

**Corresponding Author:** Sehrish khan (Assistant professor and Deputy Director of Education Department, Gujranwala Institute of Future Technologies University, Punjab, Pakistan.

Email: [Sehrishkhan@gift.edu.pk](mailto:Sehrishkhan@gift.edu.pk)



## Pakistan's Security Challenges after the Taliban Takeover in Afghanistan



Muhammad Saad Khan \*

Sehrish khan †

Amna Muzamal ‡

**Abstract:** *The Taliban seized power in Afghanistan after the US withdrawal on 15 August 2021. Because of the sudden withdrawal of the United States, a political and security vacuum has spread to all of the regional states, and the state system has also broken down. The purpose of this study is to identify the security challenges for Pakistan after the Taliban regime. This study will also comprehend the different security challenges like terrorist insurgencies, regrouping of TTP, Durand line issue, and spillover effect. The research paper used the theoretical perspective of Neo-Realism to better understand the behaviour of Afghanistan and Pakistan in contemporary times.*

**Key Words:** Pakistan, Afghanistan, Durand Line, War on Terror, Taliban Resurgence, Extremism, Security.

### Introduction

Afghanistan is constantly in the spotlight for major powers due to its Geo-strategic location. In addition, for the last four decades since 1979, the past of Afghanistan has been full of wars, conflicts and bloodshed. Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was considered as the initiative step to spread out the communist ideology. This attack was encountered by the emergence of the Taliban. The Taliban non-secular extremist institution became shaped within the early Nineties by way of Afghan mujahideen or Islamic guerrilla warring parties, who, from 1979 until 1989, with the support of the CIA and its Pakistani counterpart, opposed the Soviet occupation. When the ethnic Pashtun Taliban took control of Kabul in 1996, they

became a significant political force and changed the name of the nation to The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan instead of The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Mujahideen had been a hit in overthrowing the Soviet-sponsored communist authorities. The Mujahideen took over America by means of 1989 and the Soviet invasion got here to cease (NATO and Afghanistan, 2022). The Taliban subsequently stepped in to fill this power vacuum; in 1996 they were being seized control of Kabul. The power was consistent with aspirations to set up a government governed by Islamic Shariah law, and their rule was publicly acknowledged by other nations (Linschoten & Kuehn, 2011). Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and UAE recognized the Taliban's regime. (Congressional

\* MS Scholar, Department of International Relations, COMSATS University Islamabad, Pakistan.

† Assistant professor and Deputy Director of Education Department, Gujranwala Institute of Future Technologies University, Punjab, Pakistan.

‡ MS Scholar, Department of International Relations, COMSATS University Islamabad, Pakistan.

Research Organization, 2021) There were good relations between the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. Taliban took over almost 91% of the area in Afghanistan with the help of Al-Qaeda till 2001. Al-Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden were considered being responsible for 9/11. America ordered the Taliban to surrender OBL, who had been hiding in Afghanistan, but the Taliban refused to hand over him. As a response, on October 7, 2001, the US and its allies launched "Operation Enduring Freedom" to combat the Taliban and its supporters. (Smith, 2010) However, after regrouping and fighting a persistent insurgency against US troops stationed in Afghanistan as well as the Afghan government that the US-sponsored, the Taliban took back control in 2021. Finally, on August 15, 2021, the Taliban seized control of Afghanistan and the US withdrew from the country. Bilateral relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan have never remained cordial despite sharing historical, geographical, cultural, and religious commonalities. The two neighbouring states have experienced many ups and downs since Pakistan's independence as their bilateral ties are marked by mutual distrust and antagonism (Qassem & Durand, 2008). Many issues such as Durand-line and Pakhtunistan, as well as insurgencies and instability in Afghanistan, have had direct consequences on Pakistan. The level of hostility between Islamabad and Kabul keeps increasing. Even though Pakistan has tried to reduce these tensions between the two, Afghanistan is Geo-strategically an important country. A natural corridor between the Indian subcontinent and the Persian Gulf and Central Asia was served by Afghanistan. Therefore, nowadays it is termed a "Crossroads of Routes in Asia". Additionally, Afghanistan is positioned at the junction of states aiming to be local powers and hegemony inclusive of China, India, Iran, Pakistan, and Russia. In this current situation instability in Afghanistan will ultimately affect regional peace and security. After the Taliban regime, Pakistan is facing serious challenges like terrorist insurgency, border management, terrorist movements across borders, Dollar

smuggling, religious extremism, and many others. This study aims to find out the challenges posed by Afghanistan in contemporary times and how the rise of the Taliban after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan imposes serious security challenges for Pakistan.

### Methodology

In this research paper, data is analyzed using the qualitative research approach to better understand the situation, people's perspectives, and experiences. To determine the answer to the research question, the researcher has employed descriptive and exploratory research methods. Instead of primary state sources, well-respected publications, internet analyst pieces, and media reporting are being used.

### Literature Review

According to Talal Makbool (2022), any tension in Afghanistan creates a threat to Pakistan, and that's why Pakistan wanted a peaceful withdrawal from the US without any civil war. Instead of this Pakistan faced many security issues by Afghanistan. One of which is the Non-recognition of the 2670 km Durand line by Kabul. He argues that TTP gained strength after the Taliban government in Afghanistan. After coming to power this government was released. all prisoners of TTP, making Pakistan in point of serious concern. There is a huge Afghan influence on the Tribal areas of Pakistan. Incidents like the killing of civilians and illegal Afghani immigrants create serious security threats to Pakistan. Another issue for Pakistan's security is movements like the PTM, which are financed by India and are supported by this regime.

Dr. Siegfried (2023) states that there is an observed 50% increase in terrorist attacks - experienced by Pakistan after the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. He claimed that the Afghan Taliban had surreptitiously helped Pakistan's TTP, which was another significant security threat. TTP expanding its circle of influence in Pakistan by including more people as a part of its terror campaign in Pakistan. TTP also rejected the constitution of Pakistan and held its own

government for border areas to challenge the sovereignty of the country.

Attaullah & Fakhar (2022) give an account of the security implications for Pakistan after the rise of the Taliban. This includes the TTP resurgence in Swat in Aug 2022 which creates concerns about Pakistan's anti-terrorist strategy. After the Taliban's ascent, there was a discernible surge in the frequency of BLA attacks, whether they were on locations for gas pipelines or on mining and infrastructure projects backed by China. All of these attacks put Pakistan's security in danger. Another major issue faced by Pakistan from day one is the border issue. Their article also highlights that many Taliban terrorists were spotted removing fencing from the border and threatening soldiers who were restrained from taking part in drills.

## **Taliban regime and security challenges for Pakistan**

### **Terrorist Insurgencies**

It's feasible that the undesired element will soon fill this vacuum after the US withdrew its forces and the Taliban seized power if the security flaws are not properly fixed. Not only will this void affect Afghanistan and Pakistan, but the entire world as well. Threats from terrorism in the area and around the world are likely to increase due to the Taliban's takeover and Afghanistan's changing situation. This is evident from the fact that numerous militant organizations, both local and international, have praised and embraced the Taliban conquest. Taliban influenced various warlords, and there was also an impact of the TTP, and Al-Qaeda, in the Doha agreement signed with the US. The Taliban government, on the other side, will face an existential threat from IS-K. They might assert that the Taliban no longer has control over their territory, economy, or authority. The security of Afghanistan and the entire world may further deteriorate in this type of scenario as it could lead to chaos and a war-like situation.

The region is experiencing a rise in terror and fear, with Pakistan being one of the victims. Factions like "Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan"

(TTP) have reemerged since the Taliban took control of Kabul, which is a worry for Pakistan and could threaten China's long-term investment in the region. As a result, China's People's Republic is one of the first countries to send \$31 million to the Taliban government. Pakistan also provided relief goods to Afghanistan. (Ghosh, 2022) Other Islamist extremist organizations now feel more confident and ideologically strong as a result of the Taliban's success in Afghanistan. The Taliban's victory gave Tehreek Taliban Pakistan (TTP) motivation to carry out terrorist operations in Pakistan. The Taliban's success in Afghanistan was encouraged by those who wanted to impose Sharia Law and the government of the Taliban there. The attack on the mosque of Peshawar is a recent example of TTP activities. On 30 January more than 200 people were injured and over 100 were killed in a terrorist attack in Peshawar. The attack occurred in the most secure zone of the city which is a hub of police and other security forces. The leader of the TTP splinter group Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, Omar Mukaram Khorasani, claims that his group accepted the attack shortly after it occurred as payback for the South Asia Media Research Institute and the Long War Journal's killing of Jamaat-ul-former Ahrar leader Omar Khalid Khorasani in Afghanistan last year.

Khorasani, the attacker "took responsibility and claimed that this was a revenge attack for the killing of his sibling in Afghanistan, which he blamed on Pakistan's security forces," Hyder said. It is evident that this is a TTP group because it is a splinter organization that joined the TTP in 2020. The TTP claimed that two intelligence officers were killed by one of their members at the beginning of January, including the head of the Inter-Services Intelligence's counterterrorism division. Security officials reported that the shooter in that assault had been located and killed in a shootout near the Afghan border in northwest Pakistan. According to one Pakistani think-tank, a 50% spike in terrorist attacks was seen in the country after the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan, posing serious threats to Pakistan's security (Kaura, 2022). Despite the Taliban's promises to Pakistan that their territory wouldn't be used against it, terrorism and extremism incidents are on the rise. TTP leader Mufti Noor

Wali showed his loyalty to the Afghan Taliban in the upcoming months, and Pakistan may experience another wave of terrorism (Samad, 2021). Since 2021, there has been a rise in TTP attacks, and this trend will continue in the upcoming months. The terrorist attacks by TTP had caused a delay in the CPEC initiatives. 32 assaults have been attributed to the TTP since August, which is extremely concerning for Pakistan and the CPEC. Arif Alvi, the president of Pakistan, and Shah Mehmood Qureshi, the former foreign minister, made an amnesty offer to TTP members in exchange for their surrender, cessation of terrorist activities, and acceptance of the Pakistani constitution. TTP stated that they would continue to fight for the implementation of Shariah in Pakistan and rejected the conditional amnesty. (Khan, 2021)

Pakistan is extremely concerned about the release of highly skilled terrorists, including TTP members. Among those detainees was Maulvi Faqir Muhammad, the TTP deputy leader. Speaking to a group in Afghanistan, he asserted that the application of Shariah is a step towards doing the same in Pakistan. Additionally, he reiterated his dedication to jihad and the establishment of sharia in Pakistan (Samad, 2021).

### **Kalashnikov culture**

From the ANDSF and townspeople, the Taliban had taken several weapons and ammunition. Additionally, they seized weapons, shells, military planes, and armed force vehicles sent by the United States of America and other nations. Taliban are now stronger and enjoying having political and military power with a large stock of arms. It is impossible to ignore the possibility of weapon proliferation in the surrounding nations. Now, Pakistan will witness a different Kalashnikov culture, as we have earlier. Weapons that were smuggled from the Cold War gave rise to a culture of weapons in Pakistan. The AK-47 gained notoriety in a number of militant and illegal activities. The Kalashnikov was widely distributed throughout the nation, and the sale of arms was the most important industry at

the time. The Taliban's large-scale seizure of weapons and ammunition has increased the likelihood of weapon proliferation and smuggling. In the upcoming days, smuggling weapons to Pakistan will be a profitable business (Wood, 2021). The Canadian research group International Forum for Rights and Security (IFFRAS) claims that Afghan traffickers trade US-made firearms in stores. They collected the weapons from the Afghan army bases. Then, in tribal regions along the Afghan-Pakistan border, these weapons are traded in arms marketplaces. In trucks transporting produce vegetables and weapons from Afghanistan, Pakistan was the final destination. The Torkham border crossing in KPK, Chaman in Baluchistan, Gulam Khan in North Waziristan, and Nawa Pass in Bajaur are the key entrance locations, it continued (Samad, 2021).

### **Border Clashes**

After independence, Pakistan had to address the Pashtunistan issue, the Afghanistan claim on its territories. Afghanistan claimed over the Pashtun population of Northwest Frontier Province (now KPK), Tribal Areas, and Baluchistan. Afghanistan did not accept the Durand line as a border between the two countries. Along the controversial border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, conflicts have regularly taken place. The frequency of these clashes has escalated since August 2021, when the Taliban took over control of Afghanistan. Even while the unrest in Pakistan's Pashtun region has gotten too serious to ignore, Pakistan had until recently played down the border clashes and advocated for a diplomatic solution. Following an incident involving Taliban squaddies and Pakistani border guards on November 19 near Dand Patan in the Afghan province of Paktia, Sajid Hussain Turi, Pakistan's federal minister for overseas Pakistanis and human resource development, tweeted that Afghanistan's violation of Pakistan's Kurram border at Karachi and Borki and focused on the civilian populace is condemnable. It is still difficult to address the basic differences between

the two countries. The most recent conflicts between Pakistani and Afghan security forces were brought on by Kabul's continued rejection to recognize the Durand Line as the two nations' international border. For years, this denial has been a major cause of conflict, undermining confidence and stoking hostility. (Kaura,2022). The Taliban spokesman assured Pakistan that militant incursions into Pakistan would not take place on Afghan soil, but voiced "sorrow" over the cross-border shooting. The Taliban spokesman assured Pakistan that militant incursions into Pakistan would not take place on Afghan soil, but voiced "sorrow" over the cross-border shooting. However, following a suicide blast in southwest Pakistan on December 1, the subject gained further attention. Following Islamabad's admission of culpability, Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah stated that the Taliban should be concerned if the TTP's involvement in the incident was proven. The attack was attributed to Pakistani Taliban fighters stationed in Afghanistan (Samad, 2021).

### **Taliban and India's changing relations**

The Taliban was nurtured as a key strategic asset for Pakistan's security apparatus and its anti-Indian policy. In Pakistan, prevailing wisdom held that the Taliban should rule Afghanistan in order to improve Pakistan's security. It has thus backed the Taliban in an effort to stop India, which many in Pakistan consider to be an existential threat to Pakistan (Pakistan Reaps What It Sowed: How the Country's Support for the Taliban Backfired: R/geopolitics, 2022). India increased its reach to nearly all of Afghanistan's provinces by making significant investments in trade infrastructure, roads, and dams. In other words, if not improving, at least becoming less obviously hostile in both speech and deed, are India-Taliban relations. This alteration in the relationship presented Pakistan with significant difficulties because Pakistan was unable to combat the two-front conflict (Samad, 2021).

### **Mounting Extremism in Pakistan**

For Pakistan's internal and international security, extremism and militancy have combined to create a combustible environment. A variety of domestic and external factors have fueled Pakistan's rise in militancy and religious extremism. For example, the Afghan conflict has had a significant impact on Pakistan's politics and society. Talibanization and Taliban-related militancy, which were regularly seen in Pakistan before September 11th and the U.S. military intervention, were primarily caused by the Afghan Jihad and following combat in Afghanistan. The 1989 Kashmir uprising, which India sponsored, and the Afghan Jihad were both supported by several hard-line terrorist organizations that emerged within Pakistan. a combination of madrasa training, spiritual guidance, and ties to Afghanistan (Pakistan: A Personal History, 2001).

Pakistan is undoubtedly going through the most difficult period in its history as a result of the continuous acts of terrorism and extremist militants. Religious intolerance, radical sectarian religious organizations that are quickly growing and becoming more violent, and religious exploitation have all come to define the society. Religious intolerance, radical sectarian religious organizations that are quickly growing and becoming more violent, and religious exploitation have all come to define the society. The biggest threat to the nation's internal security comes from rising militancy, which cannot be defeated solely through the use of military force. A comprehensive strategy that includes political mobilization of the populace to fight terrorism is necessary to reverse the trend of militancy (Samad, 2021).

### **Distortion of the national image at the international level**

The emergence of extremism has had a severe impact on Pakistan's international standing. No one is willing to believe Pakistan. All over the world, Pakistanis are stereotyped as terrorists and bigots. Pakistan is perceived as a nation of bigots

and intolerance that cannot be relied upon (Samad, 2021).

### **Prevalence of terrorism and lawlessness**

To further their goals, extremist groups frequently turn to terrorism. These groups have turned to suicide bombings in Pakistan, where terrorism is at its worst, to achieve their political goals. Extremists have given their global community of like-minded individuals a place to live. In Pakistan, terrorism and anarchy have taken over as the norm. 'Recent events in Pakistan have brought into question the capacity of the government to deal with the issue of law and order in an acceptable manner. (Jalalzai, [2007](#))

### **Flight of capital and decline of growth rate**

No one is prepared to invest in the country because of terrorism, polarization, and lawlessness. The ability of the economy to prosper depends on stability, law, and order. Existing businesses are closing in Pakistan as there is no new investment (Samad, 2021).

### **Political polarization and Instability**

Political polarization and instability feed radicalization and extremism, which in turn feeds these two phenomena. It is a vicious cycle, therefore. There is more division and polarization in society as a result of extremism and refusal to accommodate opposing viewpoints. Radical religious groups took advantage of the nation's political unrest (Samad, 2021).

### **Dollar smuggling**

Millions of dollars are smuggled into Afghanistan from Pakistan every day, contributing to the country's ailing economy in light of the US and EU's decision to withhold billions in foreign reserves from the Taliban administration. Foreign media sources claim that the outflows are aggravating Islamabad's quickly

worsening economic woes. A gang of 26 currency traders, merchants, and smugglers is smuggling almost \$5 million over the border every day, according to Muhammad Zafar Paracha, general secretary of the Exchange Companies Association of Pakistan. That includes the weekly maximum injection of \$17 million into the market by the Central Bank of Afghanistan. The unlawful flows will enable the Taliban to dodge sanctions after seizing control of the country in 2021. Pakistan's diminishing foreign reserves are contributing to the rupee's decline as it falls to all-time lows and the economy teeters on the verge of collapse. Paracha claims there's no question the money is being smuggled. This company has become extremely prosperous (Millions of Dollars Being Smuggled Into Afghanistan Daily: Report, [2023](#)).

### **Conclusion**

The United States of America, after spending \$ 2 trillion in an effort that failed to bring peace and stability to Afghanistan. There is a security void in Afghanistan following the US exit. Pakistan and Afghanistan have never had friendly relations since Pakistan gained its independence, despite having parallels in history, geography, culture, and religion. The first nations to acknowledge the Taliban government were Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Now after the US withdrawal, the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan is posing serious challenges for Pakistan. Pakistan is facing challenges like a new wave of terrorism, dollar smuggling, spillover effect, border clashes, and many others. TTP is the main element behind terrorist insurgencies in Pakistan. Since the Taliban took over Afghanistan there has been a significant increase in terrorist activities in Pakistan, as Taliban and TTP share good relations despite assuring Pakistan that Afghanistan soil would not be used by anyone for terrorist activities. Taliban and India's changing relations are also a major concern for Pakistan, as Pakistan does not want to front war-like situation. The establishment in Pakistan also assumed and saw Afghanistan as a strategic

depth, which had an impact on good relations. The Durand Line and Pashtunistan have been significant barriers to establishing harmonious bilateral relations. In the modern era, Pakistan launched some practical initiatives to eradicate the annoyance of terrorism, including the building of forts, the installation of biometric systems, the establishment of checkpoints, and the project of border fencing on its side of the Pak-Afghan border. The instability in Afghanistan has had a significant impact on countries all over the region, whether it be

Pakistan, China, Iran, Russia, or Central Asian nations. It is clear that regional actors do not want to see Afghanistan slip back into a protracted conflict, and achieving stability in Afghanistan—even before Taliban rule was formally recognized—has become a top regional priority. As a result, significant regional players like Pakistan, Russia, China, and the Central Asian states are repeating their warnings and holding conferences and summits to spread awareness of the crisis that could develop if it is not handled properly.

## References

- Samad, H. (2021, September 3). *Pakistan and the Taliban 2.0: The good, the bad, and the ugly*. Atlantic Council. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/south-asiasource/pakistan-and-the-taliban-2-0/>
- Congressional research organization. (2021, October 14). *Taliban Government in Afghanistan: Background and Issues for Congress*. CRS Reports. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46955>
- Ghosh, A. (2022, May 23). *Expect a recalibration in the Pakistan- Taliban relationship*. (n.d.). Vivekananda International Foundation. <https://www.vifindia.org/article/2022/may/23/expect-a-recalibration-in-the-pakistan-taliban-relationship>
- Hussain, T. (n.d.). *U.S.-Pakistan Engagement: The War on Terrorism and Beyond*. United States Institute of Peace. <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/sr145.pdf>
- Jalalzai, m. k. (2007, Oct). *The United Kingdom: Future Terror Threat* by Musa Khan Jalalzai | Waterstones. (n.d.). Waterstones. <https://www.waterstones.com/book/the-united-kingdom-future-terror-threat/musa-khan-jalalzai/9780955764608>
- Kaura, V. (2022, December 2). *Pakistan-Afghan Taliban relations face mounting challenges*. (n.d.). Middle East Institute. <https://www.mei.edu/publications/pakistan-afghan-taliban-relations-face-mounting-challenges>
- Khan, D. (2021, September 15). *Govt open to pardon for TTP members if they give up terror activities, surrender: FM Qureshi*. DAWN.COM. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1646548>
- Millions of dollars being smuggled into Afghanistan daily: report*. (2023, February 8). The News. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1038584-millions-of-dollars-being-smuggled-into-afghanistan-daily-report>
- NATO and Afghanistan. (2022, August 31). *NATO*. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_8189.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_8189.htm)
- Pakistan Reaps What It Sowed: How the Country's Support for the Taliban Backfired: r/geopolitics. (2022, May 24). *Reddit*. [https://www.reddit.com/r/geopolitics/comments/ux49cf/pakistan\\_reaps\\_w](https://www.reddit.com/r/geopolitics/comments/ux49cf/pakistan_reaps_w)
- Smith, B. (2010, February 26). *The legal basis for the invasion of Afghanistan*. UK Parliament. <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN05340/SN05340.pdf>
- Van Linschoten, A. S., & Kuehn, F. (2011, feb). *Separating the Taliban from al-Qaeda: The Core of Success in Afghanistan*. (n.d.). <https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/wps/cic/0021267/index.html>
- Wood, J. (2021, August 27). *Taliban takeover is likely to drive regional, global terrorism threats*. Control Risks. <https://www.controlrisks.com/our-thinking/insights/taliban-takeover-likely-to-drive-regional-global-terrorism-threats>