



## Analysing the Resurgence of Terrorism in Pakistan: Causes and Remedies

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### Abstract

This research article explores the ‘Resurgence of Terrorism in Pakistan’ since the withdrawal of NATO from Afghanistan and the Taliban takeover as the interim government of Afghanistan. It was widely believed that once the NATO forces were to pull back from Afghanistan, peace would prevail and bring an end to deadly waves of terrorist attacks in Pakistan, however, events took an alternate path. Pakistan has since suffered relentless attacks that caused immense agony to the general population. Facing political and economic instability, the resurgence of terrorism brought multiple challenges for Pakistan, causing an increase in socio-political-economic and cultural implications. Using the ‘Cyclic Theory’ of ‘Ibn-e-Khaldun’ and the concept of ‘Asabiyah’, this research will explore the resurgence of terrorism in the form of TTP 2.0 and the possible recommendations through which an end to terrorism in Pakistan can be brought.

**Keywords:** Afghan Taliban, Asabiyah, Ibn-e-Khaldun, NATO, Pakistan, Terrorism, TTP

### Introduction

The search for the root cause of terrorism has long been debated. Proclaimed experts on terrorism have discussed even the mere definitions of terrorism, and from where it started. Much scholarly work has been published on definitions and the start of terrorism, for instance, the anarchists (1870s to 1910s) are considered to be among the first wave of terrorists. But what brought them together to launch a deadly wave of attacks against their governments, in France, Italy or Spain, has least been debated. It was a common goal, objective, common grievance, a meaning they assigned to their societal action that formed a common ideology, which bonded them together to rebel against the monarchs. A bond that Ibn-e-Khaldun called, asabiyah, which is a social cohesion, group solidarity or group feelings. (Abd Ar Rahman bin Muhammed ibn Khaldun, 1861, pp.851) But did terrorism only start during the first wave or had it always been there? As famously said, “One man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter” is a way through how different societal groups view violence or resistance. For monarchs, the anarchists were terrorists, while for anarchists, the monarchs were oppressors and terrorists (often referred to as state terrorism). It is asabiyah, a social cohesion, a “group’s feeling”, and an ideology that made the anarchists see the right to rule as oppression, while the monarchs saw the anarchists as terrorists due to their demands for rights. Many civilisations in history emerged, and they perished. Emerged by replacing an existing entity and perished either through internal revolts or external invasions.

Similarly, Pakistan seeded terrorism on its soil when it saw an external aggressor invading Afghanistan in 1979. Was Pakistan in danger? Was warm water theory applicable? Was atheism

knocking on the doors of Pakistan? Many experts, scholars and historians have already explored these questions. Who is to be blamed and who is not, there is a lot of academic discourse available. However, now that terrorism has grown its roots inside Pakistan, it bore sour fruits. Being a responsible country and the ally of the USA, Pakistan always sided with the 'world order'. Similar was the case in 1979 and later after 9/11. During 1979, seeds of asabiyah, jihad, a common ideology and common feelings, were injected to turn a nation into a fighting machine against atheist communist ideology until the founding father of the Afghan War/Jihad died in a plane crash on 17<sup>th</sup> August 1988. Soon, the defeated USSR retreated from Afghanistan which formed a power vacuum. On the other hand, the USA halted all its support for Afghan Jihad, and instead of filling the power vacuum, it left both the Afghan people and Pakistan alone, as famously posited by Ahmedzai who had been a prisoner of the Soviets for 11 years, "Afghan people have good memories of the Americans. During the Russian invasion, everybody knows that America helped us to get the Russians out. But when Russia collapsed, they had no more interest and they left us alone".(*Stirring at U.S. Embassy Raises Hopes of Afghans*, 2001) Pakistan alone had to deal with Afghan refugees and the civil war that ensued inside Afghanistan.

In contrast, tired of the civil war, and ruthless warlords of Afghanistan, gave birth to the Afghan Taliban, a movement started by Mullah Umer, who brought whole of Afghanistan under his control by 1996.(Maley, 2002) Pakistan was the first to recognise its legitimacy in Kabul. A politically unstable Pakistan in the meantime had to deal with a coup d'état in 1999, the war against terrorism in 2001 and a brewing war on the eastern front after the Indian parliamentary attacks. Soon Pakistan was engaged on two fronts, with fleeing Al-Qaeda hiding in the tribal areas of Pakistan while constant skirmishes taking place with India in Kashmir. At a later stage, Pakistan conducted an operation in Lal-Masjid, declaring it a state within a state, which turned 'Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi' founded by Sufi Muhammad into Tahreek-e-Taliban formed by Baitullah Mehsud. It was a common ground, a common ideology, a common grievance and a common feeling that turned TNSM into TTP, which to date is fighting a war against the state of Pakistan. In its war against terrorism, Pakistan suffered 83,000 civilian casualties,(*83,000 Lives Lost in Pakistan's War on Terrorism*, 2021) the highest being 10,355 in 2009,(Pakistan Security Report 2009, 2010) with a declining trend from 2015 onwards. However, once the NATO forces withdrew its forces from Afghanistan, Pakistan saw a sharp rise in terrorist incidents. In 2021 alone, TTP claimed 282 attacks, while in 2022 TTP claimed 367 attacks.(Pakistan Security Report 2022, 2023) A sharp rise compared to 2020, in which TTP claimed 177 attacks. The period from 2021 onwards, is known as the resurgence of terrorism period in Pakistan, to be specific, the rise of TTP 2.0. What caused such a sharp rise is the area of interest for this research paper. Were the NATO weapons, which were left behind in Afghanistan, a reason that made TTP stronger? Is the lower leadership of the Afghan Taliban and its foot soldiers under the control of higher leadership? Are the lower ranks of Afghan Taliban threatening to join ISKP? After Operation Zarb-e-Azab and Operation Rad-ul-Fasaad, followed by non-kinetic tactics, what made the TTP rise again that turned into TTP 2.0? All questions will be explored in this research paper.

## Literature Review

Pakistan fought against the menace of terrorism for at least two decades with high hopes that the third decade would be spent peacefully. However, since the Afghan Taliban took over, the power vacuum left behind by NATO forces has caused a resurgence of terrorism once again through the western borders of Pakistan. Previously, a lot of literature has been published related to Pakistan and terrorism. In the article "Terrorism in Pakistan: A Critical Analysis", published in 2022, the authors "Fazal Elahi Bilal", "Rashida Abbas", and "Muhammad Akif Rashid" have argued that Pakistan has been a victim of terrorism since 9/11 attacks claiming that since the start of the global war against terrorism Pakistan has suffered both material and human losses. They have emphasised that the causes of terrorism in Pakistan include certain factors like poverty, lack of education,

human rights violations, grievances and repressions etc., concluding that the exact reasons for terrorism in Pakistan cannot be identified as there are multiple causes of terrorism and that a direct link between any factor and terrorism is always difficult to identify, making the nature of terrorism in Pakistan complex. (Bilal et al., 2022) To add to it, 'Syed Ali Abbas' and 'Shabib Haider Syed' in their article 'Sectarian terrorism in Pakistan: Causes, Impact and Remedies' published in 2021 have discussed in detail sectarian terrorism and the influence external countries have on sectarian terrorism in Pakistan. They have studied terrorism with special reference to Iran, India and KSA, suggesting that both Iran and KSA have influenced the sectarian violence inside Pakistan from 1973 till 2017. (Abbas & Syed, 2021)

Furthermore, 'Zahid Iqbal' and 'Sumaira Lodhi', in the article 'Extremist and Religious Violence: An Economic Overview of Pakistan' published in 2015, have asserted that the weak economy of Pakistan is due to the flawed policies, corruption, weak governance and government's failed strategies to counter extremism. Due to the increase in extremism and terrorism, Pakistan has portrayed an unfavourable environment for foreign direct investment, thereby facing further repercussions. (Iqbal & Lodhi, 2015) Moreover, 'Aisha Ismail' and 'Shehla Amjad' in their article published in 2014 'Determinants of terrorism in Pakistan: An empirical investigation', have utilized the 'Johansen co-integration technique' to study the relationship between terrorism and unemployment, political instability, poverty, inflation, illiteracy, and inequality; concluding that increase or decrease in these factors have a direct impact on the increase and decrease in terrorism inside Pakistan. (Ismail & Amjad, 2014) Currently, there is not enough literature published to study the 'Resurgence of Terrorism in Pakistan'. Most of the work that has been published previously focuses on the terrorism that started after 9/11 and does not see the rise of TTP as TTP 2.0. Therefore, this article fills the literature gap by studying the 'Resurgence of Terrorism in Pakistan through 'Ibn-e-Khaldun's Cyclic Theory' and 'Asabiya's' lens thus introducing a new terminology 'TTP 2.0' to explain the rise/resurgence of terrorism since November 2021 onwards.

## **Material and Methods**

The methods utilized in this research are both qualitative and quantitative in nature. Theoretical applications of this research are inductive in nature as it made use of Ibn-Khaldun's cyclic theory at a micro level to study terrorism in Pakistan, which has never been done before. Moreover, this study is exploratory to gain insight into the resurgence of terrorism in Pakistan, based on mostly secondary sources.

## **Theoretical Framework: TTP 2.0, Ibn-e-Khaldun's Cyclic Theory and Asabiyah**

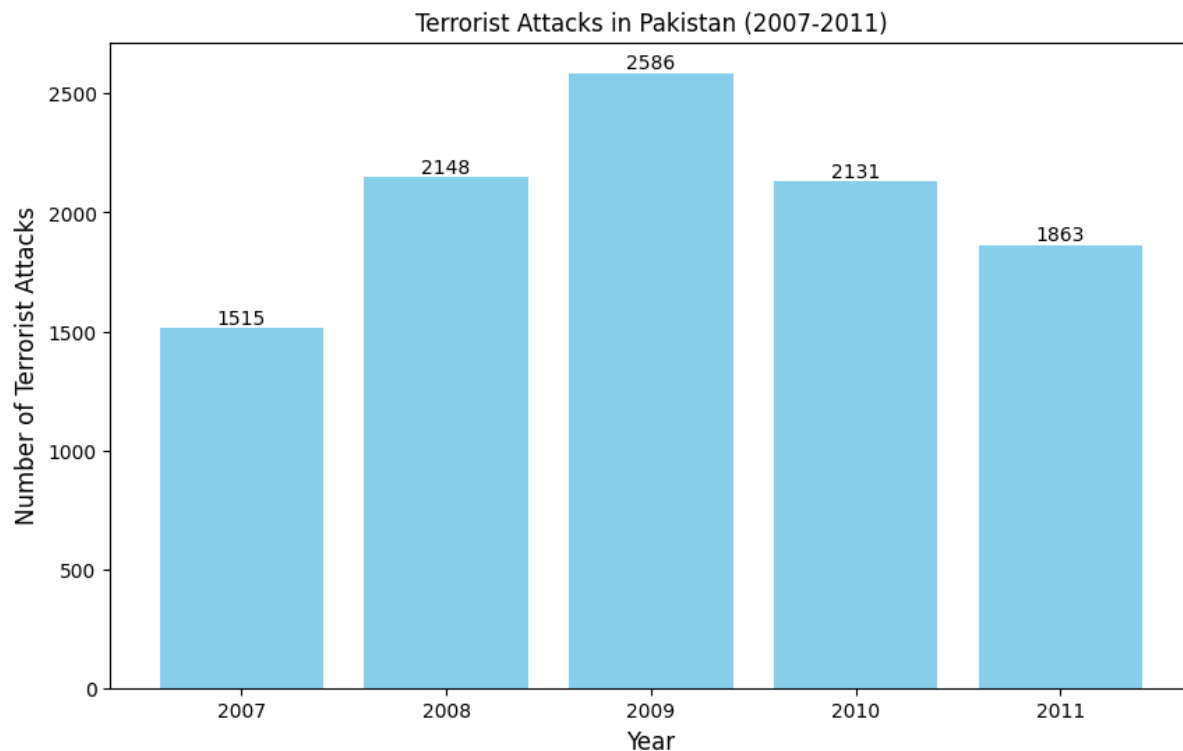
The realist school of thought believes that states seek to survive and maintain the status quo. To maintain that status quo, the state utilizes repressive state apparatuses, which are, using all the means at the state's disposal to bring in conditions that are favourable to the ruling elites and maintain the status quo. But what it fails to explain, is why would a certain group rise to challenge the status quo? 'Abd Ar Rahman bin Muhammed ibn Khaldun' in his book 'The Muqaddimah' not only explains the rise of a societal group but explains what causes the downfall of a societal group. (Abd Ar Rahman bin Muhammed ibn Khaldun, 1861, pp. 227–375) 'Ibn Khaldun' has applied most of his concepts on a macro level (dynasty level), however, these concepts can be narrowed down to a micro level to understand the bonding of a societal group, based on a common feeling, that makes them radical and turn against a state. It can be applied to understand the resurgence of TTP 2.0, and how possibly it can be eliminated.

*"Royal authority and large dynastic (power) is attained only through a group and group feeling."* (Abd Ar Rahman bin Muhammed ibn Khaldun, 1861, p. 205)

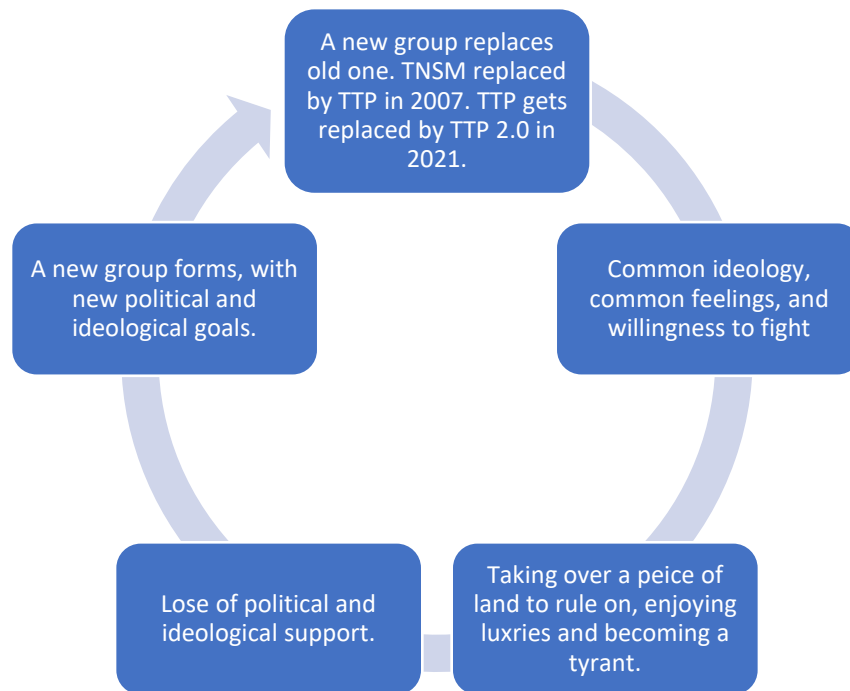
'Ibn Khaldun' argued in 'Muqaddimah' that authority and power can only be attained through group feelings, feelings based on common ground. Now seeing it in terms of TTP, it found a common ground in the form of religion.

*“Aggressive and defensive strength is obtained only through group feeling which means (mutual) affection and willingness to fight and die for each other”.*(Abd Ar Rahman bin Muhammed ibn Khaldun, 1861, p. 205)

After the Lal Masjid operation, the ‘Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi’ (TNSM) expressed a mutual affection and sentiment, alleging that President Musharraf’s ‘Operation Sunrise’ was conducted solely to appease China and Western nations. (‘Lal Masjid - Radical Bastion in Pakistani Capital’, 2007) The lower leadership and individuals also had a sense of failure that TNSM failed to stop the ‘Siege of Lal Masjid’. ‘Operation Sunrise’ showed TNSM, a group based on common feelings and ideology, willingness to fight and die for each other. This made Mulvi Fazulla join Baitullah Mehsud’s newly formed group TTP. What happened later, was a series of suicide bombings and terrorist attacks that covered every part of Pakistan from 2007 and onwards. In 3 years after ‘Operation Sunrise’ Pakistan suffered 6,249 terrorist attacks according to PIPS report, with 2009 being the worst in Pakistan’s history. (Pakistan Security Report 2009, 2010)



(Source: PIPS Security Reports 2007-2011)



To understand the cyclic theory shown in the figure above, one needs to know some historical background to understand the contemporary rise of TTP 2.0. TNSM was founded back in 1989 by Sufi Muhammad. Previously he had been with ‘Jamaat e Islami’ but due to a political and ideological schism, Sufi Muhammad formed his extremist organisation to implement his version of Islamic Sharia in Tribal Areas of Pakistan. During the 1990s TNSM launched two armed rebellions against the state of Pakistan for the implementation of Sharia Law. Why did TNSM launch armed rebellions in the first place? Well, they had a general grievance that the courts were not doing enough to provide them justice. TNSM brought a new system that replaced the justice system in the tribal areas on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1994 after the governor of NWFP allowed the implementation of Sharia Law.(Fayyaz, 2010) Here as well, one can see a new system replacing the old one, a cyclic theory in action. However, TNSM was later replaced by TTP in 2007, again a cyclic theory in action. Later TTP was defeated both on ideological and military fronts by the state of Pakistan, yet again, a resurgence was seen in the form of the rise of TTP 2.0. All events will be explained in a sequence. Sufi Muhammad was arrested back in January 2002 due to encouraging armed struggles against US-led NATO forces and demanding the implementation of sharia laws in tribal areas of Pakistan again. This led to TNSM being banned and declared as a terrorist organisation. Later his son-in-law ‘Mulvi Fazullah’ also known as ‘Mullah Radio’ took over TNSM and demanded the implementation of sharia law in Swat. The people who have had enough due to the lack of injustice in Swat were attracted and henceforth started to join TNSM. Women even donated gold jewellery to the cause of TNSM, using which he further promoted extremism.(Fayyaz, 2010) While TNSM kept on preaching religious extremism and teaching its students how to make bombs, what it failed to achieve was to get Sharia implemented outside of Swat. In 2007, Musharaf Regime made a 9-point peace agreement with TNSM, which included allowing the girls to carry out education in schools and allowing polio vaccinations to continue. In response, all felony charges against ‘Mullah Radio’ were dropped and he was allowed to carry out his zealous preaching through FM radio. For the state of Pakistan, it was a failure as it allowed ‘Mullah Fazullah’ to continue his extremism, who later executed the APS massacre.(*Taliban Chief Behind Pakistan School Massacre Promises More Attacks*, 2015) On the other hand, it was the decline of TNSM as well, due to its supporters seeing it as a weak stance. In the meantime, the situation in Islamabad kept on growing tense due to Lal Masjid preachers delivering sermons

against the Pakistan army and calling them ‘Kafirs’. Later in July 2007, an operation was launched, in which all terrorists inside Lal Masjid were killed, and was seen by the supporters of TNSM as a massive failure of Mulvi Fazullah who failed to stop this operation. The TNSM was replaced by TTP in 2007, as the supporters of TNSM started slipping away to join TTP, a much more well-armed organisation, newly formed by Baitullah Mehsud in July 2007 after the siege of Lal Masjid. TTP had promised to avenge those killed during the Siege of Lal Masjid and used it as an excuse to launch terrorist attacks all across Pakistan. ‘Mulvi Fazullah’ seeing the disintegration of TNSM decided to merge with TTP.(Basit, 2014) This made TTP numerically and ideologically superior and allowed it to gain more firepower, ground, and support. TTP also claimed to be the iron brothers of the Afghan Taliban, which the leadership of the Afghan Taliban kept on rejecting, claiming that their goal had never been to attack Pakistan, but rather to defend Afghanistan from invaders. However, the lower ranks of the Afghan Taliban kept on switching sides. From the rise of TTP in 2007 to its peak in 2009 to its start of downfall after the APS massacre in 2014, TTP ruled tribal areas till 2018, when finally, Pakistan managed to defeat TTP both militarily and ideologically. TTP retreated to Afghanistan, where it was provided safe passages by the ‘National Directorate of Security’ (NDS), an Afghan intelligence agency.(Amir Khalil Sayed, 2019) Now, the question of what gave rise to TTP 2.0 is the area of interest for this research. Through Ibn Khaldun’s Cyclic Theory, this research paper will explain why terrorism in Pakistan has resurfaced in the form of TTP 2.0.

### ***Prophecies and Propaganda***

*“Dynasties of wide power and large royal authority have their origin in religion based either on prophecy or on truthful propaganda.”*(Abd Ar Rahman bin Muhammed ibn Khaldun, 1861, p. 210)

Ibn-e-Khaldun has applied his theoretical approach on the dynastic level or macro level, however, this perspective can also be applied to terrorists/micro level as they are an important component of society and they can trigger events that can impact nation-states across the globe, for instance, the 9/11 attacks. Therefore, the prophecies TTP believed in were that they were the army of Khurasan that had been promised in ‘Ahadees’. They believed themselves to be the ones to establish a caliphate under the black banner, conquer Hindustan and later free Al-Aqsa of Zionism.(Bahari & Hassan, 2014) But before they could do so, they had to establish an Islamic caliphate within Pakistan and completely occupy it. This religious propaganda produced zealots, who would sacrifice themselves only to fulfil the prophecies promised. The Lal Masjid Operation allowed them to reunite under a single banner and unleash their ferocious attacks on innocent people of Pakistan. (Fayyaz, 2010). 2014 onwards, Pakistan launched major operations, while countering the very religious propaganda and defeating terrorism on both ideological and military fronts, however, later in 2021, the TTP resurfaced again in the form of TTP 2.0. The phenomenon of its resurfacing will be discussed later in this research article.

### ***Using Religion to increase the number of Supporters***

*“Religious propaganda gives a dynasty at its beginning another power in addition to that of the group feeling it possessed as the result of the number of its (supporters).”*(Abd Ar Rahman bin Muhammed ibn Khaldun, 1861, p. 211)

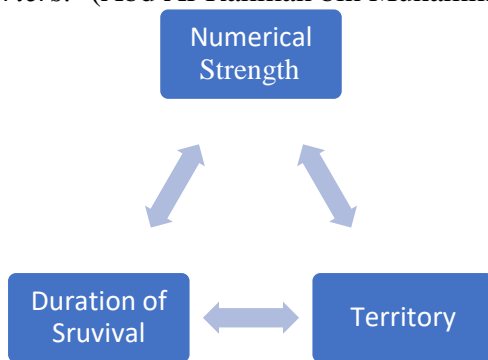
At that time the general population of Pakistan, due to not having a clear perspective, were against the operation held in the heart of Islamabad, while those living near Lal Masjid supported it. Once the operation was completed, many including the media of Pakistan showed sympathy for the terrorists in Lal Masjid. The radicals in tribal areas of Pakistan acquired this opportunity to gain more supporters, which later grew powerful enough to form a new terrorist organisation named TTP.

*“When people (who have a religious coloring) come to have the (right) insight into their affairs, nothing can withstand them, because their outlook is one and their object one of common accord. They are willing to die for (their objectives).”*(Abd Ar Rahman bin Muhammed ibn Khaldun, 1861, p. 211)

The sole objective of TTP was to avenge the deaths of Lal Masjid, overthrow the government of Pakistan, reject the constitution and implement their version of Islamic Shariah. This, to date, is supported by religious fundamentalists in Pakistan, and with the withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan, all guns are now blazing towards Pakistan. Thus, the TTP recurred in parts of Pakistan, with a strong support base inside Afghanistan under the Afghan Taliban regime. In 2018 the TTP retreated to Afghanistan and utilized 3rs, regroup, reunite and rearm. They bought time, reunited multiple smaller groups, rearmed using the weapons left behind by NATO, and emerged as TTP 2.0.

***Numerical Strength, territory and the duration of Survival***

*“The extent of its territory, and the length of its duration depend upon the numerical strength of its supporters.”*(Abd Ar Rahman bin Muhammed ibn Khaldun, 1861, p. 218)



At the beginning from 2007 to 2014, the TTP had a strength of 25,000 militarily trained and armed men.(‘Pakistan Army Eyes Taliban Talks with Unease’, 2014) After the launch of Operation Zarb-e-Azab and Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad, the numerical strength of TTP was reduced to 3000 armed men,(‘Country Reports on Terrorism 2019’, n.d.) when it had to retreat to Afghanistan. After the withdrawal of NATO from Afghanistan, the strength of TTP has grown back to 10,000 trained men,(Haq, 2022) however, one need not count the numerical strength of TTP alone, but the Afghan Taliban as well, the ideological brothers. The reason for counting Afghanistan is because they have now achieved their objective of defeating NATO and expelling them from Afghan territory. With no aim left for foot soldiers of the Afghan Taliban, they have now started to join TTP.(Hummel, 2023) It is estimated that the Afghan Taliban currently have a numerical strength of 80,000 and seeks to have an army of 110,000 highly trained men,(Dawi, 2022) meanwhile it also holds 652,860 km<sup>2</sup> of territory. Even if 25 per cent of foot soldiers decide to join the TTP, they will have enough manpower to gain territory inside Pakistan. TTP 2.0 has strong support in Afghanistan and some parts of Pakistan. It draws its numerical strength from both. Since the withdrawal of NATO, the complete focus of the leadership of the Afghan Taliban has shifted into stabilising Afghanistan and getting international recognition, however, the Afghan Taliban’s lower ranks, now left without anyone to fight against, have made Pakistan a target. With Afghan leadership trying to maintain peace with neighbouring countries, the lower ranks are continuously joining TTP to wage war against Pakistan. This increase in ideological and numerical support is causing an increase in the resurgence of TTP, also known as the rise of TTP 2.0 and the duration they can wage war against Pakistan. The increase in the number of attacks since 2021 as shown in Table 1, is evidence of the resurgence of terrorism and the rise of TTP 2.0 in Pakistan. Suppose the numbers continue to increase and Pakistan cannot counter them on both kinetic and non-kinetic fronts. In that case, there is a high chance that the TTP will again gain territory and advance within Pakistan. The

attacks perpetrated by TTP 2.0 in Miawali Airbase on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2023 and Chitral on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2023 with 500 strongly armed men were a glimpse of incursions made inside Pakistan.(Amir, n.d.)

### **The Rise of TTP 2.0**

The rise of TTP 2.0 refers to the resurgence of terrorism in Pakistan. TTP 2.0 has replaced TTP according to cyclic theory. The reason for using this terminology for this research is that the support TTP 2.0 now has is way different from what it enjoyed previously in Pakistan. It has the least support inside Pakistan but high support in Afghanistan. TTP 2.0 is far more well-equipped with NATO weapons left behind compared to its predecessors. (Hummel, 2023) Most of its high leadership including ‘Maulvi Fazullah’ has been killed and new leadership has replaced the old one. They have learned from the previous wars and have adopted new strategies, including investing in drone warfare. Moreover, TTP 2.0 has managed to merge several groups like ‘Jamaat-ul-Ahrar’ led by ‘Omar Khalid Khorasani’, killed in 2022, which had previously parted away from TTP, and ‘Hizb-ul-Ahrar’. Moreover, TTP 2.0 is also collaborating with the Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA), a secular separatist group, to further coordinate its attacks against Pakistan.(Samad, 2022) TTP had previously enjoyed the support of intelligence agencies like Afghanistan’s NDS and Indian RAW, however, since the withdrawal of NATO forces and the Afghan Taliban takeover, the NDS-TTP-RAW nexus has broken down, but TTP has gained weapons far more sophisticated, previously used by NATO, to attack Pakistan. To add to it, new groups like Tehreek-e-Jihad, responsible for the Miawali airbase attacks,(*What Is Known Thus Far about the Mianwali Airbase Attack, Its Attackers and Possible Motives*, 2023) are also acting on behalf of TTP 2.0, with the support of Afghan Taliban, which it previously had not enjoyed. Moreover, the armed militia of the Afghan Taliban, who had previously been busy fighting the NATO forces, are now joining TTP to wage a war against Pakistan. This is making TTP 2.0, a resurgence of terrorism in Pakistan, more deadly.

### ***The Resurgence of Terrorism***

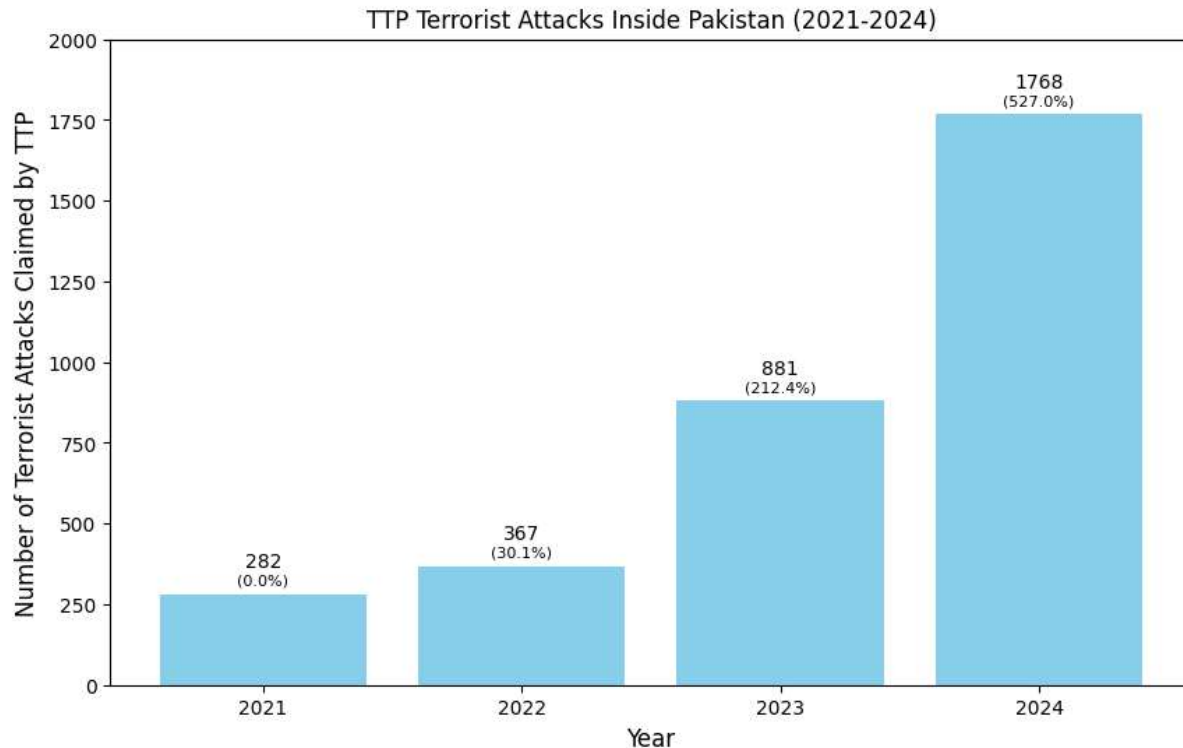
The resurgence of terrorism in Pakistan refers to the rise of terrorism, after a brief period of semi-relative peace, since the Afghan Taliban took over Kabul on 15th Aug 2021. There was a general and widespread perception and consensus among stakeholders of Pakistan that once the NATO forces withdrew from Afghanistan, it would ultimately help in reducing terrorism in Pakistan, however, the events unfolded differently. The cause of this perception was based on the intelligence reports that India had been using Tahreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) to launch terrorist attacks using Afghan soil inside Pakistan.(Siddiqui, 2017) Moreover, claims that Indian consulates inside Afghanistan, most notably the Kandahar Consulate General of India, had been funding, training, and providing weapons to TTP inside Afghanistan, under the umbrella of NATO; were another reason for such perceptions. On 15th August 2021, once the Taliban took over, many in Pakistan celebrated the withdrawal of NATO, hoping that the menace of terrorism would end in Pakistan, however, once the Imran Khan-led government involved the Afghan Taliban, to help them secure peace with TTP, a negative shift in the fortune of Pakistan became apparent. It was in November 2021 when the Afghan Taliban decided to finally mediate a peace deal between Pakistan and TTP. (*Afghan FM Confirms Kabul ‘Mediating’ Talks between Pakistan, TTP | News / Al Jazeera*, n.d.) Many analysts warned the Government of Pakistan from negotiating with the TTP, however, the Pakistani Government believed in having a peaceful solution just like in Afghanistan. The then Prime Minister Imran Khan believed that war was not a solution and while giving an interview to TRT Khan expressed,

*“There are different groups which form the Pakistani Taliban or TTP, yes, so we are in talks with some of them on a reconciliation process, and the talks are taking place in Afghanistan”.*(Dawn.com, 2021)



### **3rs: Rearm, Regroup and Reunite**

The government of Pakistan failed to realize that TTP was buying time to utilize 3rs, which is to rearm, regroup, and reunite. The new government under the leadership of Prime Minister Shebaz Sharif continued with the peace talks, which started to collapse after the drone strike by the US in Kabul that killed the Al-Qaeda leader Ayman-al-Zawahiri on 31st July 2022. On the other hand, the TTP 2.0 needed an excuse, just like the Siege of Lal Masjid, to launch their holy war against Pakistan. In the meantime, once the TTP utilized the 3rs, it launched a deadly offensive in September 2022 against Pakistan and officially ended the peace talks on 28th November 2022. (Pakistan Taliban Ends Ceasefire with Gov't, Threatens New Attacks | Pakistan Taliban News / Al Jazeera, n.d.)



As shown in the bars above, TTP 2.0 has claimed 3298 attacks from 2021 till December 2024 which is a 527% increase since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in 2021. All of these include target killings, cross-border attacks, rocket attacks, suicide bombing, IED attacks etc. In a nutshell, this shows that TTP 2.0 bought time through negotiations, and became even stronger to relaunch their attacks on Pakistan.

### **The Rationale Behind the Rise of Terrorism**

#### ***A weak Governance System leads to Corruption leaving a State vulnerable to Terrorism***

A weak governance system leads to widespread corruption. Due to both, a state is left vulnerable to terrorism. Moreover, weak governance and corruption reduce the effectiveness and efficiency of the institutions. This makes the Pakistani state an easy target for extremist infiltration. Many a time when the government, institutional and political apparatus fails to fulfil its promises of providing its citizens' basic needs and necessities, for instance providing health and education due to poor governance and corruption, this causes an increase in the grievances of the citizens.

*“Many people in Pakistan have grievances against the government, law enforcement, and the state. When these grievances and injustices are coupled with resentment, rage, and aggressiveness, some of these individuals turn to terrorism, as in the cases of Baluchistan, FATA, etc. When the state suppresses the problems of its minority, oppressed classes, or deprived sections*

*of society, these individuals resist and raise their voices. However, some turn violent and utilize weapons in retaliation for governmental persecution.”(Bilal et al., 2022)*

In Pakistan, terrorism and the rise of terrorism have similar patterns, as discussed above.

### ***Fault lines are dividing Pakistan Internally***

*“Traditionally, the society has remained divided along religious, ethnic, linguistic, and provincial lines. However, political developments of the last decade have added a new dimension, which has divided society into political lines.”(Ishaque et al., 2022)*

It is a fact that the nation of Pakistan is divided on ‘religious, sectarian, ethnic, linguistic and political lines.’ All these trends create a vacuum for harbouring terrorism. Radical young people often are a target for such activities. Politicians in Pakistan have long played religious, ethnic and linguistic cards to promote their radical ideologies. Similarly, TTP has targeted youngsters who are often easy to brainwash and have used them against the state of Pakistan, especially for suicide bombing by promising them paradise in the hereafter. Therefore, fault lines have played a huge role in promoting and resurging terrorism in Pakistan.

### ***External Influences***

Pakistan has a hostile eastern border and an unstable western border. With an unstable Afghanistan on its western border, it has become a breeding ground for terrorism. With the withdrawal of NATO forces and the Afghan Taliban being unable to fill the power vacuum, bring stability, and secure the porous borders with Pakistan, TTP found a perfect zone in Afghanistan to regroup, rearm, and reunite to emerge as TTP 2.0 and launch terrorist attacks against Pakistan. Moreover, terrorist organisations like Islamic State Khorasan Province, which is an enemy of the Afghan Taliban, have also collaborated with TTP 2.0 to launch multiple attacks inside Pakistan. Therefore, the external environment influences the resurgence of Terrorism inside Pakistan.

### ***Remedies to Counter Resurgence of Terrorism in Pakistan***

#### ***Breaking the Social Fabric and Bonds Among Terrorist Groups***

Firstly, Pakistan must break the social fabric that connects and bonds the terrorists together. Most terrorist organisations, that operate on a religious basis believe that their version of sharia law must be implemented in Pakistan. Pakistan needs to effectively counter this perspective through the religious school of thought which becomes a source of funding radical ideas for terrorist activities. Moreover, Pakistan must also work to improve the *governance system of Pakistan* and provide its people with necessities like, basic rights, health, education, and employment to address the grievances of the masses who are likely to get radicalised and join terrorist organisations because the grievances of the masses are what makes the social fabric and bond of terrorist groups stronger, as it makes it easier for them to recruit the masses. (Irfan et al., n.d.)

#### ***Promoting Social Inclusiveness and Tolerance through Paigham-e-Pakistan***

*“Experiences in development and peacebuilding show that more inclusive and tolerant societies are better able to achieve lasting peace and sustainable development” (Preventing Violent Extremism Through Promoting Inclusive Development, Tolerance and Respect For Diversity, 2016)*

Pakistan must work on bringing tolerance into the society. Tolerance would help bring social inclusiveness and remove xenophobia from the radical youngsters in Pakistan. Building an enabling environment for society that promotes solving disputes peacefully, can help counter the growth of extremism and terrorism. Terrorists usually exploit the narrative that encourages conflicts, and a society that has tolerance and social inclusiveness would block the paths for terrorists to recruit any manpower from Pakistan. Projects like Paigham-e-Pakistan must be promoted at educational institutions in order to bring social cohesion and inclusivity among the people of Pakistan.

### ***Empowering Local Governance System***

The true spirit of the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment has not yet been implemented. The purpose of the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment, apart from removing presidential powers, was also to devolve the government down to provincial and local levels, however, most provinces have failed to do so.

*“After the ratification of the 18th Amendment, provincial governments in Pakistan remain reluctant to transfer significant powers, responsibilities and resources to the local governments.”*(Mutawakkil, 2017)

By empowering the local governance system, Pakistan can ensure the effective deliverance of institutional services to ordinary citizens of Pakistan and can help foster community engagements. This in turn can make ordinary citizens the main stakeholders in the governance system and can stop radicalisation by early identification of the root causes for example unemployment or religious extremism, thus solving the problems that lead to radicalisation of individuals.

### ***Improving Law Enforcement Agencies and Intelligence Networks***

Finally, due to being politically unstable for a long time, Pakistan’s resources were diverted towards stabilizing the internal situation rather than focusing on external issues. Pakistan must now focus its resources on countering the resurgence of terrorism by improving law enforcement agencies and intelligence networking. Moreover, through effective intelligence networking, the state of Pakistan can dismantle the operational capabilities of terrorists as well as cut off their crucial supply lines including funding sources that enable them to conduct terrorist operations inside Pakistan. To be precise, Pakistan will need to build a powerful espionage network within Afghanistan to tackle the resurgence of terrorism. Furthermore, training law enforcement in open-source intelligence gathering can improve the capabilities of countering terrorism, as it makes it easy to track and identify the individuals promoting radical ideas and likely to join terrorist organisations.(Pearson, 1999)

### **Conclusion**

The resurgence of terrorism in Pakistan post-NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan is gaining strength with every passing moment. It is a complex issue that will require a comprehensive approach. By studying terrorism through Ibn-e-Khaldun’s cyclic theory and the concept of asabiyah, one can have a deep understanding of how these groups operate, from where they get their motivations for conducting terrorist activities and how they can pose a threat to nation-states by occupying lands, gaining numerical strengths and even establishing their own governments within the area they occupy. ISIS gaining land in Iraq and Syria and establishing an Islamic State is an example of a terrorist group overthrowing the existing governments and occupying the territory to establish their caliphate. TTP 2.0 is trying exactly the same, and with the strong support from Afghanistan, both ideological and numerical, it can threaten the territorial integrity of Pakistan. Moreover, such a fault line would attract other adversaries of Pakistan, to say India, to join hands and contribute to the increasing difficulties of Pakistan. Therefore, Pakistan must effectively counter the resurgence of terrorism in Pakistan by breaking the social fabric and bonds among the terrorist groups, promoting social inclusiveness, improving the local governance system that would improve the health-education-development sectors, and finally improving law enforcement agencies and intelligence networking within and beyond the borders of Pakistan.

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