

**TALIBAN GOVERNMENT IN AFGHANISTAN: SECURITY
CHALLENGES FOR PAKISTAN (2021-2024)**



Researcher

Asma

Reg. No. 213-FSS/MSIR/F22

Supervisor

Dr. Nasreen Akhtar

Dept. of Politics and IR

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY, ISLAMABAD

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	i
DEDICATION	ii
LIST OF ABBREVIATION	iii
ABSTRACT	v
CHAPTER 1	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1. Rationale of the Study.....	6
1.2. Statement of the Problem.....	7
1.3. Significance of the Study.....	7
1.4. Objectives of the Study.....	8
1.5. Research Questions.....	8
1.6. Delimitation of the Study.....	9
1.7. Research Gap	9
1.8. Literature Review	11
1.8.1. Review of Related Literature.....	11
1.9. Theoretical Framework.....	18
1.10. Research Methodology	23
1.10.1. Research Design	23
1.10.2. Data Collection.....	23
1.10.3. Data Analysis.....	24
1.11. Organization of the Study	25
CHAPTER TWO	26
2. SECURITY IMPACTS FOR PAKISTAN AFTER THE TALIBAN TAKEOVER ...	26
2.1. The Re-Emergency of Militant Groups	27
2.2. Growing TTP threats.....	29

2.3.	ISKP; Emerging Extremism	32
2.4.	TTP and Afghan Taliban Nexus.....	34
2.4.1.	<i>Common History and Ideology</i>	37
2.4.2.	<i>Religious Views and Pashtun Identity</i>	38
CHAPTER THREE		42
3.	A BONE OF CONTENTION BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN	42
3.1.	The Porous Pak-Afghan Border.....	43
3.1.1.	<i>Cross-Border Attacks</i>	45
3.1.2.	<i>Cross-Border Movement</i>	49
3.2.	Refugees' Challenges and Implications	51
3.2.1.	<i>First Phase</i>	52
3.2.2.	<i>Second Phase</i>	53
3.3.	Refugee a Security Challenge.....	53
CHAPTER FOUR.....		57
4.	PAKISTAN EFFORTS FOR THE COUNTER-INSURGENCY	57
5.1.	Counter-Measures	58
5.1.1.	<i>First Phase of Peace Negotiations</i>	63
5.1.2.	<i>Second Phase of Peace Negotiations</i>	64
CHAPTER FIVE.....		67
CONCLUSION.....		67
MAJOR FINDINGS.....		71
RECOMMENDATIONS		79
REFERENCES.....		82

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am very grateful to Allah who gave me the courage, knowledge, and insight to start this research work and complete it. By the grace of Allah, I completed my thesis and got through the difficult times.

I want to thank my supervisor Dr. Nasreen Akhtar, whose expert advice and guidance made my Research path smoother. Her unconditional support, expert guidance, and encouraging words helped me complete my research work. Her unwavering faith in me has inspired me, and I am deeply grateful for her contribution to my academic growth.

I would also like to extend my immense thanks and prayers to my parents and my family for their unwavering encouragement and unconditional support throughout my academic career in general and this thesis in particular. Moreover, I would like to thank my colleagues and classmates for their support, which has been invaluable to this journey.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research work to my loving parents and family, and especially to my brother Syed Mohammad Uzair, who is a wonderful example of care and support. His encouragement and kind attention are like glimmers of hope, encouraging me to continue and complete my thesis. He has supported and inspired me throughout my academic career. I am forever grateful for their unconditional love, support, and advice, which have been a constant source of inspiration and strength to me.

LIST OF ABBREVIATION

TGA	Taliban Government in Afghanistan
TTP	Tahreek-Taliban Pakistan
TJP	Tahreek-e-Jihaad Pakistan
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria or Daesh
ISKP	Islamic State Khorasan Province
NSAs	Non-States Actors
NAP	National Action Plan
RAW	Research and Analysis wing
PM	Prime Minister
PO	Police Officers
FO	Foreign Office
DG	Director General
ISPR	Inter-Service Public Relations
PIPS	Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies
PICSS	Pakistan Institute of Conflict and Security Studies

MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
IOM	International Organization for Migration
UN	United Nations
US	United States
CA	Central Asia
DL	Durand Line
CT	Counter-Terrorism
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
SATP	South Asia Terrorism Portal
ACC	Afghan Citizen Cards
JUIF	Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam-F
PTI	Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Party
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Area
KPK	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

ABSTRACT

Pakistan and Afghanistan have several shared interests and commonalities which can pave the way for smooth relations between them. However, at the same time, both states have several important factors that always keep them away from one another regarding healthy ties. For instance, the Pakistan and Afghanistan border raises enduring concerns for Pakistan due to insurgencies, human trafficking, and threats from Non-State Actors such as militant groups that are Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, (TTP) and Islamic State Khorasan Province, (IS-KP). The 2021 Taliban takeover in Afghanistan further intensified these worries. This study profoundly investigates the security implications for Pakistan in the aftermath of the Taliban government in Afghanistan while focusing on the strong connections between Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Afghan Taliban. These ties enable attacks on Pakistan from Afghan territory. Furthermore ISKP emergence further complexes threat to the state. The study aims to reveal the extent of TTP and IS-KP in Afghanistan and their impact on Pakistan security, especially along the Pak-Afghan border. It also addresses IS-KP threatening presence and regional destabilization. Furthermore, the research proposes effective strategies to counter these security challenges. The research questions explore security consequences for Pakistan due to relationships between TTP and the Afghanistan Taliban. The study significantly contributes to understanding these ties and encourages regional collaboration against terrorism. The theoretical framework employs constructivism in International Relations. This perspective analyses ideological, social, and cultural connections and differences between the Afghan Taliban, TTP, ISKP, and other extremist groups, providing insights into severe security implications for Pakistan. At the same time, the theory highlights several historical factors and aspects that make Pakistan and Afghanistan behave in a specific manner regarding their bilateral relationships. Ultimately, the study aims to guide actions for lasting peace and stability in the region. The research methodology applies qualitative approach, employing exploratory and predictive data analysis. The nature of the study is based on primary and secondary data. The study gives a detailed analysis of the situation and provides a comprehensive way forward.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Pakistan has gained an important geostrategic location. In this regard, Pakistan's border with Afghanistan is always a matter of concern for Pakistan. The controversial status of Durand Line, across-the-border insurgencies, human trafficking, and threats of Non-State Actors (NSA) such as Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP) are some of the major tensions Pakistan faces on the Pak-Afghan border. However, the Taliban's ongoing occupation of Kabul, which began on August 15, 2021, continues to have a profound impact on neighboring Pakistan. As the Taliban declared their authority over Afghanistan and declared their caretaker government, Pakistan faced major security challenges. Moreover, Pakistan is currently struggling with the consequences of its border with Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, including the threat of cross-border terrorism (Khan, 2021). Pakistan is seeking a delicate balance between addressing its security concerns and maintaining relations with other regional actors. Nevertheless, the situation remains unstable. However, one of the profound implications for Pakistan in the current scenario is the presence of TTP in Afghanistan. The TTP has become more active and dangerous since the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan, as they got a stronghold after the Taliban government (Sayed, 2023). If one looks at the history of TTP Pakistan and other terrorist groups, they were very active in Pakistan. As more than 96% percent of the area was cleaned from terrorism and is under the control of state administration as a result of previous military operations, almost the entire terrorist is either eliminated, captured, or escaped to Afghanistan (Khalid, 2020)

Pakistan's security forces work on long-term tactics to counter-terrorism. After the Taliban control in Afghanistan, TTP's attacks across the border have increased over the past two years. According to a report, an increase of 79 per cent in such attacks occurred in the year 2023 (Manisha,

2023). Similarly, in 2023 Chaman and Torkham border with Afghanistan, Pakistan came across several significant events in terms of cross-border firings and clashes. Furthermore, on the 6th of September, 2023 a large number of terrorists attacked from the Afghanistan border in the Chitral region of Pakistan. These are serious security challenges to Pakistan from Afghanistan. Moreover, Pakistan experienced a surge in terrorist attacks in 2023, with the TTP and ISKP the two main terrorist groups (Hussain, 2023).

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

Moreover, Pakistan has experienced a significant surge in terrorist activities, particularly in the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, after the termination of the ceasefire

agreement between the government and the banned TTP in November 2022. According to the Centre for Research and Security Studies annual security report, this escalation has resulted in a substantial increase in violence-related fatalities and injuries, with a total of 1,524 deaths and 1,463 injuries reported in 789 terror attacks and counter-terrorism operations in 2023, marking a six-year high in terrorist activity in the country (Dawn, 2024).

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

Additionally, on 29th Nov 2022, the one-day trip to Kabul by Pakistani Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar (then) and her wide-ranging talks with the Afghan Taliban leadership on security issues and economic cooperation and especially over cross-border violence was a significant development. It was the first high-level Pakistani delegation to visit Kabul since the Taliban takeover in August 2021. On the other side, the Taliban spokesperson, Zabihullah Mujahid, says the two sides are having fruitful discussions on various issues, including security, economy, trade, etc. He further states that the Taliban would not allow any country to use Afghan land against Pakistan (Khan, 2022). Apart from that, Pakistan is repeatedly urging the Afghan

Taliban to control the operations of terrorist groups within Afghanistan. Several times, Pakistani top-level civil and military leadership of Pakistan have mentioned that progress and development for both Pakistan and Afghanistan are linked with peace on the border. Pakistan is looking committed to engaging the Afghanistan government on the issue of TTP and ISKP.

However, Pakistan is implementing various counter-insurgency measures to combat terrorist groups operating in the country. Pakistan has established a National Action Plan (NAP) to counter terrorism, which includes measures to strengthen intelligence sharing, enhance border security, and prosecute terrorist financiers. These efforts aim to ensure national security and stability in the face of ongoing terrorist threats.

Most recently in June 2024, the law and order situation continues to further deteriorate in the various areas of Pakistan; such as the Former FATA and several other districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province as a result of increasing terrorist activities. In this regard, Pakistan has the same old stance that is declaring Afghanistan soil for it. According to Pakistani Officials, Various insurgent groups are sheltered on Afghan soil; where they collect their force and courage and conduct their violent activities in Pakistan. For instance, about two months ago on 31st May 2024, a religious scholar was killed and other was injured in an attack by an unknown in Dir lower district. Similarly, on 22nd June 2024, the Fighters of TTP launched an attack near the Pak-Afghan border where 5 security forces were killed (Gul, 2024).

Pakistan repeatedly urges the Taliban-led Afghan government to look into the issue and take necessary measures in that regard; to contain such violent activities across the border. As a result of such increasing militancy; the civil and military leadership of Pakistan took important decisions in the previous apex committee meeting. They linked economic development and

stability with a peaceful environment and promised to take the initiative in that regard. A new counter-terrorism initiative in the name of “Aazm-e-Istehkam” was announced to get rid of such terrorism and increasing cross-border insurgency. In this regard, it is important to mention that Pakistani officials declare the Afghan soil and government responsible for not taking steps against such militant groups that exist in Afghanistan. The special representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, Munir Akram highlighted the Taliban commitments in the Doha agreement of not allowing Afghan soil to be used against any neighbor. He is blaming the Afghan government for not fulfilling their promises in that regard. Similarly, the defense minister of Pakistan Khawaja Asif told the media that, Pakistan can launch attacks on Afghan soil against those Insurgents who are destabilizing Pakistan. He reminds that such attacks are carried out under a new strategy of curbing terrorism that is given the name of "Aazm-e-Istehkam". Pakistani official's statements about this strategy are sparking tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan and the Taliban-led Afghan officials declared such statements as unnecessary and aggressive. They call it a source of hurdle in the smooth relationship between both countries; that is not in the interest of both (Dawn, 2024).

Furthermore, the two senior TTP commanders, “Nasrullah alias Maulvi Mansoor” and “Idris alias Irshad”, are arrested in Balochistan on 26th June 2024. The Balochistan government reveals that the two have engaged in subversive activities since 2005 under the platform of Baitullah Masood. Nasrullah serves as chairman of the TTP Defense Committee, responsible for overseeing all terrorist activities, and financial and economic affairs of the TTP. He reveals that many missing persons are hiding in Afghanistan and that the TTP has joined forces with the banned Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) to launch joint attacks in Balochistan. The TTP aims to sabotage Pakistan's development projects with the help of India's secret agency Research and Analysis wing (RAW). Nasrullah also reveals that the TTP leadership, including Maulvi Noor Wali,

is currently in Afghanistan, and the Afghan Taliban government is providing comprehensive convenience to the TTP (Sattar, 2024).

Similarly, Pakistan and Afghanistan, as neighboring states, have a significant interdependence in areas like economy and security. However, their policies towards each other are inconsistent due to the close ties between the TTP and the Afghan Taliban. Pakistan has repeatedly expresses concerns to the Afghan government about the presence of TTP and other terrorist groups in Afghanistan, who use Afghan soil to launch attacks on Pakistan, posing a significant threat to Pakistan's security.

1.1. Rationale of the Study

The current environment is based on instability in terms of security, which has increased terrorist attacks in Pakistan. Pakistan faces serious security threats after the Taliban took control in Afghanistan in August 2021. However, terrorism and instability spread to Pakistan due to the porous border between the two countries. Along with it, the resurgence of terrorist sanctuaries in Afghanistan has been a serious security challenge for Pakistan, which has seen a surge in terror attacks since the Taliban took control. The study focuses on the period from 2021 to 2024. It also examines how these structures influence Pakistan's security strategy and threat perspectives. Moreover, there is a need to address this study through the constructivist theoretical lens and to explore how the ideology and narratives of both Afghan Taliban and TTP influence Pakistan's perceptions of the threat and expose how security meanings are created, negotiated, and struggled between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Security concerns have long overshadowed the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan. However, various aspects of tensions affecting the relations between the two nations have consistently played a significant role. Considering this backdrop, the security challenges have gained more prominence, especially with the formation of the Afghan Taliban government in Kabul in 2021. Security issues emanating from Afghanistan significantly impact Pakistan this study aims to delve into these challenges. The TTP and Afghan Taliban share a close relationship due to ideological alignment and mutual interests. Additionally, the ISKP is active in various border areas. This study seeks to explore the presence of TTP and ISKP on Afghan soil, utilizing it for violent activities against Pakistan. TTP activities have seen an uptick following the Afghan Taliban's control of Afghanistan, leading to a series of terror attacks in Pakistan. After the establishment of the Taliban government in Kabul, several terrorist organizations, including TTP and ISKP, have gained momentum within Afghanistan, posing severe security implications for Pakistan. The primary objective of this study is to thoroughly analyze these security implications on Pakistan and propose a comprehensive approach to address these security challenges.

1.3. Significance of the Study

Currently, it has been witnessed that Pakistan is experiencing severe challenges in terms of insecurity and insurgency in various areas along the border of Afghanistan. For instance, in the past few months, on the Chaman and Torkham border with Afghanistan, Pakistan came across several significant events in terms of cross-border firings and clashes. Similarly, on the 6th of September 2023, a large number of terrorists attacked from the Afghanistan border in the Chitral region of Pakistan. This study is significant because it considers and examines these events in detail and presents a comprehensive way forward for the future. It is also important because it tends to

describe the possible connections between the TTP and the Afghanistan Taliban, which is becoming a serious security threat to Pakistan. Along with that, this study also discusses the presence of other terrorist organizations on Afghanistan soil, such as ISKP, which poses security threats as well to Pakistan. Furthermore, an in-depth analysis of these ties helps to identify potential threats to stability in the border region. It enables policymakers in Islamabad to devise comprehensive strategies to address them. Moreover, it will help scholars of international relations gain deep analysis and reliable data on one of the most critical issues of South Asian politics. This research study is vital for understanding the way forward to collaboration to combat terrorism effectively. More importantly, security is always considered a matter of concern in ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan; thus, this paper comprehensively analyses the matter and tends to present a way forward.

1.4. Objectives of the Study

The Study has the following objectives:

1. To explore security challenges to Pakistan after the formation of the Afghan Taliban government in 2021.
2. To examine the impact of the TTP and Afghan Taliban nexus on the security of Pakistan.
3. To analyze the impact of the Afghan Taliban Government on Pakistan's security since 2021 and propose strategies to mitigate these challenges.

1.5. Research Questions

After studying the research problem following questions have been formulated to address the research topic systematically:

1. How far the Afghanistan Taliban posed security challenges for Pakistan since 2021?

2. What security threat does Pakistan face due to the nexus between TTP and the Afghan Taliban?
3. How does the Taliban government in Afghanistan affect Pakistan's security and what strategies can Pakistan opt to manage and mitigate these impacts stemming since 2021?

1.6. Delimitation of the Study

The research limitation should be specific and focused but also broad enough to analyze the topic comprehensively. To begin with, the study focuses entirely on security challenges to Pakistan from Afghanistan and the role of the Taliban Government since 2021. It limits the study to this specific period from 2021 to 2024. Moreover, it discusses the Taliban government's ideological alignment with the TTP and the security implications for Pakistan as a result of such ties. Furthermore, it discusses the Presence of other terrorist organizations in Afghanistan, such as ISKP, and their threats to Pakistan. Overall, this study discusses the role of the Afghan Taliban in this regard and the way forward for Pakistan to deal with the situation. The study is based on primary and reliable secondary data.

1.7. Research Gap

Since independence, the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan has always been essential for security concerns. However, after thoroughly analyzing the literature, we found limited literature on the topic under research. The controversial nature of the Durand line has been discussed widely by several researchers. However, Pakistan's security status regarding the TTP factor and other terrorist organizations such as ISKP and the role of the Afghan Taliban since 2021 is yet to be highlighted thoroughly. Furthermore, there is still a need to discuss various connections and links, such as ideological, cultural, social, and historical, between the TTP and the Afghan

Taliban. Therefore, this study will try to fill these gaps in the existing literature and recommend policy options to tackle this situation.

These gaps are comprehensively analyzed and presented in a broad way forward. In this regard, the existing literature is read thoroughly to address such gaps.

1.8.Literature Review

The Taliban's rise to power in Afghanistan in 2021 has revived security concerns for Pakistan. However, Pakistan has long suffered from the ramifications of instability and faces threats from the TTP and Afghan Taliban nexus.

1.8.1. Review of Related Literature

Tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan have increased since the Afghan Taliban takeover of Kabul. Unexpectedly, cross-border military clashes and Terrorist insurgencies have increased in various areas across Pakistan. Since the Taliban took over, TTP and other militant organizations, such as Islamic State Khurasan Province ISKP, have raised their presence in tribal areas of Pakistan. When the Afghanistan Taliban took control over Afghanistan Pakistan was confident and thought that the Taliban, who share similar ideological beliefs with the TTP would be able to control or limit the actions of the TTP against Pakistan. In his address to the United Nations General Assembly in September 2022, Pakistan's Prime Minister, Shehbaz Sharif, noted that Pakistan shared global concerns about the threat posed by the major terrorist groups operating from Afghanistan, especially ISKP and TTP, as well as al-Qaeda". Similarly, Pakistan urges Afghanistan authorities to take vital initiatives to prevent such terrorist organizations from attacking Pakistan (Kaura, 2022).

The TTP is a resurgent organization that was always a big threat to Pakistan's immunity. He argues that the TTP is a more dangerous and sophisticated group than it was in the past and that it poses a serious threat to Pakistan's security. He provides a detailed account of the TTP history, ideology, and tactics. Moreover, he examines the factors that have contributed to the group revival, such as the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan and the rise of the ISKP. He concludes the book by arguing that the Pakistani government needs to take a more comprehensive approach to

combating the TTP. He calls for the government to address the root causes of militancy, such as poverty and inequality. The TTP is a group of Islamic militants who are fighting to overthrow the Pakistani government and establish a Taliban-style Islamic state. The TTP has been responsible for numerous terrorist attacks in Pakistan, including the 2009 attack on the Pakistani Army headquarters and the 2014 attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar. The Pakistani government has taken steps to combat the TTP, but the group remains a potent threat. The government needs to do more to address the root causes of militancy, such as poverty and inequality. It also needs to improve its intelligence gathering and counter-terrorism capabilities (Sayed, 2023)

The historical dynamics and future path of the Afghanistan-Pakistan relationship and its impact on Afghan stability. The takeover of the Taliban in Afghanistan is likely to emerge as the most influential party. These changing aspects will shape prospects for stability in Afghanistan and the broader region of Pakistan. She identifies many challenges that must be addressed to improve relations between the two countries. These challenges include the lack of trust between the two governments, the perception that Pakistan interferes in Afghanistan's internal affairs, the presence of terrorist groups on both sides of the border, and the refugee crisis. However, regarding the Durand Line border dispute, she recommends that Afghanistan should work to build trust with Pakistan by extremely down on terrorist groups and by working to improve its governance. She also suggests that Pakistan should stop interfering in Afghanistan's internal affairs and should work to address the refugee crisis. The two countries must cooperate on counter-terrorism and border security to create a more peaceful and prosperous region (Threlkeld, 2021).

Afghanistan's significance in the region is based on military and security prospects. According to her, as a result of both Soviet and US military strategic ambitions in Afghanistan, the

significance of Afghanistan increased. Pakistan, being a neighbor of Afghanistan, is greatly affected by situations in Afghanistan. Pakistan has a connection of a different nature with the Afghanistan issue. For instance, there is the religious and ideological linkage of Pakistan with Afghanistan. Similarly, due to strategic interests, Pakistan supported various war groups and military militias in the past to preserve its interests. This shows a deep connection of Pakistan with Afghanistan, and it is rightly said that any situation in Afghanistan impacts Pakistan directly. Moreover, after the disintegration of Soviet Afghanistan, the country became more divided internally. The Taliban became an essential political and military force in 1996. They have received Pakistan's diplomatic and material support. Pakistan's decision to support the U.S. policy in the war on terrorism means that Pakistan has officially launched a war against the Taliban. However, Pakistan's goal is to see a stable Afghanistan; now the U.S. forces have withdrawn, Pakistani elements may again tend to support the Taliban government in Afghanistan (Akhtar, 2008).

With the takeover of a new regime of the Taliban in Afghanistan, former Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan said in an interview that his government is negotiating with some departments of the (TTP) seeking reconciliation with the Pakistani state. He further stated that the Taliban leaders do not want to be Pakistan's hostages because it will weaken their position among ordinary people. Furthermore, the situation raises questions about the limitations of Pakistan's relationship with the Taliban and its ability to persuade the organization to take action against the TTP. Similarly, he further argues that the majority of Pakistan's people expect Pakistan to impose strict conditions on Afghans who cross the border into Pakistan. Finally, Pakistan may also impose some conditions on bilateral trade with Afghanistan. However, this push-pull situation may continue (Jamal, 2021).

The Taliban's strategy and operations, interactions with other armed groups and regional forces, and their response to the US-led invasion of Afghanistan. He also discusses the internal dynamics of the Taliban, including their leadership, internal organization, and internal ideological conflicts. However, he further examines the Taliban's war activities from 2001 to 2021. Furthermore, the author comprehensively introduces the Taliban's changes in response to circumstances and military strategies, exploring the organization's internal conflicts and historical development. Generally, he provides a complex and robust analysis of the Taliban's war operations and their impact on the future of Afghanistan and its surrounding areas. It also deals with how the Taliban interacts with other terrorist groups and regional powers and provides a detailed and reliable analysis of their military operations and their impact on the future of Afghanistan and the region (Giustozzi, 2021).

Afghanistan is experiencing a severe humanitarian crisis with multiple dimensions, such as widespread poverty, food insecurity, and lack of access to health care and education. The Taliban's return to power has made these problems worse, and the international world is unsure how to react. Hassan Abbas's book *The Return of the Taliban* provides a comprehensive and detailed analysis of the return of the Taliban to power in Afghanistan in 2021. To help policymakers deal with complex moral and political issues, they must clearly understand the Taliban's beliefs and behavior; this may require using diplomatic pressure to persuade the Taliban to adopt more reasonable policies or mandate compliance with specific human rights standards. He said engaging the Taliban could be a good strategy, but it must be done with caution and a thorough grasp of the group's beliefs and methods. He further urges that division between moderates and extremists within the Taliban, as well as the movement's efforts to negotiate with the outside world, especially China and the countries of Central Asia. Finally, the author acknowledges the situation's challenging geopolitical

realities while emphasizing the well-being and dignity of the Afghan people. He provides a careful and nuanced analysis of engagement and diplomatic options to address humanitarian issues in Afghanistan (Abbas, 2023).

The resurgence has resulted from numerous variables, of which the developing tensions between the Pashtun community of the old tribal regions and the KPK and the primary government are just one, and possibly not the most significant. The TTP went through an extensive stretch of crisis and internal fractures, and by 2018, it was almost dead; its formal initiative might gather possibly about 2,000 fighters under its straight command. He also highlighted the relationship between TTP and Al-Qaida in his investigations. Al-Qaida and the TTP consistently had a disquiet relationship, even though Al-Qaida never isolated the TTP. Sources in Al-Qaida have in the past represented their economic help for the TTP as changing. Despite its second thoughts about the capacities of the TTP's administration, Al-Qaida determined that it required the TTP. With Noor Wali in charge of the TTP, Al-Qaida appears to have recovered trust in the group as a practical organization (Giustozzi, 2021).

The Pakistani Taliban has made a comeback in the past two years, the Pakistani Taliban have reappeared. The organization poses a threat in Pakistan and other regions. The TTP was founded in 2007, and it quickly became one of the most powerful militant groups in Pakistan. The group's goals include the establishment of a Taliban-style government in Pakistan and the overthrow of the Pakistani state. The TTP has carried out numerous attacks against Pakistani security forces, civilians, and government officials. In 2014, the Pakistani military launched a major offensive against the TTP in the North Waziristan region of Pakistan. The offensive successfully drove the TTP out of North Waziristan, but the group has since regrouped and reemerged in other parts of Pakistan. Furthermore, he highlighted the threat of the re-birth of TTP,

which is a deep concern not just for Pakistan but also for Afghanistan, China, India, and the United States (Khattak, 2021).

The security situation in Afghanistan has drastically deteriorated since the US withdrawal, the Afghan Taliban facing challenges from other insurgent groups like ISKP. This has led to a significant surge in violence and terrorism, causing widespread instability and fear. Furthermore, human rights concerns have escalated, including potential violations against vulnerable populations, such as women and minorities, who are at risk of being marginalized and oppressed. The Taliban has imposed several restrictions on human rights, particularly the rights of women and girls. State failure: Regional instability: The instability in Afghanistan could hurt the security and stability of the wider region. He concludes by arguing that the international community has a responsibility to help Afghanistan address the challenges it faces. This includes providing humanitarian assistance, supporting economic development, and promoting human rights (Akram, 2023)

Major players in Afghanistan: United States: The US has several interests in Afghanistan, including preventing terrorism, promoting regional stability, and countering China and Russia. China: China is interested in Afghanistan's natural resources, its location on the Belt and Road Initiative, and its potential to destabilize Central Asia. India: India is concerned about Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan and the potential for terrorist groups to use Afghanistan as a base to attack India. Iran: Iran is worried about the presence of Sunni extremist groups in Afghanistan and the potential for instability to spill over into its territory. Pakistan: Pakistan has many interests in Afghanistan, including preventing the rise of anti-Pakistan terrorist groups, promoting regional stability, and countering India. Russia: Russia is interested in preventing the spread of terrorism and instability from Afghanistan to Central Asia. Pakistan should use its influence with the Taliban

to promote a negotiated settlement with the Afghan government. Pakistan should strengthen its border security to prevent the movement of terrorists and weapons across the border (Humza, 2022).

The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has emerged as a significant security threat to Pakistan since the Taliban takeover in 2021. Pakistan lacks a clear strategy to counter the TTP, which officials say is broadly similar to other militant groups but can radicalize specific segments of Pakistani society. The conflict between Pakistan and the TTP, which targets the security sector and avoids significant attacks on civilians or foreign targets, is likely to continue. While the Pakistani army has controlled the violence, continued attacks by the TTP pose a considerable challenge. The international community, including the United States and China, has limited influence and interest in pressuring the Afghan Taliban to rein in the TTP. Pakistan must deal with this deadly triangle alone, with general elections scheduled for February 2024, which the TTP may try to disrupt (Taylor, 2024).

The complex nature of Pakistan and Afghanistan relations. Several historical factors, such as social, economic, political, and historical, have given a detailed account to address their role in shaping the bilateral ties. The book addresses the historical background of the Durand line, which is controversial, and the authorities in Afghanistan refuse to recognize it. Thus, it is a significant source of continuous tension on the border. Similarly, the Author highlights various historical conflicts in Afghanistan, such as the USSR intervention and the United States' war on terror, and considers Pakistan's role as destabilizing one as it always supported the insurgent Taliban, which believes in armed struggle. Several important social and economic factors are examined in the book that negatively contribute to the bilateral ties. For instance, there is close interconnectedness between Pakistan and Afghanistan; however, this interconnectedness often leads to tensions.

Considering the case of refugees, hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees are badly impacting Pakistani society and economy (Baqai, 2021).

1.9.Theoretical Framework

Constructivism is a theoretical framework that first emerged in the 1990s. In international relations, constructivism emphasizes the importance of ideas, norms, and identities in the state's perceptions and interactions. According to this view, the global system is driven by power, material interests, and shared beliefs and values that shape state behavior (Zehfuss, 2002).

Constructivism in international relations views global politics as a social system where individuals interact to create rules and practices. It emphasizes the role of ideas, identities, and norms in shaping behavior, and sees global political environment components as socially constructed. This perspective highlights the importance of individual action and decision-making in shaping state behavior and the international system and shows how states can be socialized to adopt new standards and identities. (Hopf, 1998).

Constructivist theory highlights that a state's perceptions of threats, opportunities, and interests are not fixed or determined by external factors. Instead, these perceptions may change over time through interactions with other states, learning from past experiences, and the emergence of new ideas and norms. This means states can adapt their behavior to changing circumstances and redefined interests, demonstrating how thoughts and ideas shape international relations and behavior. (Malhotra, 2022).

According to its major proponents, Alexander Wends, Nicolaus Onuf, and several others, the current international relations are not inherited naturally but came into being due to socially constructed interaction and specific socially applied meaning. The particular social, ideological,

and cultural identities make some states friends while others are enemies. Similarly, various materials and interests are given specific and self-motivated meanings, which later play significant roles in international relations. Ideas and beliefs regarding such factors are given due importance in international relations. Who can forget the core assumption of constructivism: “Anarchy is what states make of it,” meaning that anarchy is a socially constructed phenomenon. States value historical background, cultural and religious identities, and social norms to shape their interaction with others and to gain their desired interests.

According to Wendt, anarchy, the absence of a centralized authority in the international system, is a social construct rather than a fundamental aspect. Absence of a central authority, states must rely on their resources to ensure their security and protect themselves from external threats. Wendt argues that states perceptions and reactions to anarchy are influenced by political ideology, historical events, and social and cultural norms. However, if states observe anarchy as an opportunity for coordination and cooperation, they are more likely to engage in peaceful and fruitful interactions. He emphasizes that states create their security environments because states have the choice to cooperate and develop institutions that advance security and peace, or they can choose to compete and engage in conflict (Wendt, 1999).

A more nuanced perspective emerges when the current security issues between Pakistan and Afghanistan are viewed through a constructivist lens. Historical context, past relationships, and events influence current attitudes and behaviors in Pakistan and Afghanistan by examining their historical interactions. The Afghan Taliban's current relationship with Pakistan is affected by its support for the TTP. Constructivism believes that material interests, ideas, identities, and social norms influence state behavior.

The complex relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan is shaped by historical events, social identities, ideological backgrounds, and cultural factors. Constructivism in International Relations highlights the significance of these socially constructed phenomena in shaping international politics. According to this theory, the social world is constructed through the interactions and actions of both states and non-state actors, such as individuals and groups, which play a crucial role in influencing international political behavior.

Addressing the contemporary security issues between Pakistan and Afghanistan through the lenses of constructivism, one can notice that historical background and events, social and religious identities, and ethnic factors play dominant roles. The historically controversial status of the Durand line between Pakistan and Afghanistan is always a source of contention between the neighbors. The recent tensions on the Chaman and Torkham border may be traced back to the so-called controversial status of the bilateral border. Similarly, currently, the TTP has made Afghan soil their shelter base. TTP and Afghan Taliban have shared ethnic, social, cultural, and ideological backgrounds, which make them strong allies. Moreover, both have a common enemy, the US and its Western allies, with whom they have fought for two decades. There are certain social, cultural, and ideological relations between TTP and the Afghanistan Taliban. Similarly, TTP looks at Pakistan through specific religious and social lenses. Along with this, the Afghan Taliban has a particular policy towards Pakistan as well, which is highly motivated by ideological, ethnic, and social factors. Such types of various social relationships, on one side, have made TTP and Afghan Taliban strong allies and Pakistan and TTP strong adversaries.

Constructivism shows that states cooperation and conflict are shaped by their perceptions of each other and the environment. Shared norms and identities can foster cooperation, as seen in the Afghan Taliban and TTP strong bond due to their similar ideologies and history. Despite

different goals, they have collaborated and supported each other. Constructivism highlights how ideas, identities, and norms influence state behavior, providing a deeper understanding of international relations beyond power politics. It emphasizes the importance of social and cultural context in shaping state's interactions, making international relations more complex and nuanced. (McGlinchey, 2017).

This approach shows how Pakistani and Afghan national identities, past experiences, and perceptions of international norms shape their interactions with the TTP. Pakistan-Afghanistan relations have a complicated history, sometimes with cooperation and sometimes with conflict. Afghanistan does not recognize the Durand Line, which was established by Britain in 1893, as an official border. As a result, disputes between the two countries and their history have created a climate of distrust and competition that has affected their ability to cooperate on TTP-related issues (Javaid, 2020).

Constructivism highlights how learning and socialization shape state behavior, evident in the evolving relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan regarding the TTP. Their shared Pashtun ethnicity has created a complex relationship, with Pakistan suspicious of Afghanistan's reluctance to act against the TTP. Pakistan views the TTP as a threat to its security, while Afghanistan views the TTP as a means of using influence in the region. Understanding these identity dynamics is crucial to understanding the complexity of their relationships and the challenges they face in addressing TTP issues.

However, a constructivist perspective reveals how ideas, identities, and norms shape their interactions, offering insights into cooperation and conflict resolution paths. It emphasizes the importance of understanding the underlying factors driving their behavior, providing a deeper understanding of their complex relationship. This perspective emphasizes the role of ideas,

identities, and norms in shaping their relationships, particularly for the TTP. Historical context is crucial as past events and interactions build their national identity and mutual perceptions. For example, Pakistan's historical support for armed groups during the Soviet-Afghan war and Afghanistan's resistance to foreign intervention influence their current attitudes toward each other, such as the TTP. Constructivist analysis of the complex relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan offers a unique perspective beyond traditional realist or liberal perspectives. This perspective is particularly important for TTP, highlighting how ideas, identities, and norms shape their relationships. Historical context is crucial because past exchanges and events shaped their national identity. For example, Pakistan's past support for TTP during the Soviet-Afghan conflict and Afghanistan's resistance to external intervention shape their current perceptions towards each other.

Moreover, the formation of social relationships, identity, norms, values, and interests is highly valued by the Afghan Taliban regime. For instance, the Afghan Taliban and TTP are united by shared norms and values, including support for Islam and opposition to Western influence. Their shared ideology is based on a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam. The Afghan Taliban and TTP share Deobandi ideology, Pashtun ethnicity, and cultural ties, and due to their close relationship, they both share a strong bond; therefore, the Afghan Taliban provides a safe haven in Afghanistan, while the TTP may look to the Afghan Taliban for support and legitimacy for its operations in Pakistan, the Afghan Taliban may consider the TTP as a possible ally in destabilizing the Pakistani government. Due to the TTP ability to operate from Afghan territory, possibly with the help of the Afghan Taliban, this relationship presents serious security risks for Pakistan. The porous border between Afghanistan and Pakistan and historical links between militant groups in the area further worsen this scenario and encourage cross-border terrorism and instability (Zahid, 2022).

Considering such historical, social, ethnic, and social factors, the Taliban government of Afghanistan has allowed TTP to operate from its soil. Such settlement of TTP on Afghanistan soil brings profound security implications for Pakistan. This study discusses these implications in detail.

1.10. Research Methodology

Research methodology is a contextual framework for research that designs the whole study. The methodology of this study is Qualitative. Moreover, Qualitative research is highly detailed and descriptive (Neuman, 2014). Furthermore, descriptive methods provide coherence in learning about highlighting details to fill gaps in related topics. Similarly, a descriptive approach also helps explain the security challenges to Pakistan, and a more comprehensive understanding explores the role of Afghanistan (Timulak, 2013)).

1.10.1. Research Design

The study uses qualitative research methods; it applies the exploratory and predictive data analysis approach to examine security challenges to Pakistan from Afghanistan and the role of the Taliban's Government since 2021.

1.10.2. Data Collection

Data Collection is a process of collecting relevant data to find answers to the research question through different sources (Liamputtong, 2005). The nature of the study is based on primary and secondary data. This study collects primary data through Government bodies such as official documents from governmental institutions like the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Scholars and experts who have a deep study on Pakistan's security challenges from Afghanistan

since 2021 and what is the role of the Taliban Government in this regard. Secondary data from online sources, such as books, research publications, research articles, journal thesis, newspapers and news articles, online articles, and other internet sources.

1.10.3. Data Analysis

Once data is collected, the next step is to analyze it. Data analyses are vital in the research process as it progresses, improving and organizing the collected data. Data analysis helps to explore the pertinent information to reach meaningful outcomes. Moreover, this study applies constructivism theory to analyze the linkage between the TTP and the Afghan Taliban and the security challenges to Pakistan.

1.11. Organization of the Study

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter is composed of Research Objectives, Research Questions, Statement of the Problems, Research Gap, Research Methodology, Literature Review and Theoretical Framework.

Chapter 2: Security Impacts for Pakistan after the Taliban Takeover

This chapter discusses Pakistan's security challenges from Afghanistan under the Taliban government since 2021. It explores the TTP-Afghan Taliban relationship and its implications for Pakistan.

Chapter 3: A Bone of Contention between Pakistan and Afghanistan

This chapter explores the security challenges posed by the porous Pak-Afghan border, including cross-border attacks, militant movements, and refugee influx, and their implications on Pakistan's national security.

Chapter 4: Pakistan Efforts for the Counter-insurgency

This chapter examines Pakistan's countermeasure efforts against TTP on the Pak-Afghan border, assessing military operations, intelligence actions, and peace negotiations with TTP, including the first phase of 2021 and the second phase of 2022 of peace talks.

Chapter 5: Conclusion, Major Findings, Recommendations and References.

CHAPTER TWO

2. SECURITY IMPACTS FOR PAKISTAN AFTER THE TALIBAN TAKEOVER

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

Initially, there was hope that Pakistan could benefit from the Taliban government in Afghanistan. It was believed that establishing the Taliban government would promote regional economic activity between the two countries. Some thought it would increase trade between the two nations and improve security cooperation. But things have not worked out as expected (Mir, 2022) However, Pakistan faces security and economic consequences, which have also encouraged Pakistani militant groups that have been sheltering in Afghanistan to intensify their activities across Pakistan. Moreover, Pakistan faced severe security challenges in the aftermath of the re-emergence

of the Afghan Taliban. (Jan, 2023) These security challenges are majorly associated with militant organizations based in Afghanistan. These groups, including the TTP and the IS-KP, are posed as a major security threat to Pakistan.

2.1. The Re-Emergency of Militant Groups

After the takeover of the Taliban in Afghanistan, terrorist groups like TTP and IS-KP became active. Currently, these Militant groups have posed a major threat to Pakistan's security. Pakistan is now highly concerned about security in light of this return of militant activity. The current increase in violence shows that things are more complicated than first believed. In this regard, the TTP has been a major security challenge for Pakistan. Similarly, the resurgence of TTP in the post-August 2021 situation has significantly impacted Pakistan's security. However, after the Afghan Taliban took control of Kabul, the TTP became the first insurgent group to celebrate the victory publicly. The TTP said in a statement on August 17, 2021, that the Taliban's return to power was a significant success for the Islamic Jihadi mission. However, the Taliban takeover also immediately strengthened the power of the TTP through the release of hundreds of TTP members held by the US military and the former Afghan government. During these times, the TTP began armed activities. They used Afghanistan as a base to launch more and more militant attacks on security forces in particular and the Pakistani people in general. They expanded their influence inside Pakistan. Pakistan believed the United States withdrew its forces and the Taliban's return to power would reduce the potential threat to Pakistan from the TTP. After the Taliban took over Afghanistan, the TTP underwent four significant changes: mergers, centralized organizational structure, increased operational activities, and strengthening of media operations. Since the fall of Kabul, the TTP has absorbed 21 smaller militant groups and networks. The group's attacks have escalated dramatically, spreading from the tribal heartland into the country's major cities and

specifically targeting security forces. On the contrary, the comeback of the Afghan Taliban intensified the TTP threat to Pakistan (Sayed, 2023).

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

However, the TTP led modern weapons, including the upgraded M24 sniper rifle, the M4 carbine with Trijicon ACOG scope, and the M16A4 rifle with a thermal scope, making it even more lethal. The TTP obtained these weapons after the fall of the previous Afghanistan government; they received these weapons after residents looted the military bases (Sayed, 2023). According to SATP on September 8th, 2023, Pakistan's Foreign Office (FO) Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch expressed concern over the use of “advanced weapons” by terrorists operating in Afghanistan. She argued that these modern weapons had fallen into the wrong hands and urged the international community to take responsibility for the situation. The Foreign Office claimed that these weapons were being used to attack Pakistan and its security forces. On December 15, 2023, Pakistan urged a United Nations (UN) panel to investigate how TTP was acquiring modern weaponry to carry out terrorist attacks in the country. According to SATP statistics, 74 of the 929 deaths in the provinces

in 2023 were caused by ISKP. According to a United Nations (UN) report presented at the Security Council meeting in New York on 25 August 2023, the TTP and other factions linked to the Taliban and Al Qaeda are also supplying NATO-caliber weapons to ISKP (SATP, 2024).

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

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

2.2. Growing TTP threats

"Pakistan is facing multiple challenges as it struggles with a severe economic crisis that has led to hyperinflation and a political crisis described as "lastingly turbulent" One of these challenges

is the growing threat posed by Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), especially with the support of the Afghan Taliban” (Mir, 2023).

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

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

The re-emergence of TTP has raised significant concerns for Pakistan's security. On August 5, 2022, Liaqat Ali Khan, a member of the provincial assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, was attacked by unidentified militants in the adjacent Dir district, where he was severely injured. His

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

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

Moreover, Pakistan's counterterrorism strategy has come under criticism due to the Taliban's recent surge in the region (Naseer, 2016). In addition, a suicide bomb attack on a mosque inside a security compound in Peshawar killed at least 100 people, mainly police officers, and injured more than 225. However, the TTP claimed responsibility for the attack. The attack was

Pakistan's bloodiest in a decade and highlighted a surge in attacks by armed groups (Hussain, 2023).

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

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

2.3. ISKP; Emerging Extremism

The Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) is a militant organization in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The ideology of the ISKP has its roots in the significant ideology of ISIS in the Middle East, majorly in Iraq and Syria. It has the beliefs of Salafi-jihadist ideas and acknowledges Takfirist teachings, which seek to create a worldwide caliphate ruled by its interpretation of Islamic law

(Ali, 2020). ISKP aims to build its version of the caliphate in the Khorasan region, which historically covered parts of modern-day Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Central Asia, and, to some extent, India. (Beckmann, 2024). To further their objectives, they utilize terrible methods, including suicide bombs, assassinations, and mass murder. Their behaviour is characterized by violence, intolerance for human life, and targeted attacks on places of worship, political rallies, and even Pak-China infrastructure projects could be targeted. However, governments and Muslim academics worldwide have strongly condemned their ideologies and actions. (Beradze, 2022).

The ISKP has strengthened its roots in the various areas of both Pakistan and Afghanistan (Sikandar, 2023). The ISKP is a majorly distinct group from both the TTP and the Afghan Taliban. Unlike the TTP, ISKP tends to implement its version of the caliphate and has refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Taliban caliphate (Khan, 2019). Since the Taliban took power in 2021, the security situation in Afghanistan has changed dramatically. Attacks by ISKP increased in the month after the Taliban took control in Afghanistan. The ISKP launched more attacks than ever. The Afghanistan Taliban have taken severe actions against ISKP and consider it as an existential threat to its Islamic Emirate.

However, ISKP views the Taliban as an enemy because of ideological differences and because of the competing nature of their goals in Afghanistan. However, establishing territorial control is costly. ISKP lacks the economic resources and manpower to monitor the population and enforce the law. Furthermore, due to its operational success, it has become a prime target for airstrikes organized by the Afghan Army and the U.S. Air Force aimed at driving ISIS out of its regional safe haven. Therefore, the Afghan Taliban keeps strong ties with the TTP to avoid any possible collaboration between the TTP and ISKP and keep the latter completely isolated. Such ties

between the TTP and Afghan Taliban become further stronger in addition to their strong ideological, cultural, and ethnic connections, which have been discussed above (Raza, 2023).

2.4. TTP and Afghan Taliban Nexus

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

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

TTP's attacks across the border have increased over the past two years. According to a report, an increase of 79 per cent in such attacks occurred in the year 2023 (Manisha, 2023), and these attacks also continued in early 2024. Similarly, in 2023, on the Chaman and Torkham border with Afghanistan, Pakistan came across several significant events in terms of cross-border firings and clashes. Further, terrorists attacked the Chitral region of Pakistan from Afghanistan (Siddique, 2023). These are serious security challenges that Pakistan is facing in the aftermath of the Taliban's control of Kabul in August 2021. Moreover, Pakistan experienced a surge in terrorist attacks in 2023 by the leading terrorist group TTP, (Hussain, 2023). Apart from these cases, Pakistan faces constant security threats from the border, which is badly impacting bilateral ties (Shahid, 2023).

Pakistan political and security authorities believe that Afghanistan's Taliban are supporting anti-Pakistan groups, which raises security worries. Pakistani officials said that the Taliban-led

Afghan government is giving the TTP safe havens. (Iqbal, 2023). As neighbouring states, Pakistan and Afghanistan depend heavily on one another in several areas, most notably the economy and security. However, such dependency is greatly disturbing due to the recent developments discussed above.

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

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

Similarly, Pakistan's security is closely linked to lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan. The country is concerned about securing its borders with Afghanistan to prevent militants from crossing. The Pakistani security establishment is concerned about the Afghan Taliban gaining full power, fearing that this would strengthen the TTP and lead to an increase in armed activities in

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

More recently, on 18 March 2024, Pakistan launched another airstrike inside Afghanistan due to the terrorist strike that killed several Pakistani soldiers in North Waziristan, which was associated with the TTP. This airstrike between the two countries has demonstrated deeper tensions. Pakistan considered it as a right of defence as, according to it, it has not left with any other option with regards to TTP presence on Afghan soil. Afghanistan rejects Pakistan's stance by claiming that civilians were killed in the strikes (Staff, 2024). Moreover, Afghanistan's security and long-term peace and stability are closely linked. To stop terrorists from entering, the country is worried about securing its borders with Afghanistan. Because of their organizational and ideological linkages, the Pakistani security establishment fears that if the Afghan Taliban gains complete control, it will fortify the TTP and encourage further armed activity in Pakistan.

As mentioned earlier, Pakistan and Afghanistan depend heavily on one another in several areas, most notably the economy and security. Despite their mutual reliance on each other in

economic and security matters, Pakistan and Afghanistan's relationship is marked by inconsistent policies, largely due to the strong ties between the TTP and the Afghan Taliban. Pakistan consistently voices its concerns to the Afghan government regarding the presence of terrorist groups, including TTP, on Afghan soil, which is used to launch attacks on Pakistan, posing a serious threat to Pakistan's security.

2.4.1. Common History and Ideology

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

their operations, particularly in fields where their goals coincide. However, the TTP and the Afghan Taliban share a close relationship (Hussain, 2023).

2.4.2. Religious Views and Pashtun Identity

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

Apart from ideological and spiritual factors, the majority of Afghan Taliban and TTP share the same ethnicity. As mentioned, most of them belong to the Pashtun ethnicity, which brings them closer together. The reason behind sheltering the Afghan Taliban in the war on terror is because of the same ethnic identity as well as ideological grounds. It is the reason for showing honor and brotherhood; that made the TTP assist the Afghan Taliban remarkably in the war against the US. Thus, in return, the Afghan Taliban are also showing their loyalty and proof of mutual coordination

by not expelling them from the soil of Afghanistan. The TTP has always had the full support of the Afghan Taliban, especially when they started occupying areas. TTP chief Noor Wali Mehsud said in an interview in late July 2021 that the group would continue its fight against Pakistani security forces to control border territories and establish independence. He said his group has close ties with the Afghan Taliban and hopes to benefit from the Taliban's success in Pakistan (PIPS, 2023).

“Pashtunwali, the Pashtun code of honour, is highly valued by the TTP and the Afghan Taliban. As fundamental Pashtun values, it highlights hospitality, fidelity to family, and even retaliation, called “Badal” in Pashto (Zahid, 2022).

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

Conclusion

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

Theoretically, this whole situation can be best explained through the lenses of constructivism. The core principles of constructivism highlight the role of identities, history, common grounds, ideas, and past experiences in shaping the relations among states. These factors can go either way, such as influencing the bilateral ties in both positive and negative ways. The recent challenging and uncertain security situation between Pakistan and Afghanistan is a classic example. Past bitter events, historical border issues, and territorial conflicts have always deeply impacted bilateral ties. Such factors never allow both states to enjoy fruitful ties despite having

plenty of potential to do so. More importantly, specific identities, shared ideas, and common objectives influence actors to act in particular ways. These can lead to both cooperation and confrontation. In the case of TTP and Afghan Taliban, it has led to deep understanding, long-lasting ties, and cooperation, which has ultimately impacted the bilateral relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan, especially in terms of security. Such security implications deeply impact other sectors of state affairs such as the economy and social aspects etc.

CHAPTER THREE

3. A BONE OF CONTENTION BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN

The Durand Line remains a bone of contention between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Durand Line was drawn by British India in 1893. Afghanistan does not officially recognize the border, and from time to time, there are incidents of constant violence and tensions about this line. A 2240 km long common border makes these two nations neighbors. The current government of Afghanistan has a soft corner for militant groups such as the TTP, which further worsens the security and stability situations in the Border area. Although Pakistan and Afghanistan share the same geography, race, and religion and have strong historical and cultural relationships, the relations with Afghanistan have never been easy. Pakistan constantly faces security challenges because of the hostile attitude of Afghanistan's authorities from time to time.

A series of terrorist attacks on Pakistan from Afghanistan immediately serves as an example of the existing problems. The instability of the Pakistan-Afghanistan boundary and the conflict on the Durand Line are long-lived challenges that have caused years of instability in the area. The boundary is inflexible and unclear, making moving people, supplies, and militants easy. It is claimed that the line separates Pashtun tribal lands unjustly, and some Pashtun people are in Afghanistan and others in Pakistan. This partition is contrary to the idea of cultural and ethnic unity. Due to this, Afghanistan lays claim to the Pashtun areas on the Pakistani side, which include the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) as well as some areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province (Berg, 2020). However, the historic boundary conflict has been a significant tension point for many years, and insecurity in the region has ultimately led to poor relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The contention between Pakistan and Afghanistan is based upon the division of

Pashtun tribal lands that resulted in the claims of sovereignty over some territories by both countries. It has also resulted in cross-border movements and is particularly common in places with large Pashtun populations.

3.1. The Porous Pak-Afghan Border

The porous Pak-Afghan border remains a central point of dispute between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The history between Pakistan and Afghanistan is pretty much complicated due to this disputed border line whose legitimacy is denied by Afghanistan. Historically, the British colonial rulers drew the Durand Line in the late 19th century despite local ethnic and tribal realities. It broke up Pashtun tribes and territories, a concern that lives on today. The border splits Pashtun communities, which have historical links and cultural associations, which are more than national borders. Most Pashtuns in both parts of the border do not accept it as legitimate and want to preserve their independence and traditional lifestyle. The fact that Afghanistan does not recognize the line instead highlights its desire to recover what it regards as lost territory and even declare sovereignty over the Pashtun-majority regions in Pakistan. Pakistan and Afghanistan share strategic interests in the border region. The porous characteristics of the border also allow the cross-border movement of militants and insurgents, thus aggravating the security challenges to Pakistan (Baqai, 2021).

Furthermore, in 2017, Pakistan initiated the construction of a fence along its long border with Afghanistan to strengthen its security. The decision comes amid growing concerns about attacks on Pakistani soil by the TTP and other militant groups based in Afghanistan for several years. Pakistan has been suffering from these attacks, creating a dangerous security situation on the border. The fence is intended to be a physical barrier to these militant groups and, in the process, improve Pakistan's security position in the region. Pakistan hoped that the fence would be a comprehensive solution and suggested that it was intended to prevent cross-border terrorist attacks

physically. Moreover, it could regularly control the flow of refugees into Pakistan. Finally, Pakistan thought that the fence would block smuggling routes used by terrorists to import weapons and drugs; if implemented, these proposed benefits would significantly enhance Pakistan's security prospects (Basit, 2021). Unfortunately, due to ideological ties between the Afghan Taliban and the TTP, the effectiveness of the fence has been significantly reduced. The Afghan Taliban also looks the other way and actively supports TTP fighters across the border (Gannon, 2022).

The Afghan Taliban have disrupted the fencing work and consider it illegal, while Pakistan finds it essential for security and regulating trade. This has led to a confrontation in which the TTP may exploit the situation. Although the fence is 94% complete, the issue remains unresolved due to the long-standing dispute over the Durand Line. Afghan Defense Ministry spokesman Enayatullah Khwarizmi declared the fence illegal. At the same time, Pakistan's ISPR director general, Major General Babar Iftkhar, said the fence would be completed and would remain in place, citing sacrifices made by the martyrs of Pakistan. He further said the border fence was intended to regulate trade and protect civilians on both sides (Fazl-e-Haider, 2022).

Furthermore, given the Taliban's support for the TTP, the fence is no longer a security barrier but an actual manifestation of deeper political conflicts. Taliban support for the TTP has reduced the role of the fence. Instead of preventing TTP militants from crossing the border, the Taliban have disregarded them and even helped them. This safe haven in Afghanistan makes the fence no longer an obstacle to TTP and other terrorist groups. As a result of such strong bonding between the TTP and Afghan Taliban, most recently the TTP has emerged as a more prominent security threat to the Pakistani state (Jazeera, 2022).

In this regard, since 2021, the TTP continued launching border attacks into Pakistan from their bases in Afghanistan. Such attacks targeted security forces, state officers and civilians. In

response to these attacks, the Pakistani army intensified its operations in the border areas between Afghanistan and Pakistan in an attempt to stop and target TTP fighters. Meanwhile, the Pakistani government and the TTP were trying to reach a ceasefire (Sayed, 2022). These agreements did not last long, as each party constantly accuses each other of violating the terms of the talks. During this period, several individuals in the leadership of the TTP changed after the few influential figures of the outlawed movement were killed. Pakistan has constantly urged Afghanistan to take action against TTP sanctuaries on its soil, but obstacles inside Afghanistan and the presence of other armed groups have troubled the Afghan attempts. The overall situations arising from the mentioned developments have badly impacted the lives of ordinary people in Pakistan, especially in the border area (Hussain, 2022).

In the same way, the Afghan Taliban and TTP share a long history that makes a complete separation challenging. Pashtun nationalism and a fundamentalist view of Islam are the foundations of both groups. The TTP received invaluable support from the Afghan Taliban, which provided sanctuaries for them. Moreover, some of the TTP leaders have family connections with the Afghan Taliban (Taylor, 2024). However, the Afghan Taliban may not openly support TTP strikes. Still, the relationship between them and their ideological and personal ties make it difficult to crack down on the group operating from Afghan soil. This complex web of relationships poses a major obstacle to preventing cross-border attacks and promoting Pak-Afghan border stability.

3.1.1. Cross-Border Attacks

The period from 2021 to 2024 saw the continuation of the ongoing conflict between the TTP and Pakistan, characterized by cross-border attacks, military operations, ceasefire attempts, and diplomatic efforts to address the root causes. The TTP has grown considerably more potent and increased its attacks significantly after the Taliban took control of Afghanistan in August 2021.

Since the Taliban took control of Afghanistan in August 2021, terrorist activities in Pakistan have increased significantly. Pakistan faces a surge in attacks by terrorist groups, including the TTP. On February 6, 2022, the TTP attacked the Kurram district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, killing five Pakistani soldiers (Hussain, 2022). On January 18, 2022, the Pakistani Taliban allegedly attacked police personnel in Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan. Since the Afghan Taliban took power in August 2021, terrorist attacks in Pakistan have increased significantly, from 267 in 2021 to 365 in 2022 (SATP, 2024)

According to a Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) report in 2022, 34 Pakistani civilians, including 20 security officials, were killed in 13 attacks on the Pak-Afghan border. Nine attack clashes took place in the North Waziristan and Kurram border areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, while four attacks clashes took place in the Chaman border area of Balochistan. Furthermore, in April 2022, terrorists from Afghanistan opened fire on Pakistani troops in North Waziristan province, killing three Pakistan Army soldiers and injuring four others. The attack triggered a strong response from the Pakistani government and security agencies. Meanwhile, According to some sources, Afghan officials stated that the death toll has risen to 47 after Pakistan's military strikes in Kunar and Khost provinces in eastern Afghanistan (PIPS, 2023).

However, TTP Commanders and troops are sheltered by the Afghan Taliban. As a result, the TTP has been able to utilize Afghanistan as a base to coordinate and strengthen the attacks in Pakistan. Even though the Taliban offered to negotiate with the Pakistani government, the TTP has not been forced from the Afghanistan Taliban. However, after the lack of progress in negotiations, the TTP started Operation Al-Badr in April 2022, a massive offensive with a record of fifty-four attacks in a single month, as a result of which security personnel, including civilians were killed (Sayed, 2023).

Terrorist attacks recorded that have taken place compared to the years of 2020 and 2021. According to the Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies PIPS, there were 207 recorded terrorist attacks including 5 blasts in 2021, this figure was 42% higher than that of 2020. Unfortunately, 335 Pakistani people died due to such attacks in 2021. The TTP was the lead organization in 87 attacks, an 84% increase from 2020. In November 2021, more than 283 attacks were claimed by TTP against Pakistani security officers. The primary issue to the national security in Pakistan is that the TTP targeting government employees in the western border regions. Almost one hundred and twenty-eight attacks with 236 death toll and 278 wounded are attributed to TTP, IS-KP, and local Taliban groups (PIPS, 2021). Similarly, according to another report by the Pakistan Institute of Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS), since August 2021, ISKP has claimed responsibility for more than 30 attacks on Pakistani soil, resulting in the deaths of more than 100 security officials and civilians (PICSS, 2022) . Another PICSS 2023 report stated that in 2023, ISKP launched 41 attacks in Pakistan. The attack injured 129 people, including 20 security personnel and 109 civilians, and killed 105 people, including 27 security personnel, 78 civilians, and two militants from rival groups (PICSS, 2023). However, Pakistan accused the Afghan fighters of backing TTP-led attacks on Pakistani targets. As border management concerns were renewed, Pakistan insisted that Afghanistan should prevent terrorist activities that come from Afghan soil. Another Pakistan security report released by PIPS on 4 January 2023 also pointed out that banned organizations including TTP, and IS-KP among others were accountable for over 82% of loss of life due to terrorism and 78% of terrorist attacks in Pakistan. The report held responsible for the increase in violence to some extent on Afghanistan's non-observance of the Doha agreement, making it possible for TTP to function from there (PIPS, 2023).

On the other hand, on 30th July 2023, the ISKP conducted its most violent attacks aimed at the political rally in Bajaur, targeting those who participated in a rally for the religious political party Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam-F (JUJIF). A tribal area situated near the Afghanistan border, leaving over 60 people dead (Palmer, 2023). In addition, ISKP was behind a major blast in Mastung City, Balochistan in September 2023, which resulted in the death of over 50 people. On the other side, the car bomb attack on 12 December 2023, caused the death of at least 23 soldiers and around 34 other people were injured. The Dera Ismail Khan district is in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, which shares the border with Afghanistan. The attack was carried out by the little-known militant group Tehreek-e-Jihad Pakistan (TJP) connected to TTP (Hussain, 2023). On 4 November 2023 an attack on the Mianwali Air Force Base occurred as another assault was carried out against the same Air Force base similarly many violent incidents took place in the country TJP claimed responsibility for the attack but Pakistani forces stopped the attack and killed nine attackers (Sharma, 2023).

A report by the Centre for Research and Security Studies highlighted that in 2023 Pakistan saw 1,524 fatalities and 1,463 injuries from 789 terror attacks and counter-terror operations in 2023, marking a six-year high. KP and Balochistan were the most affected regions, accounting for over 90 percent of fatalities and 84 percent of all attacks (Junaidi, 2024). According to the South Asian Terrorism Portal (SATP), the number of terrorism-related incidents in Pakistan for 2023 was significantly higher than in 2022. This suggests a substantial increase in terrorist activity till 2024 (SATP, 2024).

Similarly, these terror attacks in Pakistan remained high during the first quarter of 2024. There were 245 incidents in the form of attacks and counter-terror operations resulting in 432 deaths and 370 injuries, including among civilians, security personnel, and militants. In the wake

of the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan, both TTP and ISKP launched more attacks, TTP has been using Afghan soil as a base from where they planned and launched attacks in Pakistan. The TTP has not shown much motivation to honor the agreement or respect the cease-fire, even as there have been several ceasefires and peace talks until the Taliban pushes them or pressurizes them.

Pakistan has warned the Afghan Taliban to take action against its terror group or face consequences after a series of cross-border terror attacks. In response to Pakistan's strong message, the Taliban decided to convince the illegal TTP and its affiliated groups to move from the border areas to other parts of Afghanistan. The strongly worded statement claimed that terrorists were using Afghan territory with impunity and urged the Afghan Taliban to take strict measures against them. When the Taliban regain control, Pakistan hopes the new government will deal with the terrorist groups. Despite those pledges, officials say the Taliban have yet to take serious steps to fulfill them (Yousef, 2022).

3.1.2. Cross-Border Movement

The current border problems between Pakistan and Afghanistan have resulted in significant changes in cross-border movements and regional stability. Both countries accuse each other of helping insurgent groups and allowing the attacks to be mounted from across the border. The situation has heightened tensions, leading to an increased military presence and intermittent clashes near the border. The developments have also affected trade, aid, and people's movements, resulting in economic suffering and humanitarian crises in border communities (Berg, 2020). Consequently, it is crucial to strengthen border management, bilateral dialogue, and regional cooperation to address the underlying problems that cause the conflict and prevent increased tension. In addition, these border problems have significantly impacted the more prominent regional security dynamics

and thus have concerned the attention of neighboring nations and international actors. The prevailing state of instability along the Pak-Afghan border has brought about fears of the spread of violence into the nearby areas and possible further destabilization.

Moreover, the TTP is taking advantage of Afghan territory as a sanctuary in the process of conducting its operations and possibly destabilizing the border regions. However the TTP may not pose a direct threat to Afghan internal security, their activities and existence may have wider regional destabilizing consequences. Although the TTP does not represent a direct threat to the national security of Afghanistan, it weakens the relationships of the country with Pakistan. The primary concern of the TTP is the insurgency in Pakistan. Nevertheless, TTP's presence in Afghanistan and sometimes cross-border attacks into Pakistan have increased the tension between the countries. Some of these tensions were the source of mistrust and occasional border skirmishes between both countries (PIPS, 2023).

Border tensions led to a worsening of the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan to this policy change has resulted in a severe impact on Pashtun communities residing on both sides, disturbing their traditional way of life and trade. The Chaman crossing-in-line protests emphasize the hardships persuaded (Karzai, 2024). Pakistan justifies the action as a step that is aimed at improving security by cutting down on illegal activities like smuggling and the movement of militants. Still, its application has posed great challenges for many who depend on easy cross-border movements for work, family visits, or trade. Both countries face the difficult task of reconciling security concerns with the needs of affected communities to restore stability and facilitate mutually beneficial relations.

3.2. Refugees' Challenges and Implications

The Taliban rule in Afghanistan has created additional security threats for Pakistan that require more restricted policies related to Afghan refugees. One of the largest host countries for Afghan refugees has been Pakistan, which has received and accommodated millions of Afghan refugees over the years. Worries were focused on possible militant spillover, whereby insurgents would easily move across the porous border into Pakistan, hence becoming a threat to their internal stability and territorial integrity. There were also concerns about refugee radicalization about the Taliban's resurgence, which was likely to affect Afghan refugee communities in Pakistan. Besides these security problems, Pakistan had to take more complicated steps, which include repatriation, to control the situation and protect its security interests. Pakistan's decision to expel 1.7 million undocumented Afghan refugees has led to tension between Pakistan and Afghanistan (Mir, 2023). On the other hand, Taliban Defense Minister Mohammad Yaqoob stated in a ceremony in Kabul that we condemn Pakistan's decision to expel Afghan refugees it's unjust and inhumane hence, it further increased tension between the two countries. Critics say illegal immigration needs to be addressed, but have also raised questions about whether it will help Pakistan address its growing terrorism problem (Gul, 2023).

Moreover, the security concern of Pakistan is due to the large number of Afghan refugees in Pakistan. One problem is that terrorists come from Afghanistan since the border is not well protected. Moreover, some refugees engage in criminal activities like smuggling or selling drugs which makes things less secure. Sometimes, clashes between different groups in Pakistan also reduce the number of refugees, who cause them to get worse, as these people fight for jobs, resources, etc. The high number of refugees also strains the resources of Pakistan such as hospitals and schools etc. Similarly, the border is difficult to control with so many people coming in; hence,

the likelihood of bad things occurring increases. Besides, TTP's continuous attacks on Pakistan have profound security implications for the two countries and their relationship. The Pakistan-TTP talks broke down even with mediation from the Afghan Taliban, which reflects the difficulties in resolving the TTP issue through negotiations (Bashir, 2023). These attacks have also resulted in the change of policies from Pakistan that affected the Afghan immigrants living in Pakistan. These developments show that the region is volatile and that the security threats must be mitigated for both countries to have peace and stability.

3.2.1. First Phase

The first phase of the return of Afghan refugees from Pakistan to their homeland of Afghanistan began on November 1, 2023, and intensified in September with "illegal" Afghan refugees. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in the first stage of the refugee return process from Pakistan to Afghanistan, 520,000 Afghan refugees returned to Afghanistan by 13th January 2024 and 500,000 Afghans were deported by the Pakistani government. The first phase of the return of Afghan refugees was started by Pakistan mainly as an attempt to deal with the problem of undocumented migrants living in their land (Nazari, 2024). The government intended to control migration by checking and implementing the existing laws about residency and citizenship (Kugelman, 2023).

Nevertheless, sending back Afghan refugees from Pakistan has strained the relationship between the two countries. On the other hand, Afghanistan condemned Pakistan for this policy, stating that the safety of returning refugees is under threat under Afghanistan's current unstable conditions. Though such a step has raised another flame in their relationship, it is only one dimension of the complicated and multifaceted dynamics between Pakistan and Afghanistan, which include political, security, and economic factors regarding refugee repatriation.

3.2.2. Second Phase

The second phase of sending home Afghan refugees in Pakistan targets the Afghan Citizen Cards (ACC) holders. The Pakistani government claims that millions of Afghans have no proper documents, but the experts believe that the figure is too high. Through now, about five hundred thousand have returned. However, the number of Afghan citizens with the correct papers left in Pakistan and whether they are leaving voluntarily is still controversial, and this phase is likely to be aimed at the further regulation of migration, targeting people with some official documents. By giving preference to ACC holders, Pakistan seeks to deal with the issues of illegal migration without closing its border and possibly solving the security challenge (Azadi, 2024). Moreover, this phase can be included in the broader policy of Pakistan aimed at controlling its refugee population and compliance with immigration laws. Nevertheless, some issues have been brought up regarding this stage of Afghan refugees' rights and welfare, safety, and reintegration upon going back to Afghanistan. The first repatriation effort was condemned for being done too quickly and inconsiderate creating a crack between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The previous repatriation drive was characterized by urgency and insensitivity that damaged Pak-Afghan relations and resulted in humanitarian issues. On 17th March, 2024, the Interior Minister of Pakistan ordered Punjab to initiate the process, and on 15th April 2024 the deportations of 850,000 Afghan Citizen Cards (ACC) were implemented (Nazari, 2024).

3.3. Refugee a Security Challenge

Security impacts of large refugee populations on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border are terrorism, cross-border crime, radicalization, extremism, and border security challenges. Terrorists can use refugee movements for hiding, criminals can take advantage of refugees for drug trafficking, and the probability of radicalization, and extremism in the vulnerable refugee

population is increased (Jafri, 2022). Pakistan's expulsion of Afghan immigrants is aimed at putting pressure on the Taliban government to stop terrorist attacks and cross-border violence, which it blames on Afghan immigrants. A large refugee population may encourage transnational criminal activities such as weapons, drugs, and human trafficking, causing instability and insecurity in both countries. The presence of refugee communities along the Pak-Afghan border has historically fueled cross-border criminal activity and exaggerated regional peace and security concerns (Aamir, 2023).

Moreover, Afghanistan is one of the world's leading producers of opium and the porous border between Afghanistan and Pakistan provides an ideal trade route. This is based on the fact that such kind of cross-border drug smuggling not only attacks the fight against drug trafficking but also makes Pakistan and Afghanistan continually unstable with violence, insecurity, and conflict. Refugee populations located at the Pakistan-Afghanistan border have been a source of cross-border criminal activities that have been making the security situation even worse in the area (Jafri, 2022). One major illustration is drug trafficking and most especially opiates heroin and opium. Afghanistan is one of the world's largest opium producers, and the cross-border between Afghanistan and Pakistan is an ideal corridor for drug trafficking. The criminal networks target their concern by either using them as couriers or using the refugee camps to launch drug shipments (Bashir, 2023). Meanwhile, the volume of refugees crossing is too high; as a result, security forces cannot carry out proper checks. Criminals or extremists utilize this freedom to sneak out. The inflow of refugees further strains the border infrastructure and resources, leaving the security forces to focus on preventing crime and security gaps.

Conclusion

In conclusion, from 2021 to 2024, TTP an insurgent continued attacks against the Pakistani government, in response Pakistan military carried out counter-insurgency operations in the tribal areas bordering Afghanistan. However, relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan are still strained due to allegations of insufficient measures against safe havens of the TTP in Afghan territory. Addressing these security concerns requires a comprehensive strategy that includes effective border management, provision of humanitarian assistance, social and economic assistance, and cooperation between governments. However, to deal with groups like IS-KP, joint efforts between Pakistan and Afghanistan are necessary to address the root causes of militancy and prevent the growth of their power. However, Joint efforts between Pakistan and Afghanistan are crucial to addressing the root causes of militancy, safeguarding stability in both countries, and protecting the well-being of refugees and host communities.

Social constructivism can best explain the ongoing obstacles in relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Social constructivism greatly emphasizes the role of social norms, ideological thoughts, historical background, and cultural customs in shaping the behaviors of actors in international politics. The same goes for the irregular relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The controversial status of the Durand line and its history greatly impact bilateral ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Similarly, political discourse and historical claims regarding the borderline in both countries have a strong influence on the behavior of both countries. Apart from this, social and cultural ties, ethnic identity, and common social bonding in various sub-nationals on both sides significantly impact the overall situation. Last but not least, the TTP and Afghan Taliban have strong religious, cultural, social, organizational, ideological, and ethnic ties that are mentioned in the above paragraphs in detail. Nevertheless, the TTP and Afghan Taliban are

essential actors in the whole situation; in which the latter is currently ruling Afghanistan. The factors mentioned above have a vital role in shaping the overall situation of the region, according to social constructivism. More importantly, as a result of such discussed factors, the bilateral relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan are constantly impacted; resulting in non-uniformity and regular uncertainty.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. PAKISTAN EFFORTS FOR THE COUNTER-INSURGENCY

The security environment in Pakistan has drastically changed after the Taliban took control of Afghanistan in August 2021 post-US withdrawal. The Taliban's takeover of Kabul and the ouster of President Ashraf Ghani were historic events. Pakistan expects the Taliban to fulfill its commitments, especially the Doha Agreement's anti-terrorism guarantees to the international community, including taking action against other terrorist groups such as the TTP and IS-KP but they have failed to do so. The Taliban's presence in Afghanistan has had an impact on all neighboring countries, but Pakistan has been hit severely.

However, both Pakistan and Afghanistan face complex and long-standing issues of historical things, ethnic tensions, and geopolitical dynamics. The borders created by colonial powers were themselves a source of instability, as they divided Pashtun communities and created a porous area for militants to utilize the region. Furthermore, TTP increase in this environment, launching attacks and pursuing safe haven across borders. Besides, weak governance, poverty, and lack of development in these border areas provide fertile ground for extremism, driving people toward militant groups. Finding lasting solutions requires a multifaceted approach that addresses poor governance, promotes development, promotes national reconciliation, and encourages regional cooperation. Unfortunately, achieving this goal is difficult due to deep-seated grievances.

One can notice how these issues influence Pakistan current spike in violence by looking into the causes of these issues. As mentioned earlier Long-standing difficulties have existed in the relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Unfortunately, disagreements have existed long despite their shared history and culture. Pakistan's border with Afghanistan is now less secure as a result of the Afghan Taliban government. Furthermore, after the Taliban took control in

Afghanistan the TTP that were previously operating in Afghanistan under pressure felt more confident. The TTP feels more liberated to commit attacks across the border now that a potentially more friendly government is in place. This is because the TTP has deep-rooted relations with the Afghan Taliban which are currently in the driving seat of Afghanistan which allows the former free hand to settle in the areas across the border. On the other side, Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan ISKP attacks on Pakistan are also intensified.

5.1. Counter-Measures

After 9/11, the waves of terrorism and extremism badly impacted Pakistan as well. Various terrorist groups became active in the tribal areas of Pakistan. They not only challenged the writ of the Pakistani authorities but sheltered fighters of the Al-Qaeda; that ultimately challenged the US. Among such groups, the major one was the TTP. From 2007 to 2014, Pakistan launched several powerful military operations against the TTP, in various areas of the country such as tribal areas and the Swat district of KP province. As a result of such military operations, the network of the outlawed militant organization was dismantled to a large extent and their remaining leadership fled to Afghanistan. During their stay in Afghanistan, these militants continued their agenda against their adversary that is Pakistan. However, as a result of the emergence of the Afghan Taliban as the ruler of Afghanistan, the TTP militants gained huge ground and support, thus their activities against Pakistan massively increased.

Pakistan has taken several countermeasures against the TTP from 2021 to 2024. Pakistan's diplomatic efforts to pressure Afghanistan to take action against TTP is one of the major ones in this regard. Similarly, Pakistan enhanced border security measures and conducted intelligence-based operations to target TTP and prevent cross-border militant movements. More importantly, Pakistan initiated peace talks with the TTP in 2021, which resulted in a brief ceasefire but

ultimately failed. The Afghan Taliban always demanded such peace talks; thus, it mediated and facilitated such peace talks between the outlawed TTP and the Pakistani state.

In diplomatic efforts to pressure Afghanistan to take action against TTP. Pakistan has sent several delegations to Afghanistan to pressure the Taliban to take action against the TTP. However, instead of actions, the Taliban has always suggested that Pakistan should negotiate a peace deal with the TTP. The situation remains complex, with the TTP continuing to carry out attacks in Pakistan and Pakistan's military and civilian leaders trying to find a solution to the problem. Pakistan has also used back channels to pressure the Afghan Taliban to take action against the TTP. Pakistan has been pressuring the Afghan Taliban to either restrict the TTP or force out them from Afghanistan. Still, the Afghan Taliban is always reluctant to initiate vital steps against the militant group. The Afghan Taliban has also denied the TTP presence in Afghanistan. The situation remains complex, with the TTP continuing to carry out attacks in Pakistan and Pakistan's military and civilian leaders trying to find a solution to the problem. The constant denial policy of the Afghan Government further worsens the situation; which ultimately costs the bilateral ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan negatively (Mir, 2022).

The first high-level delegation took place on October 21, 2021. The former Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Shah Mahmood Qureshi, visited Kabul for a day. During the visit, he held talks with Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi and other leaders of the interim Afghan government. The discussions covered the full range of bilateral relations, focusing on enhancing cooperation in various areas. Qureshi also presented Pakistan's views on regional peace and stability (MOFA, 2021).

In 2022 a high-level delegation led by Hina Rabbani Khar visited Kabul, to strengthen relations between the two countries and express support for the Afghan people. The visit aims to

enhance bilateral relations and assist the Afghan people. Senior Afghan officials met with Khaar and discussed various issues, including trade, investment, and regional security. The main focus of this visit is the TTP issue, calling on the Afghan government to take proactive measures in this field. The visit is crucial in strengthening relations between the two countries (Tahir, K.2023).

In 2023, another high-level delegation from Pakistan, led by Defense Minister Khawaja Asif, traveled to Kabul. Senior members of Afghanistan's interim government met and discussed the growing threat of terrorism in the region, particularly from the TTP and the IS-KP. Both sides commit to working together to address the terrorist threat posed by different groups and individuals. (MOFA, 2023).

Moreover, the Pakistani military leadership hoped that the Afghan Taliban would take measures to prevent the TTP from attacking Pakistan. Despite this, the army continued to work on fencing the border and responded calmly to border disputes, stressing that the function of borders is to protect people, not divide them. The military also noted the importance of resolving local issues and fake news to bring peace, claiming to agree with the Afghan government. However, after a deadly cross-border incident in April 2022, the military launched an operation against TTP militants in the border areas, specifically targeting their hideouts in Afghanistan's Khost and Kunar provinces (PIPS, 2023).

Furthermore, Pakistan's security forces conducted intelligence-based operations to target TTP hideouts and commanders. Intelligence-based operations aim to degrade the capabilities of insurgent groups, disrupt their networks, and restore government control over contested areas. These operations may involve targeted strikes, counterinsurgency campaigns, and efforts to secure the border to prevent the movement of militants and weapons.

Tensions between Pakistan and the Afghan Taliban escalated after Pakistan's air strikes on April 16, 2022, in Afghanistan's Khost and Kunar provinces, targeting alleged TTP militants in response to TTP attacks inside Pakistan. Afghan officials reported civilian casualties, while Pakistan mentioned it targeted militants. The Taliban condemned the strikes as aggression and warned of potential consequences. The root cause of the tensions is the Afghan Taliban's reluctance to crack down on the TTP, which has intensified its insurgency against Pakistan from bases in Afghanistan (Al.Jazeera). Such reluctance of the Afghan Taliban regarding the TTP is mentioned in the previous chapters in detail. Efforts to mediate peace talks between Islamabad and the TTP have failed, leading to increased cross-border attacks.

Similarly, on March 18, 2024, the Pakistan military conducted an intelligence-based operation against the Hafiz Gul Bahadur Group, killing six militants. This group active since being expelled during Operation Zarb-e-Azb in 2014, intensified attacks after the TTP ended a ceasefire in November 2022. The operation highlights ongoing security challenges and follows recent attacks on Pakistani soldiers, prompting retaliation. Pakistan has repeatedly raised concerns with Afghanistan over terrorist groups operating from its soil but received no satisfactory response. The Afghan Taliban government denies Pakistan's allegations and condemns the airstrikes, leading to diplomatic tensions. Cross-border clashes have resulted in casualties, with Pakistan claiming the elimination of terrorists in North Waziristan. From time to time, Pakistan conducts intelligence-based operations against such militant groups in the various tribal areas near the border as well, which can be considered as counter-insurgency measures by the state (Momand, 2024).

To combat terrorism globally Pakistan has strongly cooperated with international organizations and forces. Pakistan and the United States held bilateral talks to explore global political conditions, counterterrorism initiatives, and ways to deal with the evolving threats of

extremism and terrorism. The purpose of these interactions is to enhance cooperation and bringing together to eliminate terrorism around the world (PICSS, 2023). The US and Pakistan have agreed to increase cooperation in combating terrorist groups like the TTP ISKP following a surge in terrorism in Pakistan. In a joint statement, they pledged to enhance communication, capacity building, and border security to counter transnational terrorism threats (Gul, 2024).

However, in the past Pakistan has implemented various counter-insurgency measures to combat terrorist groups operating in the country. These efforts include military operations, such as Zarb-e-Azb and Radd-ul-Fasaad, aimed at dismantling terrorist networks and restoring state control in tribal areas. Additionally, Pakistan has established a National Action Plan (NAP) to counter terrorism, which includes measures to strengthen intelligence sharing, enhance border security, and prosecute terrorist financiers. Furthermore, Pakistan has also launched initiatives to counter online extremism and radicalization and to promote the de-radicalization and reintegration of former militants. These efforts aim to ensure national security and stability in the face of ongoing terrorist threats.

Similarly, Pakistan faces worsening law and order issues due to increasing terrorist activities, allegedly driven by TTP and ISKP insurgent groups. As mentioned earlier, Pakistan urges the Taliban-led Afghan government to take action, citing the Doha agreement's commitment to prevent Afghan soil from being used against neighbors. Pakistani officials threaten to launch attacks on Afghan soil, sparking tensions and accusations of aggression from Afghan officials. Pakistan's new counter-terrorism initiative, "Aazm-e-Istehkam," aims to address these issues. In this regard on 26th June 2024, Pakistani security forces dismantled a terrorist network of TTP and arrested its two top commanders.

5.1.1. First Phase of Peace Negotiations

The talks between the Pakistani government and TTP resulted in several outcomes. Pakistan's efforts to find peace with the TTP have been complicated. The Pakistani government decided to talk about peace with TTP in 2021. In this regard, Imran Khan, former Prime Minister of Pakistan and head of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party (PTI) said that his government was in touch with the TTP for peace talks in an interview with a television network in October 2021. Khan stated that the TTP was composed of many sub-groups, some of which were open to peace talks with the Pakistani government (Jan, 2023). He explained that this endeavor is part of the reconciliation process seeking peace. The Afghan Taliban initiated these peace talks, and their interior minister, Sirajuddin Haqqani, served as a mediator with both sides. However, former Prime Minister Imran Khan had always advocated for talks with militant groups. The Afghan Taliban, acting as a mediator helped to facilitate the negotiation with their Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani while denying a formal role. A one-month ceasefire was declared in November 2021. However, the situation remains complex without clear communication and misunderstanding (Ahmed, 2022).

Similarly, in December 2021, the TTP intensified its attacks and the peace talks broke down. Deadlock occurred as a result of such intensification in the attacks. The TTP has increased its attacks since a month-long cease-fire expired and peace talks broke down in December 2021, which has put the Pakistani government and the TTP in difficulties regarding dialogue (Fazl-e-Haider, 2022). The challenges and the need to find a peaceful end to the dispute between the TTP and the Pakistani government are highlighted by this increase in violence. Islamabad has started action to resume dialogue with the TTP after the failure of peace negotiations in December 2021.

5.1.2. Second Phase of Peace Negotiations

In January 2022, the second phase of peace negotiations began between Pakistan and the top leadership of the TTP in Afghanistan. To negotiate a peaceful conclusion to the TTP 14-year insurgency in Pakistan, secret delegates have been sent to Afghanistan for negotiations that try to revive a ceasefire that has expired. Numerous militant strikes and skirmishes between the TTP and the Pakistani military have claimed hundreds of lives throughout the conflict, underscoring the pressing need for a peaceful conclusion. Pakistan sent secret delegations to Paktika, Afghanistan, to meet TTP leader Noor Wali Mehsud. In a gesture to resume talks, Pakistan handed over two senior TTP leaders, Muslim Khan and Mahmoud Khan, to the Afghan Taliban, who had been acting as mediators in the peace process. These two militant leaders belonged to the Swat chapter of the TTP; captured in 2009 during a military operation in the Swat district of the KP province (Khattak, 2022). It is worth noting the continuing role played by the Afghan Taliban as a mediator. Their influence over the TTP and their control over Afghan territory provide a platform for talks. However, their ability to pressure the TTP to make concessions remains to be seen. This was because of its closed attachment and historical cooperation with the TTP which has been discussed in the previous chapters in detail.

The TTP has made several demands, including the cancellation of the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA), the release of its leaders, and the withdrawal of Pakistani security forces from the FATA. (Ahmed, 2022). Although Pakistan released several TTP members and allowed the entry of others, talks failed to reach a lasting solution. The TTP continues to demand the cancellation of the merger of FATA which the Pakistani government says requires a two-thirds majority vote in the National Assembly and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly (Saif, 2022). The peace process has been hampered by the TTP inability to abide by the ceasefire and

continued violent attacks. The Afghan Taliban government tried to broker negotiations between Pakistan and the TTP, but the talks did not make progress. The attacks by the TTP undermine mutual trust and disrespect the peace negotiations. Pakistan claims to have been involved in discussions with the TTP, but the TTP denies this. The situation remains unresolved as the TTP continues to operate (Sial, 2023). However, The TTP attacks destroy mutual trust between the parties by demonstrating disrespect for the peace negotiations. Afghanistan relations have been strained with Pakistan by the U.S. killing of al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in Kabul, which Afghanistan claims violated the deal and accuses Pakistan of supporting. The killing of Omar Khalid Al Khorasani, a prominent member of the TTP has further complicated peace talks between TTP and Pakistan (Basit, 2021).

However, the future of the talks is uncertain. Regional tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan further complicate the situation. Only time will tell if these latest peace talks will succeed in the future where previous attempts failed. However, the effectiveness of this dual-track approach depends on several factors, including the willingness of insurgent groups to engage in dialogue, the coherence of government strategies, and the level of support from regional and international actors. Therefore, achieving lasting peace requires a balanced approach that combines military pressure with meaningful dialogue and political reforms to address the conflict's root causes.

Conclusion

Despite several attempts to hold peace talks, the relationship between Pakistan and the TTP mediated by the Afghan Taliban remains complex and complicated. Reaching sustainable solutions is difficult because mistrust, ideological rigidity, and cross-border dynamics worsen the failure of negotiations. Pakistan faces major security issues due to the deep relations between the Afghan and TTP. However, TTP territorial FATA demand, internal conflicts, and Afghanistan's external assistance are the main reasons for the deadlock. As civilian casualties from TTP attacks have increased, public demands for a strong military response have hampered the peace process. However, Pakistan has combated the TTP threat with various strategies, including counter-radicalization initiatives, military operations, and intelligence gathering, diplomacy, and security assistance. However, TTP remains a severe threat, and Pakistan's efforts to stop it have been hampered by several issues, such as the terrorist organization's capacity to operate outside Afghanistan and its ties to other extremist organizations in the region. Similarly, Pakistan's security situation has worsened due to ISKP ultra-extremist ideology and strong belief in force and bloodshed. To address such security issues, Pakistan needs to close the gaps in its security strategy and implement a multi-pronged and long-term approach. To effectively end the fight against ISKP in Pakistan requires different strategies to address complex issues. This means strengthening border security, resolving internal conflicts, conducting regional diplomacy, combating extremist ideas, and improving security and governance capabilities. Countering TTP and ISKP and promoting long-term peace and security in Pakistan and beyond requires a comprehensive approach that combines security measures that address core issues and promote stability.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Pakistan and Afghanistan are neighboring countries with great opportunities to enhance their bilateral ties. It has cultural, religious, ethnic, and social commonalities; among the population of one of the provinces of Pakistan, KP, and the Pashtuns of Afghanistan. However, despite such common grounds and massive prospects for the enhancement, both states regularly face uncertainty and misunderstandings in their bilateral ties. Historical issues of the border that is Durand line, the specific role of Pakistan in Afghanistan during the past, and the hostile attitude of various governments of Afghanistan towards Pakistan are some of the primary reasons that prevent both states from coming close together.

After the Taliban took over the government in Afghanistan, many in Pakistan believed it was a positive sign for the future of the region especially in terms of stability. Especially the security analysts and military top ranks thought of pursuing their strategic depth as a strategic move, to outclass India's ambitions regarding Afghanistan. However, it proved otherwise and the thoughts of Pakistani decision-makers turned to miscalculation. As a result of the Taliban empowerment in Kabul in August 2021, hundreds of fighters from various militant groups were freed from several prisons. Especially the TTP took massive advantage of the situation; as their top military commanders along with several hundred fighters released during the Afghan Taliban raids on various jails and detentions. More importantly, the strong and deep-rooted ideological, social, cultural, and ethnic bond between both groups (TTP & Afghan Taliban) further worsened the security situation for Pakistan.

As a result of the developments that occurred in the region since August 2021 concerning Afghanistan, Pakistan faces severe challenges in terms of security. There is constant uncertainty on

the Durand line; which results in military standoffs regularly. Similarly, various militant groups such as the TTP and ISKP reemerged and reorganized; resulting in devastating security situations in different areas of Pakistan such as former FATA and other settled areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

Similarly, as a result of the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, the forces left a massive amount of military equipment and hardware behind. Such situations became a blessing for the militant groups, especially the outlawed TTP, which grabbed these with both hands. Moreover, they got enough room, unlike in the past, when the militant group developed its military strategy without any fear or tension. Under such circumstances, they freely launched their attacks on their adversaries, such as Pakistan, which have pushed the latter into very challenging situations.

In this regard, Pakistan has initiated several steps to counter the situation. For instance, it has been discussed in the previous chapters in detail that, it initiated peace talks with the outlawed militant organization; in which the Afghan Taliban-led government of Afghanistan played the role of the mediator. Similarly, from time to time several high official visits were paid to Afghanistan to discuss this issue. Moreover, Pakistan has repeatedly urged the Afghan administration from time to time to withdraw its support from the TTP and take serious action against it. Further, it has asked for ousting the militant group from the soil of Afghanistan.

Considering the worst security situations; that have been mentioned comprehensively in the above chapters, Pakistan needs to adopt a very pragmatic and practical approach to deal with such kind of hostile situations. Pakistan has to deal with two scenarios in such situations. Firstly, it has to work on the containment of the TTP factor. Secondly, the country has to work on eradicating the uncertainties with the Afghan Taliban which is currently the ruling government of Afghanistan. Reshaping the diplomatic ties with the Taliban-led Afghan government is extremely important

because one can change enemies and friends, but can't change neighbors. Further, economic development and stability in terms of peace and security in Pakistan are significantly linked with smooth ties and peace in Afghanistan.

In this regard, Pakistani decision-makers should consider its grand economic project China Pakistan Economic Corridor, CPEC, full success and economic utilization of the project are significantly associated with the future of Afghanistan. For instance, the only land and shortest land route to the mineral-rich Central Asian Republic goes through Afghanistan. It is therefore essential for Pakistan to smoothen its relations with Afghanistan. However, Pakistan should adopt the regional approach in this regard. It should work with several regional players such as China, Russia, Iran, and to some extent countries of Central Asia to deal with the issues related to Afghanistan, especially that of militant insurgency. Similarly, Pakistan should use various economic and political regional forums such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to address its Afghanistan-related concerns.

One can notice that historical background and events, social, and religious identities and ethnic factors play dominant roles in this regard when it comes to addressing the contemporary security issues between Pakistan and Afghanistan through the lenses of constructivism. The historically controversial status of the Durand line between Pakistan and Afghanistan is always a source of contention between the neighbors. The recent tensions in the various nearby border areas in the last few months may be traced back to such so-called controversial status of the bilateral border. Similarly, currently, the TTP has made Afghan soil their shelter base. TTP and Afghan Taliban have shared ethnic, social, cultural, and ideological backgrounds; which make them strong allies. Moreover, both have a common enemy in the shape of the US and its Western allies; with which they fought for two decades. There are certain social, cultural, and ideological relations

between TTP and the Afghanistan Taliban. Similarly, TTP looks at Pakistan through specific religious and social lenses. Along with this Afghan Taliban has a particular policy towards Pakistan as well, which is highly motivated by ideological, ethnic, and social factors. Such types of various social relationships, on one side, have made TTP and Afghan Taliban strong allies and Pakistan and TTP strong adversaries. The theory of constructivism best explains such situations; Pakistan needs to act according to the specific situation, which is shaped by socially, culturally, historically, religiously, and ethnically motivated factors.

Only a military solution may not deal with the situation effectively. The security issue that has been raised due to the recent developments that occurred as a result of Taliban control of Afghanistan, is multifaceted. Thus the approach of Pakistan should also be in the same manner. As the theory explains it is based on the historical, religious, social, and ethnic aspects; thus, Pakistan should act accordingly. For instance, in this regard, the doors of dialogue and peace talks should always open. Pakistan should engage the Taliban-led Afghan government in constant discussions on several issues such as terrorism and Militant insurgency. Moreover, Pakistan should also encourage talks with insurgents willing to talk. This will not only weaken the militant organizations; through division in their ranks, but Pakistan can also benefit positively. Similarly, it should use Non-state actors such as influential individuals in the shape of sports celebrities' religious figures, and economic personalities to influence the Afghan government. This will not only curb the hurdles in the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan but will change the stubborn mindset of the Taliban-led Afghan government as well, over specific issues such as border management and militant insurgent relationships, etc.

MAJOR FINDINGS

1. Security Implications of Pakistan

The Taliban's takeover in Afghanistan has worsened security challenges for Pakistan, with the TTP experiencing a resurgence and launching increased terrorist attacks and violence. A significant increase in terrorism, border threats, and regional instability are just some of the terrible security consequences of the Taliban's relationship with the TTP. Terrorist groups have become more assertive as a result of their cooperation with the Taliban Government in Afghanistan, leading to an increase in attacks against Pakistan's security forces, civilians, and infrastructure, causing widespread disruption and anxiety. The porous Pak-Afghan border between Pakistan and Afghanistan has become a center of terror activity, with armed groups able to cross to launch attacks easily. In addition, regional instability has also attracted other countries, further worsening the security situation. Furthermore, the developments have heightened tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan, troubled counter-terrorism initiatives and put at risk to peace and security in the region.

2. Afghan Taliban TTP Nexus

The Afghan Taliban and TTP nexus refers to the alliance between them which has led to the resurgence of the TTP in the region and poses a major threat to Pakistan's security. The Taliban has historically provided safe haven, training, and logistical support to the TTP militants in Pakistan, whose common goal is to establish an Islamic state in Pakistan. In contrast, the TTP has pledged commitment to the Taliban and provides fighters to support its insurgency in Afghanistan. This link has enabled the TTP to regroup and reorganize in Afghanistan and pose a major security

threat to Pakistan. However, the Taliban's constant support for the TTP also complicates Pakistan's efforts to counterterrorism, bilateral relations, and regional stability.

i. Common History and Ideology

Due to their same ideologies and shared history, the Afghan Taliban and the TTP have a close relationship. Throughout the years, they have cooperated and supported one another in various ways while having separate organizations with different objectives and interests. Same Perspective according to a strict interpretation of Sunni Islam, the TTP, and the Afghan Taliban have the same goal of establishing Islamic authority based on their interpretations of Sharia law. Furthermore, they have a similar worldview that rejects Western influences in the region. Similarly, both have historical connections as well.

ii. Religious Views and Pashtun Identity

The TTP and Afghan Taliban share a strong bond due to their Deobandi beliefs, Pashtun ethnicity, and historical ties. Both groups aim to establish an Islamic state under Sharia law, rejecting secular governance and Western influence. Their shared identity and ideology have led to mutual support, with the TTP assisting the Afghan Taliban in the war against the US and the Afghan Taliban providing shelter and loyalty to the TTP. This alliance poses significant security implications for Pakistan, particularly in the post-Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, with increased uncertainty and militant activity on the border.

3. Border Security Threats

The border between Pakistan and Afghanistan is more than 2,600 kilometers long. It is full of porous areas, posing considerable challenges to border security and allowing terrorist organizations such as the TTP to gain access to launch cross-border attacks. The rugged terrain,

lack of effective border management, and limited surveillance capabilities make it difficult for the Pakistan and Afghan border guards to monitor and control the border properly. This allows terrorists to exploit porous borders to launch attacks on Pakistani soil and then retreat to safe havens in Afghanistan, leaving Pakistan unable to protect its borders and prevent attacks. Border security issues have caused severe loss of life, property, and psychological suffering, highlighting the need for Pakistan and Afghanistan to strengthen border control and cooperation to avoid transnational terrorism.

4. Reemergence of the TTP

Pakistan faces a growing threat from the TTP, whose alliance with the Afghan Taliban is posing a significant challenge to Pakistan's security and stability. The reunification and reorganization of the TTP Pakistan in Afghanistan poses a major threat to Pakistan's security and has the potential to destabilize the region further. This resurgence also allowed TTP to expand its influence, recruit new members, and improve relations with other terrorist organizations, destabilizing the region and undermining Pakistan's counterterrorism efforts. The reorganization of TTP has worsened the threat of terrorism in the region and requires the joint efforts of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the international community to counter this threat and ensure peace and security in the region. The TTP has significantly benefited from the rise of the Afghan Taliban. After taking control of the Afghan Taliban, TTP became more confident. They view the government as more friendly.

5. The Rise of ISKP

ISKP poses a new and serious threat to Pakistan's security as it introduces a particularly cruel and ideologically motivated terrorist group into the region. Due to its growth in the tribal areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan. ISKP presence in the region threatens Pakistan's counterterrorism efforts, maintains sectarian conflict, and further undermines the country's precarious security situation. ISKP views the Taliban as an enemy because of ideological differences and because of the competing nature of their goals in Afghanistan. Therefore, the Afghan Taliban keeps strong ties with the TTP to avoid any possible collaboration between the TTP and ISKP and keep the latter completely isolated. Such ties between the TTP and Afghan Taliban become further stronger in addition to their strong ideological, cultural, and ethnic connections, which have been discussed above.

6. Terrorists Safe Havens

The TTP enjoys safe haven from the Taliban in Afghanistan, which makes stopping terrorism difficult as it gives them the ability to organize and carry out operations against Pakistan. In the border areas, the TTP uses these safe havens as bases of operations for its terror activities. The Taliban's support and protection of the TTP in these safe havens have helped the group retain its organizational structure, command and control, and logistics networks, making it difficult for Pakistan to disrupt its terrorist activities and dismantle its networks. Pakistan efforts to fight terrorism are hindered by the presence of safe havens of TTP in Afghanistan, leading to ongoing violence and instability in the region. Meanwhile, the ISKP in Afghanistan poses a significant threat to Pakistan border security.

i. Cross-border attacks

Relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan are tense. People and border posts in Pakistan have been attacked repeatedly, these attacks resulted in massive casualties and property damage. TTP targeted Pakistani security personnel as well as civilians, including the police and military. The situation is sinking the country into instability and uncertainty regarding law, order and security. The attacks have also strained relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan, with Pakistan pressuring Afghanistan to take decisive action against the TTP and other terror groups operating on its soil. The region has become more unstable, with tensions hindering efforts to achieve peace and stability.

7. The Role of the Afghan Taliban:

The Afghan Taliban deny the presence of the TTP on their soil despite accusations and evidence to the contrary from Pakistan and other sources. The Afghan Taliban insist that they are committed to maintaining security and stability in the region and will not allow any terrorist organization to operate in its territory. Due to the Afghan Taliban's support for the TTP, it is difficult to fight terrorism and achieve peace in the region, which has severe consequences for regional security. Afghan Taliban support is a significant factor in the persistence of terrorism in the region. This support enables the TTP to organize and conduct operations against Pakistan. Having similar culture, ethnicity, Pashtun identity, and ideologies, as a desire to establish an Islamic emirate in Pakistan, the Afghan Taliban and the TTP formed a strong strategic partnership, making it difficult for Pakistan to confront the TTP without considering the role of the Afghan Taliban.

8. Refuges Crisis

The violence has displaced 1.7 million Afghan refugees from Pakistan, to put pressure on Taliban leaders to take action against TTP and their violence. By expelling them, Pakistan hopes to break up the terror support network and their attacks against Pakistan. The policy further underscores Pakistan's long-standing concerns about the country's refugee population, which it believes could serve as a channel for illegal activities that damage Pakistan's security.

i. First Phase

The first phase of the return of Afghan refugees from Pakistan to Afghanistan begins on November 1, 2023. It accelerates with 520,000 refugees returned voluntarily and 500,000 being deported by the Pakistani government, a phase driven mainly by Pakistan's efforts to deal with unauthorized migration. This was an essential stage in the repatriation process.

ii. Second Phase

Pakistan says millions of Afghans do not have the necessary documents, so the second phase of repatriation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan was focused on those with Afghan Citizenship Cards (ACC).

iii. Refuges a Security Risk

There has been a link between the presence of refugee communities along the Pak-Afghan border and an increase in criminal activities such as terrorism, and the smuggling of people, weapons, and drugs. These illegal actions cause regional instability and maintain insecurity in both countries. Pakistan aims to dismantle these criminal networks and put further pressure on the Taliban government to take responsibility for guarding its borders and stopping terror activities by deporting Afghan immigrants.

iv. Economic Consequences

The conflict has restricted business and investment between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The economic impact of the Taliban's relationship with the TTP is far-reaching, with the conflict significantly limiting business and investment between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Border crossing closures and supply chain disruptions have sharply declined bilateral trade, hurting the textiles, food processing, and construction industries.

9. Counter-Terrorism Efforts

Pakistan has used high-level negotiations, diplomatic pressure, regional participation, financial incentives, and threats of military action. Pakistan has urged Taliban leaders to reassess their support for the TTP to use it to promote regional unity. Meanwhile, Pakistan has ambiguously hinted at possible military action against the TTP. However, the US and Pakistan have been working together to combat terrorism. Pakistan tries to force the Taliban to destroy its sanctuary in Afghanistan through pressure. On the other side, Pakistan has been trying to influence the Taliban to take action against the TTP through diplomatic means, but so far, the results have not been very encouraging. Take decisive action to destroy the TTP network or prevent its terrorist activities.

i. Counter Measure

Pakistan has intensified its efforts to prevent the movement of militants and weapons across its border with Afghanistan, amid escalating tensions with the Afghan Taliban over the latter's refusal to crack down on the TTP. Recent cross-border clashes and airstrikes have resulted in civilian casualties and diplomatic tensions, with Pakistan conducting intelligence-based operations against militant groups like the Hafiz Gul Bahadur Group. To combat terrorism globally, Pakistan has cooperated with international organizations and forces, including bilateral talks with the US to

enhance cooperation and synchronization against terrorist groups like TTP and IS-KP. Similarly, Pakistan has launched a new counter-terrorism initiative, “Aazm-e-Istehkam” to combat increasing cross-border insurgency and terrorism. Pakistani officials blame the Afghan government for not fulfilling its promises to prevent Afghan soil from being used against neighboring countries, as agreed in the Doha agreement. Meanwhile, two senior TTP commanders, Nasrullah Maulvi Mansoor” and Idris alias Irshad, have been arrested in Balochistan.

ii. First Phase of Peace Negotiations

The Pakistani government's efforts to negotiate peace with the TTP have been complicated and challenging. In 2021, former Prime Minister Imran Khan's government initiated talks with the TTP, facilitated by the Afghan Taliban's interior minister, Sirajuddin Haqqani. A one-month ceasefire was declared in November 2021, but the talks broke down in December 2021 due to intensified TTP attacks. The TTP increased attacks since the ceasefire ended have underscored the challenges in finding a peaceful end to the dispute.

iii. Second Phase of Peace Negotiations

The second phase of peace negotiations between Pakistan and the TTP began in January 2022, with secret delegations sent to Afghanistan to meet TTP leader Noor Wali Mehsud. Despite the release of senior TTP leaders and the Afghan Taliban's mediation, talks failed to reach a lasting solution due to the TTP continued demands and violent attacks, undermining mutual trust and disrespecting the peace negotiations. The situation remains unresolved, complicated by regional tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan. However, achieving lasting peace requires a balanced approach combining military pressure, meaningful dialogue, and political reforms to address the conflict's root causes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Currently, Pakistan is facing severe challenges in terms of security and border insurgency about Afghanistan. Pakistan needs to adopt a multifaceted strategy to deal with the security problems posed in the aftermath of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Pakistan must take diplomatic measures to convince the Taliban to cut ties with terrorist groups such as the TTP and stop using Afghan territory as a base to attack Pakistan. The Taliban leadership can be reached to the top through negotiations, international pressure through the United Nations and other platforms, and regional diplomacy with countries such as China, Russia, and Iran. In addition, to strengthen border security, Pakistan should increase its military presence, strengthen surveillance, and cooperate with Afghan forces on border patrols to exchange intelligence and synchronize operations. As a result, opportunities for attacks and cross-border terrorist activities will be reduced. To curb cross-border terrorist activities, Pakistan should strengthen border security measures such as deploying technology and expanding its military presence.

More importantly, Pakistan should fund economic development measures in Afghanistan to reduce the refugee crisis and promote regional peace. Investments in infrastructure, agricultural, and industrial development projects in Afghanistan to reduce poverty and inequality while promoting economic interdependence between the two countries. Support for Afghan development projects, trade and commerce, and bilateral partnerships contribute to this goal. To fully respond to the threat of terrorism, Pakistan should enhance its counter-terrorism capabilities, especially its intelligence operations and intelligence collection capabilities. Pakistan should cooperate with other countries to exert economic pressure on the Taliban to comply with counter-terrorism-related demands. Conditional economic aid, and support for Afghanistan's economic development programs can help achieve the cause. Pakistan must improve its military capabilities, intelligence

sharing and collection, and cooperation between law enforcement, military, and intelligence agencies to enhance its counterterrorism capabilities. This will make counter-terrorism activities more effective and curb terrorist acts. Ultimately, to combat terrorist ideology and promote coexistence, tolerance, and peace, Pakistan needs to create a comprehensive counter-narrative. This can be achieved through engaging with religious scholars, and civic community members and developing de-radicalization initiatives aimed at rehabilitating former terrorists and preventing vulnerable people from becoming radicalized.

Pakistan can effectively respond to the security concerns brought about by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and promote regional peace and stability by implementing a comprehensive strategy that integrates diplomatic, military, economic, and social activities. Along with measures on the state level, Pakistan should consider efforts on the non-state level as well. As mentioned earlier, Pashtun from both sides of the border greatly value social customs, ethnic values, and cultural traditions. Therefore, Pakistan should utilize these channels as well. For instance, tribal elders and distinguished figures from the local population should be used to build consensus with the Afghan people, especially with its government. Through such initiatives, Pakistan can convince the Afghan government to the maximum extent on issues such as TTP insurgencies, cross-border trafficking, and uncertainty on the border.

Similarly, building confidence and trust is extremely important in this regard, before working on any collective issue. For shaping trust, Pakistan should use Non-State influential actors such as famous sports personalities, business tycoons, and to some extent showbiz figures to bring both nations close to one another. In this regard, cricket may be one of many aspects that can be proven as a significant way of curbing distances between the people of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistan should take the initiative of arranging bilateral cricket series between Pakistan and

Afghanistan cricket team. Instead of rivalry, there should be healthy competition that pave the way of curbing tensions. by doing so, both Pakistan and Afghanistan can come close to one another; thus, will be able to make a long-lasting and fruitful consensus on several important issues such as terrorism and cross border insurgencies.

More importantly, the contemporary era is one of interdependence and globalization. Technological advancement, various ways of communication, and media outreaches particularly social media have brought the nations much closer to the wonderful level. Sometimes media is considered and declared as the fourth pillar of the state. In this regard, Pakistan should use various forums and media to its maximum advantage. There should be initiatives in the media that help in reducing misunderstandings between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Similarly, cultural exchange programs, media programs, and social media outlets should be shaped in such a way as to highlight positive aspects between both countries. Through this, both countries can come close together and can shape their relations with mutual trust and understanding. By doing so, both countries can overcome the mentioned issues of militant insurgencies, cross-border uncertainties, and terrorism along with human trafficking.

REFERENCES

- Abbas, H. (2023). *The return of the Taliban: Afghanistan after the Americans left*. Yale University Press.
- Akhtar, N. (2008). "Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the Taliban". *International Journal on World Peace*.
- Akram, S., & Akbar, M. (2023). "US Withdrawal from Afghanistan: Emerging Challenges and Future Prospects". *Global Foreign Policies Review*, VI, 6, 97-111.
- Akhtar, S., & Ahmed, Z. S. (2023). Understanding the resurgence of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan. *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict*, 16(3), 285-306.
- Aamir, A. (2023, October 9). Pakistan intends to deport 1.7 million Afghans | Lowy Institute. *The Interpreter*.
- Ayobi, A. (2023). Afghanistan under the Taliban rule: security implications for the region (with a particular focus on the Central Asia) *Hamburg University*.
- Ahmed, S. (2023, March 29). The Pakistani Taliban Test Ties between Islamabad and Kabul. *Crisis Group*.
- Ahmed, S. (2023, March 29). The Pakistani Taliban Test Ties between Islamabad and Kabul. *Crisis Group*.
- Ali, H. (2020). The rise and fall of Islamic State: Current challenges and future prospects. *Asian Affairs*, 51(1), 71-94.
- Basit, A. (2022). The Impact of Ayman Zawahiri's Killing on Pakistan-TTP Reconciliation Talks. *Terrorism Monitor Volume*, 20(20).
- Bajoria, J. (2009, March 20). The Troubled Afghan-Pakistani Border. *Council on Foreign Relations*.
- Basit, A. (2021, February 25). Pakistan-Afghanistan border fence, a step in the right direction. *Aljazeera*.
- Baqai, H., & Wasi, N. (2021). Pakistan-Afghanistan relations: pitfalls and the way forward. *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES)*.
- Barfield, T., & Hawthorne, A. (2007, November). The Durand Line: History, Consequences, and Future. In *Report of a Conference Organized by the American Institute of Afghanistan Studies and the Hollings Center in Istanbul, Turkey*.

- Beckmann, M. (2024). A major threat for the future?: The mobilizing force of Islamic State Khorasan in Afghanistan between 2015 and 2023 (Master's thesis). *Utrecht University Student Theses Repository Home*
- Beradze, D. (2022). Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP)–Threats to the Regional Security Environment and Challenges for the Taliban. *Free University Journal of Asian Studies*, (4).
- Cone, D., & Khan, S. (2023). ‘They Left Us without Any Support’: Afghans in Pakistan Waiting for Solutions. *Refugees International*.
- Durani, M. U., & Khan, A. (2002). Pakistan-Afghan Relations: Historic Mirror. *The Dialogue*, 4(1), 90-98.
- Dawn.(2022). *Martyrs’ blood went into Pak-Afghan border fencing, will continue as planned: DG ISPR*. Dawn.
- Dawn.(2022). *Martyrs’ blood went into Pak-Afghan border fencing, will continue as planned: DG ISPR*. Dawn.
- Dawn. (2024, June 22). Operation Azm-i-Istehkam: Govt approves reinvigorated national counter-terrorism campaign. *Dawn*.
- Elliott, R., & Timulak, L. (2005). Descriptive and interpretive approaches to qualitative research. *A handbook of research methods for clinical and health psychology*, 1(7), 147-159
- Fazl-e-Haider, S. (2022). Pakistani Taliban to Benefit from Afghanistan-Pakistan Border Fencing Dispute; *Terrorism Monitor: Volume: 20 Issue 1*
- Jadoon, A. (2021). The Evolution and Potential Resurgence of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan. In *United States Institute of Peace*.
- Jafri, U. (2022). Afghan refugees and border control: Pakistan’s challenges and policy options. Retrieved from Pak Institute For Peace Studies (PIPS) <https://www.pakpips.com/article/7041>
- Junaidi, I. (2024, January 1). *Violence-linked fatalities hit six-year high*. Dawn.
- Jan, A. (2022). The Rise of Taliban in Afghanistan in 2021 and its Security Implications for Pakistan. *Pakistan Journal of Social Research*, 4(04), 1059-1067.
- Javaid, P. (2020). Analyzing the dynamics of Pakistan-Afghanistan relations: Past and present. *South Asian Studies*, 31(1).

- Jan, A., Khan, A., & Nisa, Z. (2023). The Reemergence of the Afghan Taliban in Afghanistan and Its Impact on Militant Groups in Pakistan (A Case Study of the TTP). *Journal of Peace, Development and Communication (JPDC)*, 07(01), 77–87. V07-I01-08
- Humza, A., & Khan, R. (2022). “US withdrawal from Afghanistan—interests of Major players and Policy recommendations for Pakistan”. *Pakistan Journal of International Affairs*, 5(2).
- Hussain, A. (2023, Jan 31). Peshawar mosque bombing survivors traumatized but undeterred. *Al-Jazeera*.
- Hussain, A. (2023, December 21). What explains the dramatic rise in armed attacks in Pakistan? *Al Jazeera*.
- Hussain, A. (2023, August 2). Attacks in Pakistan buttressed by region’s “militant” landscape: Analysts. *Aljazeera*.
- Hussain, S. (2022, February 6). 5 Pakistani soldiers killed in TTP attack. *The Print*. Hussain, A. (2023, August 17). Taliban’s ties with Pakistan fraying amid mounting security concerns. *Aljazeera*.
- Gul, A. (2023, October 3). Pakistan to Begin Deportation of 1.7 Million Undocumented Afghans. *Voice of America*.
- Gul, A. (2023, October 5). Pakistan Turns Up Heat Over Cross-Border Attacks. *Voice of America*.
- Gul, A. (2024, May 13). Pakistan, US discuss how to counter Afghan-based IS and TTP terrorists. *Voice of America*.
- Gul, A. (2024, May 27). Attack on Pakistani outpost near Afghan border kills 5 soldiers, 7 militants. *Voice of America*.
- Giustozzi, A. (2021). The Resurgence of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan. *The Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (RUSI)*.
- Giustozzi, A. (2021). *The Taliban at War* / Oxford University Press.
- Gannon, K. (2022, January 6). Afghan Taliban Turn Blind Eye to the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan. *The Diplomat*.
- Kaura, V. (2022). Pakistan-Afghan Taliban relations face mounting challenges. *Al Jazeera*.
- Khattak, D. (2020, August 31). Whether the Pakistani Taliban: An Assessment of Recent Trends. New Amer Found, Last Modi. *New America Organization*.
- Khattak, D. (2022, May 12). Islamabad Hands over Pakistani Taliban Commanders to Afghan Mediators in Bid to Revive Peace Talks: *Radio Free Europe.Radio Liberty*.

- Khan, I. A. (2024). TTP, IS-K, BLA behind 82pc deaths in terror attacks. *Dawn*. Khalid, I., & Roy, M. I. (2016). "Pakistan's military operations: the counter-terrorism strategy (2001-2013) prospects and implications". *The Research Society of Pakistan*, 53(2).
- Khattak, D. (2021). "The Pakistani Taliban Is Back". *The Diplomat*
- Khan, S. (2021). Taliban announces new government in Afghanistan. *Al Jazeera*.
- Khan, A. (2019). Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) in Afghanistan—An Assessment. *Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad, Pakistan*.
- Khaliq, F. (2022, October 24). Connecting the dots: What really went down in Swat. *Dawn*.
- Khattak, D. (2022). Pakistanis brace for bloody year as TTP ends cease-fire. *Radio Free Europe .Radio Liberty*.
- Khattak, D. (2022, December 31). Pakistanis Brace For Bloody Year As TTP Ends Cease-Fire. *Radio Free Europe. Radio Liberty*
- Karzai, S. (2024). Pakistan Must Stop Sending Afghan Refugees Back to Danger. *Human Rights First*.
- Kamran. Yousef. (2022, April 24). Taliban shifting terrorists away from Pak-Afghan border. *The Express Tribune*.
- Khan, A., & Durrani, A. (2024). The future of Afghanistan under Taliban-led regime: challenges and likely scenarios. *Liberal Arts and Social Sciences International Journal (LASSIJ)*, 8(1), 1-21.
- Leheny, D. (2014). Constructivism and international relations in Asia. *The Oxford Handbook of the International Relations of Asia*, 64. *Press*.
- Liamputtong, P., & Ezzy, D. (2005). Qualitative research methods. Second. *Melbourne: Oxford university press*.
- Leheny, D. (2014). Constructivism and international relations in Asia. *The Oxford Handbook of the International Relations of Asia*, 64.
- Malik, S. (2022). Pakistan-Afghanistan relations: Pitfalls and the way forward. *Journal of Security & Strategic Analyses*, 8(1), 160-165.
- Manisha, P.(2023). "Pakistan registers 79% spike in terror attacks in 2023 so far than 2022".*India Today*.

- Mir, A. (2022, January 19). After the Taliban's Takeover: Pakistan's TTP problem. *United States Institute of Peace*. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/01/after-talibans-takeover-pakistans-ttp-problem>
- Mir, A. (2023). In a Major Rift, Pakistan Ramps Up Pressure on the Taliban. *United States Institute of Peace*.
- Mir, A. (2022). Pakistan's Twin Taliban Problem. *United States Institute of Peace*.
- Mir, A., Salikuddin, T., & Watkins, A. (2023). Is Pakistan Poised to Take on the TTP? *United States Institute of Peace*. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/02/pakistan-poised-take-ttp>
- MOFA. (2023). Visit of a High-Level Pakistan Delegation to Afghanistan. *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*.
- MOFA. (2021). Curtain Raiser: Visit of Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi To Kabul, 21 October 2021. *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*.
- Momand, T. et al. (2024). Pakistan carried out intelligence-based anti-terrorist operations in Afghanistan, FO confirms. *Dawn*. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1822274>
- Malhotra, A. (2022). Constructivist Approaches to the International Relations of South Asia. In *Routledge Handbook of the International Relations of South Asia* (pp. 32-45). Routledge.
- Mehra, T., Demuyne, M., & Wentworth, M. (2022). Weapons in Afghanistan: The Taliban's Spoils of War. *Policy Brief*.
- Mehlman, Y. Y., & Hess, J. H. (2023). A Comparative Analysis of the Afghan Taliban and the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan Ideologies Following the 2021 Takeover of Afghanistan. *Global Security & Intelligence Studies*, 7(2).
- Neuman, W. (2014). *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. United States of America: Pearson Education Limited.
- Nazari, M. A. (2024, April 16). Second Phase of Afghan Refugee Expulsion from Pakistan: Thousands at Risk. *Hasht-e Subh*.
- Noor, S. (2021). The Taliban's Ascendance in Afghanistan. *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses*, 13(4), 14-18.
- Naseer, N. (2016). Spill Over of Militants and Criminals from Federally Administered Tribal Areas to Adjacent Areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. *Pakistan Journal of Criminology*, 8(4), 44-57.
- O'Donnell, L. (2023, July 5). The Taliban Are Now Arms Dealers. *Foreign Policy*.

- Palmer, A., & Holtz, M. (2023). The Islamic State Threat in Pakistan: Trends and Scenarios. *Www.csis.org*.
- PIPS. (2021, January). Overview of Security in 2021: Critical Challenges and Recommendations. *Pak Institute for Peace Studies*
- PIPS. (2023). Pakistan's Afghan Perspective And Policy Options. *Pak Institute for Peace Studies*
- PICSS. (2022). ISKP: A growing threat to Pakistan's security. *Pakistan Institute for Conflict & Security Studies*
- PICSS.(2023). Pakistan Comprehensive National Security Profile. *Pakistan Institute for Conflict & Security Studies*. <https://www.picss.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/PICSS-Annual-Report-2023-Final-1.pdf>
- Pakistan's Campaign to Expel Millions of Afghan Refugees Enters Second Phase. (2024). *RadioFreeEurope/Radio Liberty*.
- Raza, K.(2023), "IS-K'S growing threat and implications in Pakistan" *weekly cutting edge*.
- Sharma, M. (2023). Mianwali airbase attack: Pakistan suffered more losses than it officially acknowledged, say reports. *World Is One News WION*.
- Suspected suicide blast death toll in Pakistan's Balochistan climbs to 52. *AlJazeera*. (2023).
- Staff, A. J. (2024). Pakistan-Taliban attacks updates: Exchange of fire at border after 8 killed. *Al Jazeera*.
- Sinha, R. (2022, 08 18). TTP-Pakistan peace talks: The pitfalls and their implications: *Observer Research Foundation*.
- Shah, Q. A., Nawab, B., Nyborg, I. L., & Elahi, N. (2020). The narrative of militancy: a case study of Swat, Pakistan. *Journal of Human Security*, 16(2).
- Soofi, A. B. (2015). Pakistan-Afghanistan Border Management: A Legal Perspective. *Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (PILDAT)*.
- Sikandar, A. (2023, September 25). Assessing ISKP's Expansion in Pakistan. *South Asian Voices*.
- Sial, S. (2023). Pakistan's Afghan Perspective and Policy Options. *Pak Institute for Peace Studies*. [Final-Report-full.pdf](#)
- Sayed, A., & Hamming, T. (2023). The Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan After the Taliban's Afghanistan Takeover. *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*. , 16(5).
- Shahid, A.(2023)"Major attacks in Pakistan during 2023" *Reuters World Asia Pacific*.

- SATP. (2023). Yearly fatalities - *Pakistan. South Asia Terrorism Portal*. <https://www.satp.org/data-sheet-terrorist-attack/fatalities/Pakistan>
- SATP. (2024). Terrorism in Pakistan - Yearly Fatalities | *Pakistan. South Asia Terrorism Portal. SATP*.
- Sayed, A., & Hamming, T. (2023). The Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan After the Taliban's Afghanistan Takeover. *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point. CTC Sentinel*, 16(5), 1-12.
- Sayed, A., & Jadoon, A. (2022). Understanding Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan's Unrelenting Posture. *George Town University Program on Extremism*, 16(08), 2022.
- Siddique, A. (2023, March 29). Pakistani Armed Groups Obtain U.S. Weapons Left Behind In Afghanistan. *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*. <https://www.rferl.org/a/pakistan-armed-groups-obtain-us-weapons-left-in-afghanistan/32340664.html>
- Sattar, A. (2024, June 26). Pakistan security forces have arrested 2 key Pakistani Taliban commanders, an official says. *AP News* .
- Sharma, S. (2023, February 16). Taliban “supporting” TTP, providing safe haven in Afghanistan against “un-Islamic” Pakistan. *First Post*.
- SCO, R. (2023). Security situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces of Pakistan. *Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure of Shanghai Cooperation Organization*.
- Taliban issues warning over civilians killed by Pakistan rockets. (2022, May). *Aljazeera*.
- Taliban issues warning over civilians killed by Pakistan rockets. (2022, April 17). *Al-Jazeera*.
- Threlkeld, E., & Easterly, G. (2021). “Afghanistan-Pakistan ties and Future stability in Afghanistan” (*Vol. 175*). *United States Institute of Peace*.
- Tahir, K.(2023) “Khar, Taliban leadership discuss security issues and economic cooperation in wide-ranging talks” *Dawn*.
- Thomas, C. (2021). *US Military Withdrawal and Taliban Takeover in Afghanistan: Frequently Asked Questions*. Congressional Research Service.
- Taylor, Francis. (2024). The challenge to Islamabad from the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan. *Strategic Comments*, 30(1).
- Umair, J.(2021). “ Pakistan's Great Expectations of the Taliban,” *The Diplomat –Current-affairs Magazine for the Asia-Pacific*,
- UN.IOM . (2024) 1 - 15 May 2024) - Afghanistan: <https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanist>

- Van Den Berg, A. (2020). Pakistan Situation of Afghan Refugees- *Country of Origin Information Report*.
- Wendt, A. (1999). "Social Theory of International Politics" (Vol. 67). *Cambridge University*
- Walliman, N. (2021). "Research methods": The basics. *Routledge*.
- Yousaf, F., & Jabarkhail, M. (2022). "Afghanistan's future under the Taliban regime: engagement or isolation?" *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism*, 17(1), 117-134
- Zahid, F. (2022). Dealing with Afghanistan after the US Withdrawal: Challenges and Options for Pakistan. *NUST Journal of International Peace & Stability*.
- Zehfuss, M. (2002). *Constructivism in international relations: the politics of reality* (Vol. 83). *Cambridge University Press*.
- Zahid, F. Dealing with TTP and IS-K after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan: Challenges, prospects, and policy options for Pakistan. *Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS)*
- Zahid, F. (2022). Dealing with Afghanistan after the US Withdrawal: Challenges and Options for Pakistan. *NUST Journal of International Peace & Stability*.