



Syed Rizwan Haider Bukhari¹ Haider Ali Khan² Amir Ullah Khan³ Inam Ul Haq⁴ Ejaz Hussian⁵

Abstract: *The Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021 caused major shifts in the region, particularly impacting Pakistan's security and diplomacy. The rapid collapse of the Afghan government and the Taliban's return to power led to an oppressive regime with strict interpretations of Islamic law, limited rights for women and minorities, and a worsening humanitarian crisis. The country faced poverty, starvation, and human rights abuses, while the economy deteriorated due to the loss of foreign aid. For Pakistan, the Taliban's return led to increased militancy and cross-border terrorism, particularly from Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), as the open Durand Line border heightened tensions. Pakistan also faced a growing refugee burden. On the international front, Pakistan strengthened ties with China through CPEC, while relations with the US and NATO strained over terrorism and Taliban support. The situation also worsened Pakistan's relationship with India, especially concerning Kashmir. This study explores the broader implications of the Taliban's resurgence on regional security, human rights, and foreign relations, focusing on the consequences for Pakistan.*

Key Words: Pakistan, Afghanistan, TTP, TTA, Foreign Policy, National Security

Introduction

The Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan in August 2021 is one of the most significant events that has ever happened in Afghanistan, with a host of implications within Afghanistan and beyond. It generated various political, humanitarian, social, economic, and security effects on Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries together with the world power structure. When the Afghan government disbanded, the Taliban set up its regime, and there was a humanitarian crisis afterwards; questions arose in regard to human rights, security, and stability of the region. In politics, the lack of democracy in Afghanistan and the sudden overthrow of the Afghan government, together with the takeover by the Taliban, has led to the establishment of an unauthorized interim government, which is currently facing a lot of criticism over its sectarianism and lack of democratic policy (Zarawar et al., 2024; Bukhari et al., 2024).

The Taliban's conservative rule, based on Sharia law, has led to widespread violations of democratic freedoms, especially for women and ethnic minorities. Humanitarian conditions have worsened, with millions displaced, high food insecurity, and severe poverty. The economic crisis deepened due to the loss of foreign aid, rising unemployment, and inflation. Social rights, particularly in education, media, and civil society, have been heavily restricted. Security deteriorated due to insurgent violence from groups like ISIS-K and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Pakistan has been especially impacted by increased militancy, border violence, and cross-border terrorism. On the global stage, countries like China and Russia have engaged with the Taliban, while the US and EU maintain sanctions and do not formally recognize the

¹ PhD Scholar, Department of Political Science, Islamia College University, Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

² M.Phil. Scholar, Department of Political Science & International Relation, Qurtuba University of Science & Information Technology, Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Email: haiderkhan6669@gmail.com

³ Chairman, Department of Political Science, Islamia College University, Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Email: amir@icp.edu.pk

⁴ PhD Scholar, Department of Political Science, Islamia College University, Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Email: inamhinjal@gmail.com

⁵ Independent Researcher/MS Strategic Studies, National Defense University, Islamabad, Pakistan. Email: hejaz35922@gmail.com

regime. Afghanistan's neighbors, especially Pakistan, have been forced to adjust their foreign policies and security strategies in response. This research will examine how the Taliban's rule has impacted Pakistan's national security and foreign policy, particularly regarding militancy, terrorism, and regional power dynamics. (Yawar, 2024; Harshé & Tripathi, 2024).

Problem Statement

The Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021 has significantly shifted the region's dynamics, particularly affecting Pakistan's security and policy. Given their historical, cultural, and security ties, Pakistan is vulnerable to cross-border militancy and terrorism. The Taliban's political changes in Afghanistan have also reshaped Pakistan's foreign policy, especially with key powers like the US, China, and India. This study aims to analyze the social and political impact of the Taliban's emergence on Pakistan's security and diplomacy, examining the challenges and opportunities for the country in this new context.

Research Questions

The Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan has raised security threats for Pakistan, including increased militancy and cross-border terrorism from groups like TTP. This has led to shifts in Pakistan's foreign policy, particularly in its relations with Afghanistan and neighbouring countries. Afghanistan's instability has also worsened Pakistan's economic and social issues, with growing refugee migration and disrupted trade. Pakistan needs to develop strategies to tackle security threats, manage diplomatic challenges, and protect its economy and society amidst these changes.

Research Objectives

The study aims to analyze the impact of the Taliban's return to power on Pakistan's national security, focusing on the rise of cross-border terrorism and militant activities, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. It will assess the changes in Pakistan's foreign policy towards key countries like the USA, China, India, and Iran, considering the instability caused by the Taliban's resurgence, especially regarding trade, security, and counterterrorism efforts. The research will also examine how Pakistan's security institutions, such as the military, intelligence, and police, have responded to the emerging threats from Taliban-linked groups like TTP. Additionally, the socio-economic consequences of Afghanistan's instability will be explored, including the rise in Afghan refugees, disrupted trade routes, and the economic strain on Pakistan. Finally, the study will propose policy recommendations for Pakistan to enhance its national security and adapt to the changing political landscape in the region.

Significance of Research

The Taliban's resurgence in Afghanistan has raised significant national security concerns for Pakistan, particularly with intensified cross-border militancy, terrorism, and insurgency, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. These dynamics have forced Pakistan to adjust its security policies to combat growing threats from groups like Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and ISIS-K. The geopolitical shifts caused by the Taliban's rule have altered Afghanistan's political and security landscape, compelling Pakistan to reassess its foreign policy and regional relations, especially with its South Asian neighbors and strategic partner, the United States. The instability in Afghanistan has also resulted in a refugee crisis, further straining Pakistan's economy and social sectors, particularly in its frontier districts. This research will explore the humanitarian impact, including pressure on healthcare, education, and welfare systems, as well as disruptions in trade. Additionally, the study will offer proactive policy recommendations to address security and diplomatic threats posed by the Taliban's return. This research aims to fill the gap in existing literature by providing a comprehensive understanding of the Taliban's impact on Pakistan's national security, foreign policy, and regional stability in South Asia.

Literature Review

The Peshawar school attack highlighted Pakistan's security vulnerabilities and the ongoing threat posed by terrorist groups exploiting weaknesses within the country. Despite military operations in North



Waziristan and Khyber agencies, terrorists have continued to operate due to their migration across the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and their ability to receive support within Pakistan. The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Al Qaeda claimed responsibility for the attack, with indications that they might be collaborating at an operational level, potentially with factions from Central Asia. A closer examination of high-profile attacks shows that Al Qaeda handles planning, TTP manages logistics, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) oversees operations, and local groups provide support. The attack occurred amid internal conflicts within these groups, spurred by the rise of the Islamic State (IS), leading to competition and fragmentation. Jamaatul Ahrar, a faction that split from TTP, has been behind several attacks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, FATA, and Lahore (Khan et al., [2023](#)).

The recent attacks, including the Peshawar school assault, have placed significant pressure on the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), led by Mullah Fazlullah, as it struggles to maintain its insurgency amidst Pakistan's evolving political and security landscape. Currently, the TTP operates in Afghanistan's Kunar, Nuristan, and Khost provinces, maintaining ties with Central Asian militants and Al-Qaeda. The Peshawar attack, marked by military-style tactics and civilian targets, reflects the militants' growing desperation and suggests the involvement of Central Asian allies. Despite ongoing military pressure, the attack underscores the vulnerability of both civilian and military targets in Pakistan, indicating the likelihood of similar attacks in the future. However, the country's security and intelligence agencies face systemic weaknesses, such as a lack of integration and coordination, hindering effective counter-terrorism strategies. This lack of coherence in response, coupled with ideological and operational gaps, has allowed terrorist groups to exploit vulnerabilities and mobilize support through propaganda. For effective counterterrorism, there is a critical need for improved vigilance, surveillance, and collaboration between agencies. Pakistan's attempt to merge its strategy with Afghanistan through the "AfPak" concept has failed to bridge the operational gaps between the two countries, particularly in their handling of Islamic radicalism. The lack of a strong central state in Afghanistan has contributed to the persistence of local insurgents and militias, further complicating the regional security dynamics (Salman et al., [2024](#); Yawar, [2024](#)); (Zulfqar, [2024](#)).

The comparison between Afghanistan and Pakistan highlights the stark differences in their historical development, political systems, and socio-economic structures. Afghanistan, with its history of instability, has long been divided among warlords and has struggled with the lack of state infrastructure and governance. The Soviet invasion and subsequent US and allied intervention, alongside the rise of the Taliban, have exacerbated these issues. Today, Afghanistan remains economically stagnant, ruled by a wealthy elite with limited control over the population and limited efforts to improve civil liberties, especially for women. In contrast, Pakistan, established in 1947 with a more structured state and institutions, has a growing and influential middle class, contributing to its military and political stability. However, Pakistan also faces significant security challenges, with its military operations in areas like South Waziristan receiving strong support from this middle class. The relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan has fluctuated, with occasional cooperation but ongoing tensions, especially over the Taliban and the Haqqani network. Despite efforts at diplomacy, such as the visit by Afghan President Ashraf Ghani to Pakistan's military headquarters, relations between the two countries have soured, with accusations of terrorism and diplomatic challenges complicating any potential peace efforts. Additionally, Afghanistan's failure to develop effective governance and meet the public's needs further deepens the instability in the region. (Shahzad & Falki, [2024](#); Bukhari, et al., [2024](#)). For Pakistan to be allowed to interact with and influence Afghanistan, Pakistan has to understand and respect Afghanistan's sovereignty and pride. Even the condition of being a neighbour does not exempt Pakistan from criticism; Afghanistan cannot be treated as a client state, and anger only grows when, instead of being responsive to Afghan concerns, Pakistan seeks to dismiss them using the Saudi-Yemen conflict as an excuse. Such a plan would be more constructive, especially if a strategic dialogue with Afghanistan begins, strengthening all of the stated initiatives through practical work. Afghanistan is a country that needs help, and, at the same time, Pakistan needs to turn Afghanistan into an ally, which is possible only with the help of a complex approach that implies dealing with the security problems and mentally preparing Afghanistan for the economic collapse. The follow-up measures and policies to reduce the risk of more provocative actions will have to be defined further (Qureshi, [2024](#)).

Research Gap

Afghanistan's Domestic Politics

Most of the publications are devoted to internal Taliban regulation, its position towards Afghan citizens, and the violations of human rights, particularly the rights of women and representatives of ethnic minorities. Nevertheless, there remains considerable evidence that very little effort has been made to provide exhaustive coverage of the external consequences of the Taliban's return, particularly in relation to the country of Pakistan.

Regional Security Dynamics

Although there are works that review how the emergence of the Taliban affects regional states including Iran and China and India, Pakistan is generally analyzed from a standalone security viewpoint. There is a more process-linked deficiency regarding the highly integrative examination of how the Taliban rise in Afghanistan Furthermore, how this influences Pakistan's security threats of cross border terrorism, militancy and insurgency.

Pakistan's Foreign Policy

Though much has been written and researched about Pakistan's foreign policy since the return of the Taliban, minimal literature exists on its foreign policy in relation to superpowers of the world like the United States and China. Nevertheless, analyses of the specifics of how the Rohingya issue in Myanmar affected specifically the foreign policy of Pakistan towards Afghanistan and other regional actors (India, Iran, Central Asia) after the Taliban's comeback can still be considered insufficient.

Cross-Border Militancy and Terrorism

Although the literature is replete with analyses of the global effects of instability in Afghanistan, shorter notice has been paid to its imminent effects on Pakistan, especially regarding the increased activities of insurgent groups such as TTP and ISIS K. This extends to how the Taliban's policies had this effect, on both a practical level, in terms of providing material support and safe haven, and on an ideological level.

Security-Economic Nexus

At the same time, related but even more significant connections between the threats to national security, border security, and the social and economic consequences of the Taliban regime for Pakistan remain understudied. Considering the fact that the Afghan conflict affects Pakistan in many ways, including the refugee crisis and economic strains on social services, its security environment requires a deeper analysis of how it is impacted.

Pakistan's Strategic Responses

Although overall studies on Pakistan's security and foreign policy responses to the resurgence of the Taliban are available, insufficient literature is available that scrutinises individual policies. For instance, how Pakistan has deal with the growth in militancy from the TTP, or how its foreign policy policy with regard to Afghanistan and other regional powers has changed with the Taliban takeover.

Theoretical Framework

Realism (Structural Realism)

Realism is most suitable for explaining the risks to security and choices of countries in the anarchic global system. Had it not been for Military power and alliances of states, in Kenneth Waltz's structural realism, states promoted their self-interest for survival at the expense of the rest. In the case of Pakistan, the resurgence of the Taliban in neighbouring Afghanistan poses a security concern to Pakistan through militancy, border conflict and ethno-political conflict spillover. Due to these concerns of national survival, the balance of threat and territorial integrity, Pakistan's conduct of foreign policy toward Afghanistan and regional security, critically important in light of the porous Durand Line and cross-border insurgency, is most properly located within this framework (Bryson et al., [2024](#)).



Neorealism (Balance of Threat)

In a way, this book can be seen as an argument against classical realism, which, in its focus on power and survival, appears rather as a form of neorealism or structural realism in its emphasis on systemic structures and balance of power. From Guarding, Stephen Walt introduced the Balance of Threat Theory, whereby threats come in a combination of military, geographical, capability and ideological perspectives. The Taliban's surge in Afghanistan creates a new type of ideologically related threat for Pakistan since the Afghan Taliban and their counterparts in Pakistan, such as the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the broader jihadist movement. The threat is further intensified by the fact that the border is rather open to allow insurgents to cross between Afghanistan and Pakistan, hence deepening Pakistan's insecurity dilemma (Bryson et al., 2024).

Constructivism

According to constructivism that has been expounded by scholars such as Alexander Wendt ideas norms and identities hence provide the construction sites for states. Based on constructivism, Talalani posits how the Taliban's regaining power has altered the strategic orientations of the structure and its neighbours regarding national security and sovereignty concepts. It is, however, shocking that Pakistan-Afghanistan relations are not only dictated by material gains but the changing identity of its two states Afghanistan, Pakistan's perception of the other state as security partner or a threat and its historical relations are other factors that define its foreign policy shifts (Sahoo & Goswami, 2024).

Security Dilemma

The security dilemma concept was described by John Herz; it means that actions of one state aimed at the growth of security (for example, an increase of army forces or strengthening of allied relations) destabilize other states and cause an increase in conflict. The return of the Taliban has put Pakistan in a security trap because to counter the increasing militancy in the country's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan provinces, security forces in the country need to be strengthened. While so, the existence of the Taliban has changed the security situation in Afghanistan in such a way that Pakistan has been forced to review its defence strategy as well as its interactions with other countries (Adelani et al., 2024).

Regional Security Complex Theory

One such strategic theory is B.B. Barry's Regional Security Complex Theory, which helps in making an analysis of how regional security is impacted by geographical propinquity and interconnecting security necessities. Because of the shared security concerns, the South and Central Asian countries, especially Afghanistan and Pakistan, together with the states of this geographic region, are a security complex. It has brought a new dynamic to this crisis in such a complex security landscape of Pakistan that keeps busy not only managing cross-border militancy and insurgency but also, addressing the issue of a humanitarian crisis in the form of Afghan refugees (Bryson et al., 2024).

Research Methodology

This research explores the impact of the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan on Pakistan's stability and diplomacy. It combines a literature review, interviews with key experts, and analysis of data on cross-border terrorism, militancy, and economic challenges. The study also examines changes in Pakistan's foreign policy and compares regional responses to similar situations. The findings aim to provide policy recommendations for addressing the security and diplomatic issues arising from this development.

Limitations of the Study

Limited-Access-to-Primary-Data

Owing to the existing insecurity in the region and the political sensitivity of the issues of the Taliban's rule, the use of primary sources of information, including government reports, local intelligence, and first-hand and firsthand sources, remains somewhat restricted. There are limitations on the availability and reliability of data compiled from both Afghan and Pakistani sources, hence limiting the quality of analysis in concluding with specific detail levels of insurgency, militancy and cross-border activities in the region.

Travelling-Security-Situation-That-Is-Both-Volatile-and-Flexing

The security situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan is dynamic and tends to change rather quickly. The findings of this study may become archaic as the situation changes over time, especially with regard to the latest Taliban policies, regional relationships, and fighting strategies. While some of the analysis might be applicable in present-day African politics, improvements or deterioration of political stability, issues with border security and relations with other powers such as the United States, China, or India could alter over time, making some analyses short-term or hypothetical at best.

Geopolitical-Sensitivity

There remains a huge source of bias due to political sensitivity on matters relating to the Taliban in Afghanistan and the role Pakistan plays within the region. Each of the countries has an opportunity to have some strategic goals appearing in the public interest protection area, which can raise questions as to the impartiality of the information being published. The research may therefore use secondary data which are tainted by the interests of the funding governments, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations with political or ideological motives.

This perspective is known as the Complexity-of-Regional-Dynamics.

The relations in South Asia are complex and have different players. The South Asian neighbours include Iran, China, India, and Central Asian countries. The nature and patterns of these actors' concrete interests may be incompatible or may vary, which might somewhat complicate the perception of Pakistan's foreign policy in Afghanistan. The roles of these regional powers, as well as newer security challenges (ISIS-K), have not been fully examined in this study because interactions are complex.

Limited-Temporal-Scope

This research is concerned with the short- and post-August 2021 effects of the Taliban's resurgence. Although it gives useful information on the primary effects, little is known about the future impacts on the security and diplomacy of Pakistan. Expressions: The analysis of the impact of the Taliban rule on Pakistan's internal stability, the economy of the country and the reaction of foreign countries may be somewhat limited because researchers have only a limited term at their disposal.

Lack-of-Public-Opinion-Data

This brings an understanding that the study is limited by the absence of general public opinion data both in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Thus, it has been seen that the public opinion and the perception of the common people in any two unfriendly countries can indeed prove to be potentially hazardous to the devising of foreign policies and the planned security of each of these nations. However, this study may not capture all the domestic perceptions and reactions that shape policy because of the following reasons: In Afghanistan, there is no freedom of political polls and scientific surveys under Taliban control; therefore, an objective assessment of people's sentiments is impossible. Similarly, Pakistan is a complex setting regarding capturing the general public's sentiment on issues that may be sensitive, such as the return of the Taliban.

Ethical-and-Legal-Constraints

In research involving somewhat sensitive data like security aspects and policies, foreign policy, among others, ethical issues may well and truly act as barriers to data collection, more so in conflict-affected areas. However, the legal constraints in academia, mainly with regard to the use of classified information or interviewing official government representatives in Afghanistan and Pakistan, can also help narrow down the study.

Language-Barriers

Certain important documents, newspapers, TV/Radio broadcasts, analytical articles, research papers, etc, are available only in Pashto, Dari, Urdu or other regional languages. The study may, therefore, lack direct



accounts from the actually affected population due to language barriers in getting actualization of region-specific information.

Discussion

Political Impact

The collapse of the Afghan Government: The lightning-like fall of the Afghan government was greeted by the escape of the country's president, Ashraf Ghani, on August 15, 2021. The fall happened within days of the final pull-out of the United States and NATO troops from Afghanistan, where they have been fighting for nearly twenty years. **Establishment of the Taliban Government:** On September 7 2021, the Taliban unveiled an interim administration that comprised of senior Taliban members. Many people did not like the fact that the Taliban controlled its government in an exclusive manner, and no women or people of other coloured skin (such as Tajiks or Hazaras) were allowed a position in the government. **International Recognition:** As much as organizations tried to negotiate diplomatically with the Taliban government until 2024, no country in the world has recognized it. UN has failed to provide recognition to the sovereignty and legitimacy of this government, and most of the world's countries, including the United States and almost all the countries of the European Union, have continued sanctions and limitations on Afghanistan under the rule of the Taliban. **Impact on Governance:** Thus, the return to power of the Taliban has produced a clear change of power associated with the strict application of the Sharia laws, setting a tremendous impact on rights, justice and Governance.

Humanitarian Impact

Human Rights Violations: The Taliban's regime has widely been accused of serious human rights violations: especially to women and ethnic minorities. **Women's Rights:** Once they overthrew the government, the Taliban began to tighten the screws on women and girls, barring the latter from secondary and higher education, limiting access of women to the workplace and their freedom of movement. According to reports for the year 2023, more than 1 million girls were out of school. Women also cannot without the company of a man and are compelled to wear the burqa. **Religious and Ethnic Minorities:** Taliban movements have provided religious discrimination, especially against Shia Hazaras, Sikhs, and Hindus. The Taliban once again has a rather conservative interpretation of the Islamic faith, and there are continual attacks on such people, with several murders and attacks on the said minority groups. **Displacement and Refugees:** The return of the Taliban also caused nearly a refugee crisis in the country. By the middle of 2021, more than 3.5 million people were internally displaced in Afghanistan and millions more have had to flee the country, UNHCR notes. A large number of people looked for shelter in other countries which are Iran and Pakistan; by 2023, the number of Afghan refugees has been estimated to be around 2.7 million. **Poverty and Starvation:** The United Nations estimate suggests that more than 19 million people in the country, which is about half the population of the country, are in need of food assistance. However, the important issue of malnutrition has not been fully addressed. WFP stated that 6 million people will face famine in 2022 (Bukhari et al., [2024](#)).

Social Impact

Education: The education of girls and women is one of the most publicly banned and internationally condemned areas by the Taliban. Sometimes, there have been some stated intentions to reopen schools for girls, but in most parts of Afghanistan, secondary education for girls is still practically prohibited. Education Commission of Afghanistan said more than one million girls would have no access to schools in 2022. **Media and Press Freedom:** Since the takeover of the Taliban, media freedom has drastically reverted. Journalism is targeted by arrest, harassment and violence. RSF, in its report of killed and detained journalists in 2022, listed at least 12 Afghan journalists killed and dozens detained. Independent journalism has virtually disappeared, as have most outlets, with others broadcasting under strict Taliban censorship, and many journalists have fled. **Impact on Youth:** This meant that young people formed a large proportion of the population in Afghanistan, grew closer to the earlier government, and had higher aspirations, so they were more affected. The younger generation has restricted prospects in education, work, and social life due to the regain of the Taliban in Afghanistan and, therefore, increased hopelessness among the youths (Raza et al., [2024](#)).

Economic Impact

Economic Collapse: We were able to determine that Afghanistan's economy plummeted after the Taliban restored power in the country. Foreign aid was temporarily cut off and constituted around 40% of the GDP, and the new government's and its central bank's funds, equal to about \$9 billion, have been likewise frozen by the United States and other international organizations, leading to an economic collapse. **Unemployment and Inflation:** Subsequently, the unemployment rate in the country by 2022 and inflation will lead to high living costs. Afghanistan's inflation rate rose to about 10-15% by 2023, which threatened purchasing power. **Foreign Aid and Sanctions:** The Taliban have caused a significant cut in the international assistance and developmental plans in the country. Since 2011, any international assistance has been contingent upon advancements in the rights of individuals, especially women, as well as governance. Nonetheless, whereas humanitarian funding from organizations such as the United Nations has been provided to some degree, aid levels continue to be low and insufficient in countering poverty. **Opium Production:** Afghanistan is still the third largest producer of opium; however, the Taliban said they prohibited the growing of poppy; according to some reports, opium contributes to the financing of the Taliban, thus worsening the Afghan economy (Mansoor Khalid, [2024](#)).

Security and Terrorism

Internal Security Issues: The Taliban rule has not returned to stability as many people had hoped it would. Despite the fact that they have influence over most aspects of the country the internal struggle with different organizations has gone on. The biggest threat is the Islamic State Khorasan province which is a branch of ISIS, active in Afghanistan attacks. These attacks have been on Religious minorities, the Taliban, forces and civilians in the Afghanistan region. **Terrorism and Regional Instability:** The occurrence of the Taliban situation has resulted in a belief of enhanced terrorism in the region. Afghanistan's stability has also come into question again, mainly because the Taliban has harboured and possibly will continue to protect regional and international terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda and ISIS within Afghanistan, which can pose threats to other countries in the region and even beyond. **Border Tensions:** Many neighbouring countries have been affected by increased instabilities since the rise of the Taliban. Regarding border security, it was the countries like Pakistan, Iran, and Tajikistan which have voiced an intention about the instability on their borders; with Pakistan, the battle is from militant groups based on the Afghanistan-Pak border (Bukhari et al., [2024](#)).

International Impact

Geopolitical Shifts: The substantive weakening of the USA and NATO and the return of the Taliban to power have changed the military and political vectors in the Central Asia region. To date, China, Russia and Pakistan are diplomatically involved with the Taliban; while China has shown interest in investing in the Afghan natural resources, Pakistan wants to ensure its interests in the region. **Humanitarian Aid and Diplomacy:** The problem that arises when addressing conflicts within the international community is the conflict between the humanitarian approach and political involvement. The UN and other NGOs continue to provide food and medical assistance to millions of Afghan people, and this is often done in partnership with the Taliban, which creates certain problems for the Western states. **Regional Dynamics:** The arrival of the Taliban has impacted its neighbors relative to power and politics, especially in issues to do with refugees, trade and terrorism. It is noted that similar to other countries such as Pakistan, Iran, and India, which have realigned their foreign policies to fit the new situation in Afghanistan (Taj & Khan, [2024](#)).

Environmental Impact

Environmental Degradation: The main environmental issues in Afghanistan, similar to other countries, include deforestation, water problems and desertization. These problems have not been resolved since the Taliban maintains political instability; natural resources are unutilized or poorly exploited. A drought crisis is imminent in Afghanistan as various crises deepen in the region amid worsening weather conditions. Taliban's regaining control of Afghanistan in August 2021 has imposed sensible and diverse dynamics on Pakistan's foreign policy and national security dossier. Neighboring Pakistan shares runtime historical, geopolitical and security relations with Afghanistan, and it has faced some challenges resulting from the



Taliban's comeback. This comprehensive analysis will discuss the impacts on national security means and ways insurgents and terrorism, foreign policies, and regional diplomacy (Anuka & Raymond, 2024).

Impact on Pakistan's National Security

Increased Militancy and Cross-Border Terrorism

The reemergence of militant groups, particularly Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), along the Pak-Afghan border has become a significant security concern for Pakistan. The TTP, which shares ideological and operational ties with the Afghan Taliban, has escalated attacks on Pakistani security forces, civilians, and government installations since the Taliban regained power in Afghanistan. Pakistan accuses the Taliban of providing the TTP with safe havens and logistical support. This has contributed to rising attacks in volatile regions such as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Additionally, the Taliban's alleged support for Baloch separatist groups has further destabilized Pakistan. Another emerging threat is ISIS-K (Islamic State Khorasan), a branch of ISIS which has been involved in several deadly attacks within Afghanistan and has the potential to target Pakistan as well. The growing instability in Afghanistan and its impact on Pakistan's security is a serious concern for the region (Baloch, 2024).

Cross-Border Tensions and Security Concerns

The Durand Line, a 2,600 km border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, remains a point of dispute, with the Taliban seeking to alter it while Pakistan considers it an international boundary. Tensions have resulted in limited cross-border clashes, such as in Waziristan and Chaman, as Afghan territory is used for insurgency against Pakistan. Another concern is the potential influx of Afghan refugees. Prior to the Taliban's return to power, Pakistan had already hosted around 2.7 million Afghan refugees. Following the Taliban's takeover, it is feared that up to 1.5 million more refugees may seek shelter in Pakistan, exacerbating the strain on the country's resources, infrastructure, and internal security.

Impact on Pakistan's Foreign Policy

Relations with the United States and NATO

The Taliban's return to power and the US withdrawal from Afghanistan has strained U.S.-Pakistan relations, with Washington accusing Pakistan of supporting the Afghan Taliban and the Taliban of harbouring groups like the TTP. This has led to reduced American aid and suspended military deals, such as the sale of F-16 fighter jets. Despite ongoing intelligence-sharing efforts for counter-terrorism, mutual distrust persists. European NATO members have also criticized Pakistan's alleged support for the Taliban, urging stronger action against cross-border militancy, complicating Pakistan's collaboration with Western allies in combating terrorism. (Singh, 2024).

Relations with China

Pakistan has strengthened its strategic partnership with China, focusing on economic and security interests, particularly under the CPEC initiative, a key component of China's Belt and Road Initiative. While China supports the Taliban regime diplomatically, viewing it as a potential stabilizing force, security concerns regarding Afghanistan have raised questions about the long-term viability of Chinese investments in the region. Military cooperation between Pakistan and China has intensified, particularly in counter-terrorism efforts. However, fears persist about possible militant attacks targeting Chinese assets, including those linked to CPEC, due to the evolving security situation under the Taliban regime (Nooristani, 2024).

Relations with India

The Taliban's resurgence has heightened tensions between Pakistan and India, with both nations wary of its regional impact. For Pakistan, the Taliban serves as a counterbalance to India's growing influence in Afghanistan, while India, which supported the previous Afghan government, opposes the Taliban's return to power. This shift could escalate proxy warfare, particularly in Kashmir, where Pakistan might back militant groups in Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir. Additionally, the Taliban's rise may unite jihadist elements, exacerbating security challenges for both countries and intensifying regional instability (Madni et al., 2024).

Relations with Iran and Central Asia

Iran's cautious approach to the Taliban stems from distrust over the group's treatment of Shia Muslims and concerns about regional security, including Baluchistan's vulnerability and drug trafficking from Afghanistan. These shared challenges have strengthened Iran-Pakistan relations. Meanwhile, Central Asian states like Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan are wary of the Taliban's impact on regional stability. Pakistan has sought to maintain positive ties with these nations to mitigate Afghanistan's influence, though fears of Taliban-linked militant groups persist as a significant regional threat (Nwinkol & Kia, 2024).

Findings

The Taliban's takeover in August 2021 brought significant changes to Afghanistan and Pakistan, particularly in power dynamics and regional security. The fall of the Afghan government, marked by President Ashraf Ghani's departure, left Afghanistan under Taliban rule without official diplomatic recognition as of 2024. This shift exacerbated security threats in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces, where insurgency and militancy intensified. Groups like the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) escalated attacks, exploiting Afghanistan as a base, while Baloch separatists like the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) leveraged the instability for operations. Meanwhile, the Taliban's perceived ties with ISIS-K and Al-Qaeda raised fears of Afghanistan becoming a haven for global terrorism. The Durand Line remains a contentious border, fueling cross-border clashes and complicating relations. The influx of Afghan refugees has strained Pakistan's resources, with economic instability, unemployment, and inflation worsening in affected regions. International sanctions on Afghanistan under Taliban rule have further deepened the humanitarian crisis, indirectly impacting Pakistan. While Pakistan grapples with these challenges, its security, economic, and diplomatic relations remain constrained by the broader instability in Afghanistan.

Conclusion

The Taliban regime's return to power in August 2021 has profoundly impacted Afghanistan and neighbouring Pakistan, sparking a surge in militancy and insurgency. Groups like the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), ideologically and operationally linked to the Afghan Taliban, have intensified their activities, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. The porous Afghan-Pakistan border and connections to groups like Al-Qaeda exacerbate cross-border terrorism, challenging Pakistan's internal security and stability. The Taliban's resurgence has also created regional and global security concerns, placing Pakistan in a precarious position. While Pakistan has supported the Taliban historically to counter India's influence in Afghanistan, this relationship has strained its ties with international powers, particularly the United States. US disapproval of Pakistan's perceived tolerance of the Taliban has resulted in reduced aid and military cooperation, prompting Islamabad to strengthen ties with China to protect initiatives like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). However, Afghanistan's instability poses challenges to these projects. Diplomatically, Pakistan faces a dual challenge: addressing domestic security threats while managing international and regional pressures. The influx of Afghan refugees, combined with the Taliban's association with extremist organizations like Al-Qaeda and ISIS-K, complicates Pakistan's foreign policy. Balancing its security needs with its geopolitical ambitions, Pakistan remains entangled in the ripple effects of the Taliban regime's comeback.

Recommendations

IMAGE – Enhance National Security and Counter-terrorism Deceptions Military and security Operations, Counter-Insurgency Campaigns

The influence subjected on Afghanistan by the Taliban increased the morale of several insurgent groups, including the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which set base in Afghanistan. In turn, Pakistan needs to increase the counter-insurgency operations from KP and Balochistan through military forces and counter-terrorism units. Intelligence-centred information operations should focus on militant structures and sources of income. Border Control and Surveillance: The most concerning border that persists with much controversy is the Durand Line between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Pakistani government should



strengthen and modernize the combined border security apparatus, in particular, to use surveillance equipment, drones and electronic control systems to prevent the militants from crossing the border into Pakistan. Cross-Border Cooperation: However, the current Taliban regime still poses some reluctance to cooperate regarding these issues; Pakistan should still maintain diplomacy with Afghanistan to force the Taliban to seal their borders against terrorism. Pakistan should also extend efforts to achieve cooperation with Iran and Central Asian republics on principles of security.

Second Strategy, B. Enhance Internal Security in Conflict Zones, Localized Security Initiatives

In areas like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan, where there is a history of insurgency, the military operation strategy then calls for co-development. Therefore, engagement in coordinative diplomacy with the local tribal authorities, civil society and leaders from religious factions is needed to discourage extremism and guarantee the stability of these regions. Strengthen Police and Paramilitary Forces: Strengthen local police and other elements such as Frontier Corps (FC) to enhance law and order situation, particularly in the questions that affect states, chiefly tribes and districts, usually with negligible state influence.

Accelerate the Economic Activities and Business Capacities and Export Enhancement in KP and Balochistan, Set up Rewards for Companies, Tax Breaks and Financial Support

In Pakistan, measures such as tax exemption, low-interest loans, and investment in SMEs can assist the government in convincing some organizations with potential investment opportunities in KP and Balochistan in order to stimulate economic development despite security threats. These incentives could be directed to areas such as agriculture, construction, energy, and manufacturing because they may create employment and income opportunities in local societies. Special Economic Zones (SEZs): The government can open SEZs in KP and Balochistan safe regions by providing more facilitating policies to national and international investors. These zones can specialise in industries like textile, mining, and electronics, which are most suitable to these areas.

Infrastructure Development, Develop Key Infrastructure Projects

Infrastructure must be a focus of special importance in strategic vocations, which include the physical connection of the economic heartland to hubs, transport, energy, and communication networks. Expenditures on roads, railway infrastructure, and power-generation projects can reduce business expenses and encourage domestic and cross-border activities in Pakistan. Strengthening Trade Routes: For instance, the Government of Pakistan should utilize the CPEC plan to link Balochistan with regional markets and other international markets. The Gwadar port, for instance, has the potential to support regional commencement, but this has to be done under secure conditions and with support from a long-term sustaining investment.

Address Investment insecurity, Security Guarantees for Investors

Pakistan should provide insurance or surety for the companies that are willing to invest in high-risk zones. Pakistan can encourage more investment in essential sectors with the assurance that foreign investors' and domestic traders' stakes will be defended. Incentives for Agriculture and Resource Development: KPK and Baluchistan are gifted with natural resources such as minerals, agriculture, and oil resources. The Pakistani government should put measures into practice to ensure that the exploitation of such resources in business activities such as mining and agriculture is sustainable.

Address the Southeast Asian States Concerns on the Impact of Taliban Governance on Regional Security, A Diplomatic Engagement with Afghanistan and Regional Power

Engage with the Taliban: Pakistan has to remain realistic in its dealings with the Taliban and cannot afford to browbeat them. Despite the hostile relations with Afghanistan in the international community, there is a concern on the part of the regime in Pakistan that Afghanistan cannot continue to provide militants who are a threat to the stability of the Pakistan regime. Pakistan, instead of shifting the blame on Afghanistan, should urge the Taliban to cooperate in combating terrorism and groups like TTP who operate from

Afghanistan. Regional Security Framework: Pakistan to drag regional powers like China, Russia and Iran in order to make regional security architecture of terrorism-related issues and drug trafficking as well as insurgency problems. The need for such a strategy stems from the various concerns raised in the following areas. Nevertheless, such a view can be alleviated by enhancing the effectiveness of multilateral structures such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) or the Central Asian Security Agreements.

Alleviate the Humanitarian and Refugee Problem, Manage Refugee Influx

This makes it likely that there will be new waves of refugees in Pakistan due to the continuing instability in Afghanistan under the Taliban. The population of Azad Kashmir has been threatened with a refugee crisis, particularly in the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, due to the instability in Afghanistan's need for calls for enhanced border control and humanitarian aid on the part of Pakistan in conjunction with the international community. Support for Afghan Refugees: Pakistan must maintain the host country's support for Afghan refugees with its health facilities, schooling and vocational programs. However, it should also fight for goal-sharing internationally, especially with UNHCR and Western states.

Promote good governance in KP and Balochistan and enhance political stability, A. Decentralisation, local self-governing, and decentralization.

KP and Balochistan provinces require greater decentralization in the organizational structure as well as budgetary affairs. Some could be; additional monitoring of the expenditure of provincial budgets, devolution of more powers to the regional level, and improvements within the police forces. Building up local leadership and organizations will go a long way toward enhancing the governance structures, and this will enhance the operational tactics against militancy in the state. Community-based Initiatives: To enhance security at the grassroots, the government should support and encourage the formation of community policing and what I refer to as 'town policing', such as the existing peace committees and local militias, although they are under the control of the state. These initiatives will also foster closer working relationships with the military and the locals against the insurgents.

Engagement/Political Talk/Policy Relation and Conflict Solving, Baloch Nationalist Dialogue

Fights for the provincial status quo and more control and budgetary provisions are the causes of conflicts within the Balochistan political climate. Pakistan should include Baloch nationalist leaders in the political process to discuss their complaints, especially in relation to the demand for more resources, jobs, and power. It also needs to press for the rights of Balochs' and human rights abuses in the province must come to an end. Public Confidence: To a large extent; regaining the trust of the people in the state institutions will be essential in fighting the insurgency. This includes endorsing transparency in the political systems, eradicating corruption and making certain that development touches the people.

Connect with other countries for an economic and an security cooperation, A. Join the International Financial and Security System, Financial Aid and Investments.

Pakistan should lobby global and regional fund agencies such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and Asian Development Bank for investment in KP and Balochistan's security, as well as infrastructural and business growth projects. It also means that the government should direct investment to these regions in order to make them more stable. Security Cooperation: Pakistan can rely on its friends for technical/cooperation in intelligence exchange and fighting terrorism, in particular, the USA, China, and Russia. On the matter of border control, militancy and regional security, Pakistan's counter strategies against the spillover effects of the Taliban rule in Afghanistan will be relevant.

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