks against Pakistani security forces and civilians while operating from Afghan territory, strengthening their position within Pakistan. In reality, the TTP danger to Pakistan has increased as a result of the Taliban regaining power, contrary to Pakistan's expectations that their return and the US military withdrawal from Afghanistan would lessen the threat posed by the TTP (Mir, 2022a). Khan emphasized yet another factor that contributed to the TTP's support: a number of political figures in Pakistan publicly praised the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan, referring to it as a "strategic win" (Khan, 2022). According to the Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), there were 207 terrorist occurrences in Pakistan in 2021 compared to 2020, a 42% increase in assaults. As a result of these incidents, 335 civilians of Pakistan lost their lives. PIPS also revealed that in 2018, the TTP was the lone organization accountable for 87 assaults. This represents an 84% increase from 2020 (PIPS, 2021). The TTP declared in November 2021 that it was behind 283 strikes against Pakistani security forces. More than 79 security personnel were slain by the TTP in the first quarter of 2022 (Jan, 2022). Moreover, Pakistani officials in the western frontier regions have been the target of the majority of the TTP's recent strikes (Noor, 2021).

#### **2.3.1 Pakistan's Peace Negotiations with the TTP**

In the past, the TTP and the government have engaged in negotiations and several agreements have been made. When Naik Mohammad was the Taliban leader in South Waziristan in 2004, the first agreement was established. Additionally, the Pakistani government reached out to the

Taliban locally in a number of tribal regions and negotiated deals with them. In 2009, there was a significant settlement at Malakand that led to several administrative and legal actions. It is important to note that none of the earlier peace accords with extremists succeeded in bringing about peace in Pakistan, especially in the former FATA and the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The TTP and the Pakistani government have been working on the latest peace process since October 2021. The opposing parties, however, harshly attacked these peace negotiations. Although the Foreign Minister had earlier intimated in an interview that Islamabad could be prepared to pardon TTP militants provided they laid down their arms and conformed to Pakistan's constitution, the revelation that conversations were taking place shocked both the public and the parliament (Jan, 2022).

Imran Khan, the former prime minister of Pakistan and head of the PTI, had long supported reaching a peaceful resolution with the rebels. He often stated that talks with militant organizations were necessary, even during the height of militancy and when he was leading the opposition. The Taliban in Afghanistan participated in the talks, but they denied having an official role. Sirajuddin Haqqani, the interior minister of the Taliban, served as a mediator between the two groups. With ambiguous concessions, the Pakistani government declared in November a month-long cease-fire with the TTP (Mubarak, 2022).

While certain critics in Pakistan think that these talks ought to happen, others disagree and think they shouldn't happen at all. The belief held by many in favor of these peace negotiations was that productive dialogue about peace was the best way to prevent future wars. Experts claim that since the TTP is now weak, negotiations with them were unnecessary. He went on to say that the government needed to accept the conditions set out by the Taliban. "They must be made to respect the constitution, lay down their weapons, and swear not to question the authority of the state." Amnesty should not be given to terrorist organizations, nevertheless, as they were responsible for significant assaults like those on GHQ and Army Public School. He said that the TTP members only have this as their source of income and that they are war-hardened. Pakistan should thus provide them with accommodations in the army, police, or any other law enforcement organization. They may use their prior knowledge in this industry to their advantage and provide for their children by earning a living (Hassan, 2022).

### **2.3.2 *Second Phase of Peace Talks***

The second round of talks between Pakistan and the top TTP officials in Afghanistan began in January 2022. Pakistan held peace negotiations with TTP chief Noor Wali Mehsud in Paktika, Afghanistan, by sending covert delegates. Pakistan gave two top TTP commanders, Muslim Khan and Mehmood Khan, to the Afghan Taliban, who had been mediating peace talks, to reopen discussions with the extremist group (Khattak, 2022).

The Parliamentary Committee on National Security of Pakistan publicly endorsed peace negotiations between the TTP and the Pakistani government in July 2021. The leadership of the army informed Parliament that negotiations with the TTP were necessary to prevent them from forming an alliance with the Islamic State of Khorasan (IS-K), which posed a threat to Pakistan's security (Ansari, 2022). The truce between the TTP and the Pakistani government was terminated on November 29, 2022. When a team of Pakistani officials was visiting Kabul, the TTP broke the truce (Khan, 2022).

### **2.3.3 *The TTP Demands***

The TTP's demands are part of the most recent developments in peace talks. Restoring the FATA to its former status is the primary and most essential demand made by the TTP. Reducing the number of Pakistani security troops in the former FATA territory, freeing its leaders, and dropping all legal actions against them are other demands (Sinha, 2022). Some members of the negotiation committee have reportedly told the BBC Urdu website that the TTP had all but given up on other demands, with the exception of rescinding the decision to combine FATA. A 53-person group was dispatched to Kabul in July 2022 to begin the negotiation process. This included a large number of elders and tribal leaders who were familiar with the Taliban and its leadership (Jan, 2022). The committee's head claimed that the TTP's higher ranks primarily stressed the necessity of restoring FATA's former status. However, the Pakistani government made it clear to the Taliban that the parliamentary decision integrating FATA is final and cannot be changed without further legislation. In order to overturn this ruling, a two-thirds majority in the National Assembly and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly are required (Saif, 2022).

### **2.3.4 *Ayman al-Zawahiri's Passing and Peace Talks***

Ayman al-Zawahiri, the leader of Al-Qaida, was assassinated by the United States in Kabul in August 2022 by a drone strike. According to US reports, Zawahiri spent more than 20

years in hiding near the Pakistan-Afghan border before returning to Kabul in 2022 with his family. According to US intelligence sources, CIA agents in Kabul had been monitoring his activities for months before carrying out a drone assassination. After Al-Zawahiri passed away, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken asserted that the Taliban had committed to neither supporting nor allowing al-Qaida militants onto Afghan territory when he had agreed to be in Kabul under the terms of the Doha Agreement 2020. In response, the US consented to remove its forces in exchange for Taliban assurances (Drevon, 2022). Mohammad Yaqoob, the Afghan Taliban government's minister of defence, accused Pakistan of granting the US permission to use its airspace for drone attacks on Afghanistan. Yaqoob asked Washington and Islamabad to stop these abuses during a news conference in Kabul. He insisted that Pakistan cease utilising our airspace as a means of attack (Gul, 2022).

Pakistan believes that the statements made by Yaqoob were taken very seriously. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Asim Iftikhar Ahmad said in an interview that such speculative accusations are extremely regrettable in the lack of any hard evidence and go against the norms of responsible diplomatic practice. He continued by saying that we anticipate the Afghan interim government to honour its obligations under international law and prevent terrorist activities there against any other nation (Times, 2022). One researcher believes that Yaqoob's accusations might escalate relations between Pakistan and the Taliban in Afghanistan, although the Afghan Taliban encouraged peace negotiations between Pakistan and the TTP (Hassan, 2022).

### ***2.3.5 The Demise of Umar Khalid Khorasani***

The TTP's most deadly leader was Umar Khalid Khorasani. He was a member of the Mohmand district's Safi tribe. He is still actively engaged in acts of terrorism against Pakistan. Furthermore, he went after Pakistani citizens and security personnel everywhere (Hassan, 2022). He played a significant role in the ongoing peace talks between Pakistan and TTP in 2022. In the most recent peace negotiations between the TTP and the Pakistani government, he adopted a tough posture, particularly concerning the restoration of FATA's former status. He said that since the FATA restoration could not be undone, it was difficult for these peace talks to succeed. However, he firmly maintained his choice. His uncompromising position contributed to the ongoing impasse in the peace process.

Abdul Wali Mohammad, also known as Umar Khalid Khorasani, passed away in an incident in Paktika, Afghanistan, on August 7, 2022. In addition, Khorasani was the leader of Jamat-ul-Ahrar (JuA), a TTP offshoot that has been designated as a terrorist group by the UN and the US. It is important to note that the US had also placed a \$3 million reward for Khorasani's murder (Khattak, 2022).

According to an expert, the TTP Mehsud faction was in support of the negotiations succeeding, thus his passing won't have an impact on them. He went on to say that the truce would likewise last indefinitely. According to him, the Afghan Taliban saw the TTP as a liability. On the one hand, they could not disregard TTP's prior assistance during this difficult period (Hassan, 2022). The most important point of contention was how the peace talks would go after Khorasani's passing. The terrorist who passed away was adamant in his desire to return the former FATA to its former status and had mixed feelings regarding peace talks with Pakistan (Yousafzai, 2022).

### ***2.3.6 The TTP Rebirth in Swat***

The extremists were driven out of the Swat district by the Pakistani military in August 2022, following almost ten years of operations against them. Men with heavy weapons were observed policing the roadway, evoking memories of the Taliban in 2008 (Khan, 2022). A member of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provincial legislature, Liaqat Ali Khan was attacked on August 5, 2022, in the nearby Dir area by unidentified terrorists, leaving him critically injured. This incident claimed the lives of three of his acquaintances as well as one of his brothers (Asad, 2022). A week after the incident, a video of a military officer being interrogated by a man pretending as a TTP member with his wrists bound behind his back became popular on social media. He was abducted by the militants together with a police officer and a soldier. After talks with the administration, all of these prisoners were later set free. It doesn't seem that the resurgence of terrorist networks in Swat is a unique episode as the emergence of the Taliban in the area presented serious questions for Pakistan's counterterrorism policy. The cease-fire hasn't stopped the rise in terrorist attacks, therefore it appears that the continuing peace negotiations facilitated by the Afghan Taliban administration have failed (Khaliq, 2022; Naseer, 2022).

Thousands of people in the Swat Valley of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province held rallies in many places after hearing news of the Pakistani Taliban's revival in the area. "We want peace in our land, and we don't want terrorism on our land," protesters shouted as they passed through the

Swat cities of Kabal and Khwazakhela. The National Assembly (MNA) of the former Federal Areas Territory (FATA) was alerted to the rise in terrorism in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province by a member of the house. He asserted that it began following the Taliban's ascent to power in Afghanistan. He said that as the scenario in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa worsened, the people of North Waziristan have been demonstrating for the past 26 days, demanding safety and tranquillity (ANI, 2022).

### ***2.3.7 The danger posed by the Islamic State of Khorasan (IS-K) to Pakistan***

Senior TTP leader Hafiz Saeed Khan founded the Islamic State of Khorasan (IS-K) in January 2015. The Khorasan domain, which historically included portions of Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, and Central Asia, was declared as an expansion of IS-K (Sharb, 2018). As of right now, this terrorist organisation is more complicated and volatile than before, solidifying its place among the deadly militant organisations in the Afg-Pak area (Rana, 2022). In addition, the IS-K has started its brutal campaigns against civilians—Shias in particular. A propaganda war against Russia was also started by it. They also stormed the Russian embassy in the summer of 2022. Internal conflicts within the Taliban have also presented IS-K with a chance to enlist non-Pashtun soldiers. Taliban fighters who are not Pashtuns had complained that non-Pashtun commanders in the army were being degraded. ISK had started spreading propaganda as a Pashtun movement against the Taliban administration, taking advantage of the situation (Khan, 2022).

Through its social media accounts, IS-K declared in May 2019 the founding of two new branches, Wilayat-i-Hind for India and Wilayat-i-Pakistan, and specifically began its actions against the people of Pakistan (Basit, 2022). Following the Taliban's rise to power in Afghanistan, IS-K intensified its assaults against Taliban figures, focusing mostly on the Shia population there. Meanwhile, in Pakistan, IS-K also attacked pro-Afghan Taliban figures, security forces, and the Shia population. On November 22, 2021, they assassinated Qari Ilyas of Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Bajaur province. Before this, on November 13, 2021, IS-K claimed accountability for the deaths of two police officers stationed at the Raghgan Dam in Bajaur. In another target-killing episode in the Bajaur region, IS-K also assassinated Mufti Sultan, the brother of Qari Ilyas. Due to the brothers' connections to the Afghan Taliban, the IS-K executed them both. The existence of IS-K in Pakistan has long been



denied by the country's authorities. Nonetheless, in their remarks, security personnel have stated that it is present on several occasions (Siyal, 2021).

### ***2.3.8 The Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA)***

Although the BLA is mostly active in the port city of Karachi and the Balochistan Province, it is also well-represented in the Afghan province of Kandahar, which is adjacent to it. During the first term of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's government, an armed insurrection against Pakistan was begun in Balochistan, giving rise to the BLA in the early 1970s. But once the armed insurrection concluded and Baloch nationalist leaders met with Zia-ul-Haq, the BLA vanished from view due to the military dictator's ascent to power. Then, starting in 2000, a string of assaults on government buildings and security personnel started in various parts of Balochistan following the detention of nationalist leader Nawab Khair Bakhsh Murri because he had killed Balochistan High Court judge Justice Nawaz Murri during the administration of former President Pervez Musharraf (Majeed, 2014).

The BLA assaulted two Pakistani installations in the Balochistan districts of Nushki and Panjgur on February 3, 2022. Ninety Pakistani troops were killed in those assaults, according to BLA. Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) later stated that the Pakistan Army dispatched soldiers to repel the attack, although they also reported fewer deaths. Afterwards, Interior Minister Shiekh Rasheed claimed that 15 terrorists were killed by the Pakistan Army when they prevented this attack, a claim denied by the BLA (Staff, 2022). Lieutenant Colonel Laeeq Mirza was kidnapped and captured by BLA on July 14, 2022. Subsequently, BLA assassinated Umer, Mirza's buddy, for halting his car on the route between Quetta and Ziarat. The body of Umer was found. Two terrorists were slain in a shoot-out in Balochistan by the Pakistan Army during an operation against the BLA (Yousafzai, 2022).

BLA targeted a gas facility in the Kalat region's Sheekhri district on July 18, 2022. After this incident, the Baloch people were cautioned by the BLA not to work with the Pakistan Army and its administration, or else the BLA would target them. The BLA also targeted a gas pipeline in the Sui neighbourhood of Deri Bugti on 29 July 2022. It issued a warning to every oil and gas exploration company, telling them not to buy the province of Balochistan's natural resources. They would be liable for their losses if they hadn't taken this action. The gas connection in the Chashma Aab region of the Kachchi District of Balochistan was damaged by the BLA on 3rd

August 2022 (Ranjan, 2022). This gang had attacked Chinese individuals in Pakistan in their missions and is opposed to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor programme.

Though Pakistan remains the BLA's principal objective, it is increasingly becoming seen as a violent foe of Chinese interests in Balochistan. The China-led Belt Road Initiative (BRI), which aims to promote prosperity and economic growth throughout Pakistan, includes the CPEC. However, the BLA has said that this initiative amounts to the Chinese influence and exploitation of Baloch resources in Balochistan. Consequently, the BLA has targeted mining and infrastructure projects backed by Chinese businessmen as well as security forces stationed to protect civilian property (BBC, 2022).

Three Chinese nationals and one Pakistani motorist lost their lives in an attack on Karachi University's Confucius Institute in April 2022, which the BLA claimed culpability for. Additionally, the commanders of the BLA reminded President Xi Jinping that China needed to withdraw from Pakistan and cease its involvement in the construction of CPEC. If it didn't, there would be vicious assaults on Chinese labourers and residents, which is quite undesirable (Fazl-e-Haidar, 2022).

Not even the Taliban, nor any other Afghan leader, has ever acknowledged the Durand Line as the nation's border. The controversy intensified after the Taliban took power because several militants from the Taliban were seen destroying the fence and posing a threat to the Pakistani forces participating in the exercise. When pictures of the Taliban breaking down walls went online, there was a tremendous deal of outrage in Pakistan. In response, Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Pakistan's then-foreign minister, stated that the issue will be settled diplomatically between the two countries. Zabiullah Mujahid, a spokesman for the Taliban, asserted that there is still disagreement over the Durand Line and that the border fence will eventually exacerbate tensions between the two nations. He went on to say that one country had been divided along both sides of the Durand Line. Our goal is a logical resolution to the issue (Monitor, 2022).

In response, General Babar Iftikhar, the DG ISPR, said that the border wall serves two purposes: it controls commerce and protects residents on both sides. In addition, he said that the political scenario near the western boundary was difficult in 2021. Certain local, operational, and strategic dynamics exist, and each is now being addressed at the proper level (News, 2022).

## **Conclusion**

The complex terrain of terrorism and extremism in Pakistan has been moulded by the deep interaction of historical, political, and socio-economic forces, especially in highlands like Balochistan and the tribal regions near the Afghan border. Concerns over ethnic representation, abuse of resources, and autonomy have fuelled rifts and disputes since Pakistan's founding and have continued to do so, creating cycles of bloodshed and turmoil.

The rise of new dangers like the Islamic State of Khorasan (IS-K) and the reappearance of organisations like the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) highlight the continuous difficulties the Pakistani state has in preserving peace and stability inside its borders. Pakistan's politics and policy decisions are influenced by the changing security picture in neighbouring Afghanistan, which is further complicated by the Taliban's comeback to power and the existence of other terrorist groups.

Past deals have failed to bring about enduring peace, therefore attempts to negotiate peace with violent organisations like the TTP have been received with mistrust and condemnation. Recent peace talks between the TTP and the previous Pakistani government (PTI) show a careful balancing act between advancing communication and upholding security objectives. But since violence has recently increased and militancy has returned to areas like Swat and Balochistan, it is evident how fragile peace initiatives are and how urgently we need a comprehensive strategy that resolves underlying issues and holds people accountable for past atrocities.

In addition, the Durand Line border issue with Afghanistan highlights the significance of regional collaboration and diplomatic involvement in resolving cross-border issues by adding still another level of complication to the security scenario. To establish lasting peace and stability in the area, Pakistan must manage these complex security problems by taking a comprehensive strategy that incorporates military action, political discourse, socioeconomic growth, and respect for human rights.

In summary, all parties involved in Pakistan's security issues—the government, security agencies, civil society, and neighbours—must work together to find a solution. Pakistan has the potential to create a more stable and prosperous future for its population and maintain regional peace and stability by tackling the underlying causes of militancy, advocating for inclusive government, and encouraging communication and collaboration.

## **CHAPTER – 3**

# **IDEOLOGICAL ECHOES OF TALIBAN'S INFLUENCE ON PASHTUN BELT'S POLITICAL LANDSCAPE: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The political landscape of Pakistan's Pashtun belt, which encompasses Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan, has drastically changed since the Taliban returned to power in Afghanistan. This chapter explores the subtle yet profound impact of the Taliban on the political landscape of the region, in addition to exploring the ideological force that has surged across it. With the increasing power of the Taliban, there has been a significant shift in the ideologies, discourses, and political tactics inside the Pashtun belt. This chapter dissects the ideologically relevant institutions in the region by closely analysing the party platforms, terminology, and catchphrases that political parties adopted in the wake of the Taliban takeover. This study aims to clarify the intricate patterns of political growth in KP and Balochistan in a political context.

### **3.2 Evolution of ideologies and discourse in the Pashtun belt**

The Pashtun belt, which includes KP and Balochistan, has a lengthy and intricate history of discourse and ideological development. Numerous forces, including nationalism, colonialism, and the continuous battle for power and identity, have influenced this region. The historical background, significant occasions, and the influence of prominent political parties and individuals on the discourse in the Pashtun belt will all be covered in detail in this examination.

#### ***3.2.1 Colonial Era and the Emergence of Nationalisms***

The Pakhtun issue has its origins in the colonial period. In the era of colonialism, modern-day Balochistan was partitioned into a tangled array of political entities, including British Balochistan, the Marri-Bugti tribal territories, Kalat state and its dependents (Kharan, Makran, and Lasbella). During the second Anglo-Afghan War (1878–80), the British captured Afghan areas, which made up the majority of British Balochistan, a chief commissioner province (Ahmed & Khan, 2022). Considering that the bulk of the province's population was Pakhtun Afghans, the term "British Balochistan" was misleading. Following the establishment of

Pakistan, the Kalat state and its counties were combined to form the Balochistan States Union, while the chief commissioner province was called Balochistan. The creation of the One Unit resulted in the loss of both units' unique identities. Abdul Samad Khan Achakzai and other Pakhtun nationalists pushed for the creation of a unified Pakhtun province by merging the Pakhtun regions of the old British Balochistan with those of the NWFP in the days leading up to One Unit's dissolution (Kakar, 2015; Khan, 2023). The Kalat state and the old British Balochistan were to be reconstituted as independent provinces, according to the Balochistan Muslim League chapter headed by Qazi Isa and Nawab Jomezai. The leadership of the National Awami Party at the time, nevertheless, supported the combination of the two divisions into a single province. As a result, the borders of modern-day Balochistan were declared in March 1970. The judgement infuriated Pakhtun nationalists as it stripped them of their identity and reduced them to the position of a minority (Kakar, 2015). Due to geographic isolation, common ideology, and comparative socioeconomic equality, collaboration has frequently been maintained; nevertheless, issues are growing, especially concerning identity, resource allocation, and the presence of Afghan refugees. To preserve robustness in a region already plagued by many difficulties, the analysis emphasises the significance of active, broad conversation between Pakhtun and Baloch political figures. This dialogue ought to tackle issues and fears while prioritising the security and harmony of Balochistan by means of fair representation and allocation of resources.

### ***3.2.2 Post-Colonial Era and the Rise of Pashtun Nationalism***

Pashtun nationalism flourished in the years after colonial control, particularly in the 1970s. The One Unit system's introduction and the ensuing merging of Pashtun lands from the old British Balochistan with the then-NWFP caused a great deal of unrest among the Pashtun people, who saw it as a betrayal of their interests. Driven by a sense of historical legitimacy and an urge for autonomy, the movement for the union of these regions with the NWFP to establish a single Pashtun province accelerated dramatically as a result (Abbas, 2023; Kakar, 2015; Mushtaq & Mirza, 2022).

However, the National Awami Party (NAP) leadership's opposing position, which called for combining the two divisions into one province, heightened the already brewing animosity. The Pashtun nationalism movement's ideological divisions widened communal rifts and made it more

difficult to achieve a common objective. Internal conflicts prevented coherent action despite a common desire for sovereignty and acknowledgement, leaving openings for outside forces to take advantage of weaknesses and exacerbate tensions (Din *et al.*; Erum, 2023; Khan, 2022).

A turning point was reached in the 1970s with the rise of powerful Pashtun leaders like Abdul Samad Khan Achakzai, whose backing for Pashtun liberty and autonomy inspired a broad base of support. The Pakistani state machinery, on the other hand, fiercely opposed their attempts, seeing Pashtun nationalism as a danger to the country's unity and geographical integrity. As a result, to crush dissent and keep control of the unrest-plagued Pashtun districts, state officials turned to coercive methods such as military actions and political repression (Kakar & Ullah, 2022; Nichols, 2021). It sheds light on the power struggles and coercive methods the state uses to quell criticism and maintain control, mirroring larger conflicts in Pakistan between the authority of the central government and ethno-nationalist groups.

Despite official brutality, the Pashtun people remained resolute in their quest to claim their cultural identity and political liberty, as seen by their continued battle for liberty and equality. Nevertheless, the Pashtun nationalism movement's internal strife and state-sponsored persecution prevented them from achieving their goals of geographical autonomy and self-determination. Essentially, Pashtun mobilisation and resistance against perceived injustices and marginalisation occurred throughout a turbulent post-colonial era. The unified pursuit of Pashtun nationalist goals was, however, severely hampered by internal conflicts and foreign forces, highlighting the intricate dynamics forming the Pashtun political panorama in Pakistan (Kakar, 2015). This speech outlines the Pashtun people's ongoing fight for rights and self-determination in the face of legally binding persecution, emphasising their tenacity and tenacity. But it also highlights the obstacles that stand in the way of the achievement of their goals, obstacles brought about by both foreign forces and internal conflicts within the Pashtun nationalist movement. It eventually clarifies the intricate interactions between historical, political, and social factors influencing the political environment for Pashtuns in post-colonial Pakistan.

### ***3.2.3 The Role of Political Parties and Figures***

The Pashtun belt's rhetoric has been greatly influenced by political parties and powerful individuals. Due to its organisational strength and religious appeal, the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (Fazl) (JUI-F), for example, has become well-established in the Pashtun-dominated districts of

Balochistan. The energetic JUI-F leader Maulana Fazlur Rehman has been a key player in enlisting Pashtun support and negotiating the intricate political realities of the area (Notezai, 2023). Numerous causes, including faith-based appeal, organisational sturdiness, Pashtun nationalism, alliances with other political parties like the secular Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) and the Pashtun nationalist Awami National Party (ANP), and disagreement with the military establishment, have contributed to Maulana Fazlur Rehman's prominence in Balochistan.

Likewise, the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), under its historical legacy and socialist platform, has made a major impact on the Pashtun belt, especially in Balochistan. With their sharp political sense, leaders such as Asif Ali Zardari have guided the party's direction and made an effort to solve the issues that Pashtun voters have worries about (Notezai, 2023). The PPP's influence in the political environment of the region has been solidified by its inclusive policies and strategic manoeuvres, which have also added to the conversation over Pashtun representation and privileges. In the Pashtun belt, political groups and well-known figures such as Maulana Fazlur Rehman and Asif Ali Zardari have had a significant impact, which highlights the complex relationship between ideology, identity, and power structures. Their interactions influence political discourse by expressing the goals and hardships of Pashtun populations in Balochistan and beyond.

#### ***3.2.4 The Impact of Afghan Refugees and the Baloch-Pashtun Divide***

The political climate in the area has become even more complex as a result of the flood of Afghan refugees entering Balochistan. Baloch nationalists contend that the influx of Pashtun-dominated Afghan migrants is part of a plot to rebalance the population of Balochistan, where Baloch people have traditionally constituted the majority. They worry that the province's ethnic makeup would shift as a result of the significant influx of Pashtun migrants, which could lessen the Baloch people's political and cultural dominance. However, Pashtun nationalists assert that while at first the disparities between Pakhtun and Baloch people were minimal, they have grown over time as a result of several circumstances, including political engineering in Baloch areas. They contend that rather than causing new conflicts, the influx of Afghan migrants has highlighted preexisting ones that have been made worse by social and political reasons (Aslam, 2021; Yaseen *et al.*, 2021). While not affiliated with the PTI, former SAPM Moed Yusuf

contends that Pakistan must take precautions to avoid suffering a strategic setback about Afghanistan and the expulsion of unauthorised Afghan immigrants (Ali, 2023). Afghan refugees in Balochistan are currently facing a difficult state of affairs, including unfulfilled necessities, worries about their safety, and possible hostilities with local populations. There is some hope for progress, nevertheless, as humanitarian organisations continue their inspections and efforts. It's vital to remember that Balochistan's limited infrastructure and resources have been strained by the large-scale socioeconomic effects of the Afghan refugee crisis. This has made the local populace, especially the Baloch people, who already struggle with issues of marginalisation, poverty, and underdevelopment, feel even more uneasy and resentful. It will need a sophisticated strategy to address these intricate problems that consider the worries of all parties involved and encourage inclusive growth and social harmony in the area.

### **3.3 Examination of party manifestoes, rhetoric, and slogans post-Taliban resurgence**

The Pashtun belt, which includes Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), has a complicated political system in which many different parties are involved. These are a few of the region's most significant political parties.

#### **3.3.1 *Awami National Party (ANP)***

The ANP is a secular, liberal Pashtun nationalist party that mostly gets support from the Pashtun-majority regions of the province of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP). It has been a major political force in the area and has always supported the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). The National Awami Party was outlawed in 1975 by Zia-ul-Haq's military government; it was replaced by the ANP, which was established in 1986. The key tenets of the party's ideology are secular liberal politics and Pashtun nationalism. It promotes the objectives and civil liberties of Pakistan's Pashtun community. With a sizable Pashtun population, the ANP has long been an important player in politics in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province (previously known as North-West Frontier Province). The party has been sceptical of the state's policies towards Pashtuns, especially in the tribal areas near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, and has criticised the military's dominance in Pakistani politics. Over the years, the ANP has encountered many difficulties, such as times of political persecution and acts of violence directed against its leaders and adherents. Despite this, it continues to be a crucial voice in Pakistani politics for Pashtun rights and secularism (Al Jazeera Staff, 2013; Malik, 2016).



The Awami National Party (ANP) in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and the erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) has been an outspoken opponent of the Taliban and its political philosophy (Butt, 2021; Jadoon, 2021). Following the Taliban's comeback in Afghanistan, the party has made a point of addressing the following in its manifestos, discourse and slogans:

- ***Combating Extremism and Terrorism***

The TTP resurrected its assaults on state legislators under Noor Wali's authority, including attacks on ANP leader Haroon Bilour in July 2018 and Tehreek-e-Insaf's Ikram Ullah Gandapur two weeks later, along with attacking security officials. The ANP, which ruled KP from 2008 to 2013, has a history of endorsing military actions and opposing the Taliban. Gandapur was elected to the administrative division (Kulachi Tehsil) of Dera Ismail Khan, which is situated close to the South Waziristan border. Gandapur came from a politically influential background (DAWN, 2018). The ANP has lost over 1,000 party members in the last 10 years in the fight for security and stability because it believes that terrorism and extremism pose a threat to Pakistan's survival. The party's platform places a strong emphasis on the necessity of a comprehensive security strategy that prioritises human rights and security and tackles the underlying causes of extremism and terrorism (ANP, 2024; Hassan, 2021). Although the manifesto's emphasis on resolving the origins of terrorism is consistent with current counterterrorism rhetoric, it is doubtful if the ANP will be able to carry out such steps in the face of growing instability in the region. The Taliban's comeback highlights the ongoing difficulties brought about by extremism and militancy in the area and raises questions about the viability of the ANP's suggested security plan. The party's emphasis on security and human rights becomes more nuanced in the face of a strengthened Taliban rule that is well known for its deliberate persecution of dissent and breaches of human rights. Furthermore, given an unyielding Taliban government determined to impose its fundamentalist ideology, the ANP's long-standing support for communication and compromise with extremist groups would be seen as untenable. Furthermore, regional power conflicts and larger geopolitical forces impede the ANP's capacity to implement its security policy, making it more difficult to pursue a cogent security policy. To efficiently traverse the intricacies of the modern security scene, the ANP will need to reevaluate its security approach and adjust its policies as regional dynamics continue to change.

- ***Promoting Secular Democracy***

The ANP wants to see Pakistan become an open-minded welfare state that is moving towards democracy. In tackling the issues facing the nation, the party's discourse has always emphasised the value of constitutional principles, liberty, democracy, and the supremacy of law (Ahmad & Rafiq; Rahman *et al.*, 2023; Saigol, 2010). In the aftermath of the Taliban's comeback in Afghanistan in 2021, the ANP's aim of turning Pakistan into a secular, democratically developed welfare state with a focus on constitutionalism, liberty, a free society, and the rule of law confronts severe obstacles. The restoration of the Taliban directly threatens the objectives of the ANP to become a secular state and its support for individual liberty and plurality. Furthermore, the Taliban's presence casts doubt on attempts to advance democracy and the rule of law by encouraging the rise of radicalism and militancy in Pakistan. Additionally, the Afghan conflict has taken the focus away from domestic changes, making it more difficult to advance democracy and human rights in Pakistan. To overcome these obstacles, the ANP must strike a careful balance between defending its beliefs and reacting to security risks, all the while pushing for a diplomatic settlement to the Afghan conflict that would protect Pakistan's democratic institutions and ideals.

- ***Protecting Pashtun Rights and Identity***

In opposition to the radical ideology of the Taliban, the ANP, a Pashtun nationalist party, has established itself as a defender of Pashtun interests and heritage. The necessity to defend the Pashtun people's cultural and linguistic rights is frequently emphasised in the party's manifestos and catchphrases. (ANP, 2024; Whitney *et al.*). As a Pashtun nationalist party in Pakistan, the Awami National Party (ANP) faces serious issues in the wake of the Taliban's revival in Afghanistan in 2021. Although the ANP has always supported Pashtun identity and rights, these ideals are in danger due to the radical beliefs of the Taliban. The ANP's focus on preserving Pashtun language and culture is praiseworthy, but the obstacles presented by extremism and the Taliban's expanding power make it less successful in defending Pashtun interests. Furthermore, although ANP's approach to talks with the Taliban can be considered practical, it also runs the risk of being interpreted as appeasement. As a result, the ANP has difficulty navigating the political system and defending Pashtun's rights in the face of the Taliban's comeback.

### 3.3.2 *Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)*

Since its formation in 1996, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has emerged as a prominent political movement in Pakistan. Numerous Pakistanis have found resonance in the party's populist and nationalist discourse. The PTI has been significant in influencing Pakistan's political environment, especially in the Pakhtun Belt, since the Taliban's comeback in Afghanistan in 2021 (Bibi & Rizwan, 2022; Elena, 2021; Salman, 2021).

equitable distribution of resources, economic growth, and national security have been at the core of the PTI's platform and discourse. The party has stressed the necessity of having a strong and stable administration to deal with Pakistan's problems, which include economic instability, corruption, and terrorism. The PTI has expressed disapproval of the Pakistani government's response to the Taliban's revival in Afghanistan. The party has demanded a more forceful strategy to counter the danger, accusing the government of being weak and ineffectual in dealing with the Taliban (Firdous *et al.*, 2023; PTI, 2024; Sayed & Hamming, 2023). The party's worries about the security ramifications for Pakistan and the pressing need for a more forceful government response are highlighted by this change in discourse. However, doubts persist over the PTI's capacity to adequately tackle security issues and if its censure is driven by political considerations. The PTI's response, taken as a whole, highlights the intricacies of Pakistani politics and the necessity of taking preventative action against constantly changing security concerns.

The PTI has rallied backing for its goals through several initiatives and slogans. The party has made a point of highlighting the necessity of a "Naya Pakistan" (New Pakistan), which would be a society with greater justice and equity. "Pakistan First" is another catchphrase the PTI has used to highlight its dedication to the security and interests of the nation. The Pakhtun people, who have historically been a vital constituency for the party, have responded well to the PTI's campaigns and slogans (Afzaal *et al.*, 2022; Akhtar & Ashraf, 2022; Zia & Mahmood, 2021). Although "Pakistan First" emphasises the party's dedication to national security and preferences, the Taliban's comeback draws attention to weaknesses in internal security. Furthermore, the PTI's popularity among Pakhtuns might be put to the test because the population is spread throughout both Pakistan and Afghanistan and could impact attitudes during the Taliban's comeback. In the

face of changing regional security threats, the PTI will need to strike a balance between these forces to preserve its narrative and base of support.

- ***The Impact of PTI's Rhetoric on the Pakhtun Belt***

The political discourse of the PTI has aided in the growth of Pashtun nationalism in the region. Because they believe that the prevailing Punjabi culture is threatening their culture and language, the Pashtuns have embraced the party's dedication to their liberties and culture. The Pakhtun Belt has been impacted by the PTI's anti-Taliban rhetoric. Pashtuns, who increasingly view the Taliban as a danger to the peace and security of the region, have less support for the group as a result of the party's condemnation of the Taliban and its philosophy. The PTI's rhetoric has affected the military relationship as well. Nevertheless, some saw this audacious move as a threat to their authority, it caused tensions in relations with the military elite. Besides politics, the PTI discourse has sparked the region's economic revival. Investment has been drawn in by promises of improved infrastructure and job development, which has promoted prosperity and stability. Furthermore, the party's dedication to social justice has addressed long-standing disparities and promoted social cohesiveness, resulting in noticeable advancements in healthcare and education (Akhtar, 2021; Shahid, 2022; Yilmaz & Shakil, 2021). The narrative that the present Taliban rule is superior to the previous one has crumbled, according to security expert Huma Baqai. She cites topics such as women's rights, girls' education, and cross-border assaults by the TTP (Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan) from Afghan land (Ali, 2023). Pashtun support for the PTI has decreased as a result of the group's anti-Taliban rhetoric. This position is complicated by the Taliban's revival in Afghanistan in 2021, which raises questions about regional safety and security. Managing security issues is made more difficult by the PTI's tense ties with the military as a result of its opposition to the Taliban. Despite this, the PTI's emphasis on social justice and economic recovery has encouraged advancements in healthcare and education, however, these efforts are made more questionable by the Taliban's reappearance. In the future, the PTI could have to reevaluate its strategy, striking a balance between the rights of Pashtuns and worries about regional security while interacting with various groups in search of diplomatic solutions to the situation.

### 3.3.3 *Balochistan Awami Party (BAP)*

Since its founding in 2015, the Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) has emerged as a prominent political force in Balochistan, Pakistan (Zareef *et al.*, 2021). Baluchistan has to have more autonomy and self-governance, according to BAP manifestos and speeches (BAP, 2024). The Pakistani government has been under criticism from the party for allegedly abusing the province's natural wealth and neglecting to fulfil the demands of the region's development (Arab News, 2022). The BAP has also drawn attention to the problem of political activists being killed without cause in Balochistan and compelled to disappear, which it blames on the Pakistani military's presence in the area (Khosro & Rovidad, 2023; Tareen, 2024; Whitney *et al.*). The principles of economic growth, human rights, and freedom of choice have been central to the BAP's slogans. The party has emphasised its support for the autonomy of the area by using catchphrases like "We want to govern ourselves" and "Baluchistan's rights are our rights." "End enforced disappearances" and "Justice for the victims of state terrorism" are two other slogans that the BAP has used to draw attention to the region's violations of human rights (BAP, 2024; Tareen, 2024). These concerns assume greater significance in light of the return of the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2021, as instability in the region worsens internal complaints and highlights the need for all-encompassing strategies for dealing with both internal and external challenges in Baluchistan's political panorama.

The BAP's position on the Taliban's comeback in Afghanistan has a big impact on Pakistan's Pakhtun Belt. Many Pashtuns in the area, who believe that the government has done little to tackle their issues and defend their interests, have found resonance in the party's indictment of the Pakistani government's managing of the crisis. Many Pashtuns have been prompted by the BAP's emphasis on autonomy and self-determination to want more power over their affairs and to contest the Pakistani government's hegemony in the area. To improve its standing in the Pakhtun Belt, the BAP has forged agreements with other Pashtun nationalist groups like the ANP. Through these ties, the BAP has been able to combine the region's Pashtun nationalist feelings and present a unified front against the Pakistani government. Notwithstanding its substantial presence in the Pakhtun Belt, the BAP is confronted with several obstacles and constraints. Due to allegations that it is anti-Pakistan, the BAP has found it challenging to build coalitions with other political parties as a result of its criticism of the Pakistani government. Tensions with the Pakistani government have also arisen as a result of the

BAP's insistence on autonomy and freedom of choice. The government has repeatedly accused the party of encouraging divisiveness (Arab News, 2022; Rafi, 2023; Yadav, 2022). The BAP, which criticises the way the Pakistani government is dealing with the crisis, speaks to Pashtuns who feel left out in the face of the Taliban's expanding power. By stressing freedom of choice and self-determination, the BAP wins over Pashtuns who want more say over their lives and opposition to Islamabad's hegemony. However, attempts to forge wider political coalitions are hampered by charges that this position is anti-Pakistani. Concerns about maintaining national unity collide with views of the Pakistani government encouraging secession, which also causes tensions with them. Essentially, the Taliban's comeback heightens Pashtun complaints and influences political rhetoric and tactics in the area, while the BAP's criticism and emphasis on autonomy both reflect Pashtun's demands for representation and create difficulties with handling interactions with Islamabad.

### **Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F)**

The relationship between the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) and the Taliban has been complex and evolving over several decades, influenced by regional geopolitics, ideological affinity, and strategic considerations. During the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s, JUI-F, under the leadership of Maulana Fazlur Rehman's father, Maulana Mufti Mahmud, supported the Afghan mujahideen, including factions that later coalesced into the Taliban. This support was partly driven by ideological alignment on Islamist principles and anti-Soviet sentiment. JUI-F provided religious and moral support to Afghan fighters, which helped in mobilizing support from Pakistani religious circles for the Afghan jihad against the Soviets. After the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent US-led invasion of Afghanistan, Pakistan, under pressure, shifted its stance towards the Taliban. JUI-F, while critical of US intervention, also navigated Pakistan's official policies, maintaining a delicate balance between supporting Afghan Taliban elements while cooperating with Pakistani state interests.

JUI-F has faced criticism for its perceived sympathy towards the Taliban and reluctance to condemn their actions unequivocally, especially regarding violence and human rights abuses. Despite ideological alignment, JUI-F's electoral influence in Pakistan has fluctuated, affected by broader political dynamics and competition from other parties like PTI and PPP. In recent years, JUI-F has focused more on domestic issues and electoral politics within Pakistan, adjusting its messaging to resonate with voters' concerns beyond strictly Islamist agendas.

## Jamaat-e-Islami

The Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan in 2021, following the U.S. withdrawal, marked a significant geopolitical shift in South Asia. In Pakistan, the event rekindled debates around Islamist movements and their influence on domestic politics. Jamaat-e-Islami, a significant Islamist party in Pakistan, has historically aligned with broader Islamist ideologies, making its reaction to the Taliban's resurgence particularly important for understanding the changing dynamics of Pakistani politics.

Jamaat-e-Islami has a long history of engagement with regional Islamist movements, including the Afghan Taliban. During the 1980s, JI was actively involved in supporting the Afghan Mujahideen against Soviet occupation, working closely with Pakistan's military and intelligence agencies. JI's ideological stance has often intersected with the Taliban's, particularly in their shared vision of an Islamic state governed by Sharia law. With the Taliban's re-emergence, JI has strategically framed the event as a victory for Islam, portraying the Taliban's success as a defeat for Western imperialism. JI leadership has publicly praised the Taliban's ability to reclaim Afghanistan, viewing it as a triumph of Islamic governance over foreign intervention. This positioning aligns with JI's broader narrative of advocating for Sharia-based governance in Pakistan.

## **CHAPTER – 4**

### **CONCLUSION**

This thesis discussed and critically analysed the impact of the re-rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan on Pakistani politics. The research problem addressed the regional socio-economic and political implications stemming from the resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan, particularly on Pakistani society, with a focus on the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan. The recent resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan has sent shockwaves throughout South Asia, particularly in Pakistan, where the geopolitical landscape has been dramatically altered. The Taliban's swift ascent to power, coupled with their conservative ideology, has raised concerns about regional stability, security, and socio-economic development. This research aimed to analyse how these developments impact Pakistani politics, especially in regions bordering Afghanistan, such as KP and Balochistan.

There are several obstacles to overcome when negotiating the fallout from the Taliban's comeback. Questions over security and stability have increased due to the region's increasing unrest, which has been made worse by the Taliban's comeback to power. For legislators and stakeholders, the possibility of rising militancy, terrorism, and cross-border conflict poses serious problems. Furthermore, the surge of Afghan refugees puts additional demand on infrastructure and resources, creating socioeconomic difficulties for host towns. The problem is further complicated by the shifting geopolitical dynamics, which include changes in the relative power of regional actors like China, India, and Pakistan.

Vigorous efforts are required to foster stability, peace, and collaboration among regional actors in order to overcome these difficulties. A complete strategy must include humanitarian aid, diplomatic interactions, and conflict resolution institutions. Building Afghanistan's resilience against both internal and foreign challenges may be facilitated by supporting democratic institutions and inclusive government systems. Moreover, sustained peacebuilding initiatives depend heavily on encouraging communication and developing trust among parties. In order to handle cross-border issues and advance regional stability, international coordination and collaboration are equally essential.



From Pakistan's perspective, there are benefits and drawbacks to the Taliban's comeback. Some see it as a way to acquire influence in Afghanistan and win over India strategically, while others worry about the ramifications for domestic security, cross-border terrorism, and refugee flows. For instance, the argument that "Taliban 2.0" is a better government than the one that existed before has crumbled, said security expert Huma Baqai (Ali, 2023). The Pakistani government is trying to strike a careful balance between reducing threats to stability and national security and capitalising on any advantages that may arise from the Taliban's comeback. Different political groups in Pakistan have different positions on the matter; some want stronger cooperation with the Taliban, while others advise caution and attention to detail.

It needs a balanced strategy that puts humanitarian issues, counterterrorism activities, and regional security first to address various points of view. This might entail encouraging communication, developing stakeholder confidence, and assisting Afghanistan's inclusive government systems. Long-term peacebuilding requires addressing the core drivers of extremism and instability, which include poverty, inequality, and a lack of opportunities. In addition, encouraging educational and cultural exchange programmes might aid in mending rifts and fostering understanding between various cultures.

This thesis finds that Pakistani political parties, especially those active in the Pashtun belt, have changed their vocabulary, rhetoric, and tactics in response to the Taliban's comeback. Motivated reasoning has led to revisions in party manifestos, vocabulary, and narratives in reaction to public opinion over Afghanistan. Parties have been forced to reconsider their stances on matters like foreign policy, regional cooperation, and national security in light of the Taliban's comeback. Furthermore, the Taliban's impact on Pashtun nationalism and culture has influenced regional political rhetoric and tactics, emphasising the intricate relationship between geopolitics, ethnicity, and ideology.

Furthermore, the study highlights how crucial it is to comprehend the complex dynamics of Pashtun nationalism and culture to influence political rhetoric and tactics in the area. Concerns about the protection of Pashtun rights, cultural legacy, and autonomy within Pakistan have been triggered by the Taliban's comeback. Pashtun civil society organisations and political parties have demanded that Pashtun concerns be given more weight and participation in national decision-making processes. In addition, concerns over the future course of the Pashtun

nationalism movement and its connection to Pakistan's major political parties have been highlighted by the Taliban's impact on Pashtun politics.

Finally, the results highlight the necessity of ongoing investigation and discussion to effectively manage the complex issues raised by the Taliban's comeback in Afghanistan. Through cultivating reciprocal comprehension, collaboration, and inclusive policy formulation, interested parties might endeavour to advance tranquillity, steadiness, and affluence within the region. Long-term peacebuilding requires addressing the core drivers of extremism and instability, which include poverty, inequality, and a lack of opportunities. In addition, encouraging educational and cultural exchange programmes might aid in mending rifts and fostering understanding between various cultures.

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