

THE RESURGENCE OF TERRORISM IN PAKISTAN POST-TALIBAN TAKEOVER OF KABUL: STRATEGIC AND POLICY OPTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The descriptive research project reflects the success of Pakistan against the terrorism and combating militancy in the 21st century, but we are now seeing a resurgence of terrorist threats again. This resurgence is believed to originate from the western borders of Pakistan, causing concern for the safety and security of our country. The rise of terrorist attacks began just months after the Taliban Government took control of Afghanistan. Further study explores, the Afghan Taliban made a promise in the "United States-Taliban deal" signed in Doha, Qatar on February 29, 2020. They promised not to let anyone use Afghan soil to harm any other country. How is the new wave connected to the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan? However, the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (FITNA AL KHAWARIJ) are based in Afghanistan, continue to carry out terrorist activities against Pakistan. These attacks, originating from neighboring Afghanistan, have greatly impacted the security of our country and have posed serious challenges for our government and society. Furthermore, the particular research work shed light on three key factors contributing to the resurgence of terrorism in Pakistan: first, the underlying reasons for the increase in terrorist activities; second, the motivations behind this resurgence; and third, the effects it is having on the country and its people

Keywords: Pakistan's western border, Taliban Government, resurgence of terrorism, Policy Options, FITNA AL KHAWARIJ

INTRODUCTION

Pakistan has been experiencing an increase in terrorist attacks since the recent takeover of Kabul by the Afghan Taliban Government in mid-August 2021. This resurgence of terrorism has brought back fears and concerns for the country, which had successfully combated this threat through its military operations from 2007 to 2017. The current situation highlights the ongoing challenges and dangers faced by Pakistan from its western borders. In addition to combating terrorism, the Pakistan Army and Frontier Corps have carried out numerous military operations in the former FATA and even in the settled areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Province. One of the most significant

operations was Operation Zarb-e-Azb in 2014, which involved the Pakistan Army and Air Force working together. This operation targeted the North Waziristan Agency (NWA), which was known as a "No Go Area" due to the presence of terrorist groups like Fitna Al Khawarij and now Fitna Al Hindustan. In a major operation against terrorism, the Pakistani Military successfully dismantled all terrorist networks belonging to the Fitna Al Khawarij. It included destroying IED manufacturing factories, weapon and ammunition storage areas, operational bases, underground tunnels, and communication networks. The operation was a significant blow to terrorist activities in the

region and helped to increase safety and security for the people of Pakistan. (Bateman, 2022). Due to this operation and previous military operations in different regions of the former FATA, many members of the extremist group Fitna Al Khawarij fled to Afghanistan. They were welcomed by their supporters, including the Afghan intelligence agency known as the National Directorate of Security (NDS) and elements of the Indian intelligence agency, Research and Analysis Wing (RAW). It is important to note that NDS and RAW have been working together to target Pakistan through terrorist camps located in Afghanistan along the western borders. This has been going on since Taliban take over Afghanistan. They were aiding and abetting various terrorist groups, including Fitna Al Khawarij, to launch attacks against Pakistan. This assistance involved giving them shelter, teaching them skills, supplying them with weapons, and funding their operations, all while using Afghanistan as a base. From there, the terrorists would launch attacks on Pakistan, causing harm and destruction. Recently, there has been a rise in militant and terrorist activity in Pakistan after the Afghan Taliban gained control of Afghanistan in August 2021. The group known as Fitna Al Khawarij, which had been relatively quiet in Afghanistan from 2017 to 2021, suddenly became more active after the takeover of Kabul by the Afghan Taliban. It was a surprising decision considering Pakistan's role in helping the Afghan Taliban gain power through a peace deal with the US Government. However, in 2023, there has been a significant rise in terrorist attacks by Fitna Al Khawarij in the provinces of KP and Balochistan, causing widespread concern and fear among the people. The attacks by Fitna Al Khawarij on Pakistani posts have been ongoing, and it has been observed that the Afghan Taliban Militia, the soldiers of the Afghan Taliban Government, have started supporting these extremist elements. Rather than stopping them, they have often provided assistance to the Fitna Al Khawarij terrorists, such as covering their fires during border crossings and removing the border fence that the Pakistan Army has put up along the Pak-Afghan border. It has only worsened the situation and put the safety of both Pakistani and Afghan citizens at risk (Ayaz, 2024).

An Examination of the Incidences of Militancy and Terrorism in Pakistan

Pakistan has sadly been greatly impacted by acts of terrorism in the past twenty years. Looking at the data from 2000 to present day. While the early 2000s saw fewer terrorist incidents and casualties, the situation worsened over time. It is heartbreaking to see the continuous loss of human life due to these heinous acts. However, despite some progress, terrorism remains a significant threat in Pakistan, causing harm to both civilians and security personnel. However, during this time, there were still several terrorist groups operating in different areas of Pakistan, particularly in the former FATA region. In 2007, a tragic event at the Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) brought together several terrorist groups and gave birth to a new organization known as Tehreek-e-Taliban-e-Pakistan (Fitna Al Khawarij). This group was officially formed in December 2007, with Baitullah Mehsud as its leader. The incident served as a rallying point for these extremist groups, who joined forces under the guise of this new terrorist organization. The events that took place at the Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) in July 2007, known as 'Operation Sunrise' (Muhammad & Sidra, 2024).

Operation Zarb-e-Azb: A Major Achievement in the Fight Against Terrorism

June 2014, the Pakistani military launched a major campaign against terrorist groups, specifically targeting the North Waziristan region. The operation, known as Zarb-e-Azb, dealt a significant blow to various militant organizations. It was a coordinated effort between the Pakistani Army and Air Force to combat groups such as Fitna Al Khawarij, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, East Turkestan Islamic Movement, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Al-Qaeda, and Lashkar-e-Islam. This joint operation was a decisive action against terrorism, showing the determination of the Pakistani military to protect its citizens and maintain peace in the region. Despite the fact that Operation Zarb-e-Azb caused a significant displacement of the local people in North Waziristan, it ultimately achieved its goal of eliminating the primary militant group Fitna Al Khawarij in Pakistan. The operation had a major impact on the lives of these people, causing them to leave behind their homes, possessions, and

livelihoods. After the successful execution of Operation Zarb-e-Azb, there was a noticeable decrease in the frequency of terrorist attacks in Pakistan. (Shahid, 2015). In 2014, there were a total of 1569 terrorist attacks reported. However, there was a significant decrease in the frequency of attacks in 2015, with only 950 recorded. This trend continued in 2016, with a further decrease to 526 attacks, and in 2017, with only 294 attacks reported. The following years saw a slight increase in the number of attacks, with 164 in 2018, 136 in 2019, and 193 in 2020. It is believed that many members of the terrorist group Fitna Al Khawarij fled to Afghanistan after Pakistan's military operation Zarb-e-Azb. It is also suspected that they were supported and welcomed by the Afghan government and intelligence agencies, including NDS and RAW. (ALJAZEERA, August 18, 2021).

The Rise of Terrorism in Pakistan after 2021

The terrorist group Fitna Al Khawarij has been increasingly active since mid-2021. This coincides with the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan on August 15, 2021. A closer look at the data shows a steady rise in terrorist activities in Pakistan from August 2021 to June 2025. The total approximately terrorist attacks since the Taliban take over in Kabul around 7180. It is concerning that, even though the Taliban Government promised not to allow terrorists to use Afghanistan as a base for attacks on other countries, they were unable to prevent the terrorist group Fitna Al Khawarij from carrying out attacks in Pakistan. This failure of the Taliban Government has resulted in innocent lives being lost and further instability in the region. It is crucial for the Taliban to take responsibility and take strong actions against all terrorist groups operating in Afghanistan to ensure the safety and security of both their own people and neighbouring countries. Pakistan is currently facing a serious issue with terrorism, which is originating from neighboring Afghanistan. Despite initially showing support for Pakistan, the current Afghan Taliban government has been less than cooperative. This is in stark contrast to their relationship during the US and NATO occupation, when the Afghan Taliban was closer to Pakistan and had

some of their leaders residing there (Syed & Shabib, 2021).

Protesting Against the Afghan Taliban: The People of Pakistan Speak Out:

Pakistan has expressed its worries to the government of the Afghan Taliban regarding the ongoing terrorist activities committed by radical groups, including Fitna Al Khawarij, who operate from Afghan territory. Pakistan sent a group of influential individuals, including politicians, military officials, and religious leaders, to engage with Afghanistan and address the issue of terrorism. However, despite Pakistan's efforts, the Afghan Taliban government did not take any action against the terrorist groups operating from their soil. In response to Pakistan's concerns, the Afghan government simply brushed off the issue, stating that it was not their problem. (Centre for preventive action, 2025). This lack of cooperation and ignorance towards the issue of terrorism has only exacerbated the situation and hindered any progress towards peace and stability in the region. The government of Pakistan has expressed concern over the presence of terrorists from the group Fitna Al Khawarij in Afghanistan, who are using the country as a base for their activities. Despite repeated requests, the Taliban government has not taken any action against these terrorists, which is a major concern for Pakistan's security and stability. It is imperative for the Taliban to address this issue and take necessary actions to prevent further threats from these extremist groups. In response to these accusations, the spokesperson for the Afghan Taliban Government, Mr. Zabihullah Mujahid, stated that the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan does not condone the use of their territory to harm Pakistan in any way. The responsibility of maintaining peace in Pakistan does not fall on the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. While there has been an increase in insecurity in Pakistan following the victory of the Islamic Emirate, it does not mean that we are responsible for it. We have strict measures in place to prevent the smuggling of weapons and other illegal activities in Afghanistan. Our weapons are kept safe and are not used for any malicious purposes. The Afghan Taliban's Malatia is continuously aiding and abetting terrorist groups such as Fitna Al

Khawarij. They have even been known to remove the border fence along the Pak-Afghan border multiple times. This poses a major threat to the safety and security of both countries and their citizens. It is imperative that measures are taken to prevent such acts of support for terrorist activities (Shahzad & Zahid, 2023).

UN Report on Assistance from Afghan Taliban to Fitna Al Khawarij

It is believed that the Afghan Taliban government is aiding and abetting terrorist groups, such as Fitna Al Khawarij, by providing them with safe havens and using their territory to launch attacks on Pakistani border areas. It has led to increased tension and conflict between the two neighboring countries. The actions of the Afghan Taliban government have caused harm and disruption to the people living in the border regions of Pakistan. Despite their claims of not aiding Fitna Al Khawarij, Pakistan has presented evidence to the United Nations proving the support of Afghan Taliban for the terrorist group. The evidence was included in a report issued by the UN on July 11, 2024, which clearly states that Fitna Al Khawarij is a coalition of extremist groups in Afghanistan. This shows the danger of extremist groups working together and the importance of addressing their support networks. Fitna Al Khawarij is known as the "biggest terrorist group" in Afghanistan. The group has gained increasing support from the Taliban government, allowing them to carry out attacks in Pakistan from across the border. This poses a major threat to the safety and security of both countries. According to the UN sanctions monitoring team's report, there has been a significant increase in terror attacks by the Fitna Al Khawarij on both Pakistani security forces and civilians. This assessment is based on factual evidence, showing the severity of the situation. A recent report from the United Nations has confirmed that hundreds of security forces and civilians have been killed in Pakistan due to attacks by the terrorist group known as Fitna Al Khawarij. The report also states that this group is still operating at a large scale in neighboring Afghanistan and uses that as a base to carry out terrorist activities in Pakistan, often involving the help of Afghan citizens. According to the United Nations Fitna Al Khawarij has approximately 7000 members in Afghanistan.

According to a recent UN report, there has been a consistent level of support from the Taliban Government towards Fitna Al Khawarij since they came into power. However, in the past few months, this support seems to have increased. It is surprising to note that the Afghan Taliban Government does not view Fitna Al Khawarij as a terrorist group, possibly because they share a similar history and may continue to support them if their situation in Afghanistan changes in the future (Hassan, 2021).

The Connection between Afghan Taliban, Al Qaeda, and Fitna Al Khawarij

In order to understand the terrorism in Pakistan, we must carefully examine the relationships between the Afghan Taliban (who currently govern the state), Al Qaeda, and the Fitna Al Khawarij. It is important to recognize that the United Nations has consistently emphasized the connection between the Taliban, Al Qaeda, and Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in both 2023 and 2024. The UNSC's report in June 2023 stated, "The relationship between the Taliban and these two groups remains strong and mutually beneficial." The report also highlighted the presence of various terrorist organizations in Afghanistan, which then carry out attacks in Pakistan with the assistance and support of the Afghan government. This poses a significant threat to the safety and security of both countries. It seems that there is evidence suggesting that Fitna Al Khawarij is carrying out attacks in Pakistan, potentially with assistance from the Taliban. Additionally, there are reports of foreign terrorist fighters posing a threat in Afghanistan and possibly crossing borders. Given the similar origins of these three organizations, it is not surprising that they have connections and alliances with each other. It should be noted that Afghanistan was also displeased with the decision to merge the former FATA with KP Province, as it was a hotbed for activities that could harm Pakistan's stability. This move could potentially attract negative forces and create further instability in the region (Khalil & Shah, 2014). The actions of the Afghan Taliban, such as promoting militancy and terrorism in Pakistan, violate the sovereignty and security of a well-established state. It has caused harm and instability, making it difficult for the

international community to recognize them as a legitimate government (Ayisha, 2024). The Taliban's support of terrorist groups and non-state actors only further disqualifies them as a legitimate ruling entity. It is important for the international community to stand against such actions and support the sovereignty and stability of Pakistan. The Afghan Taliban Government's support of terrorist organizations, such as Fitna Al Khawarij, goes against the United Nations Charter and International Law. It is not only a violation, but it also puts innocent lives at risk. Their actions show a lack of consideration and disregard for human life, making them unfit to govern and unrecognized as lawful rulers anywhere in the world. It is important for the international community to stand against such dangerous and self-imposed leaders (Mcgirk, 2024).

United States-Afghan Taliban relations in post 2021

In August 2021, the United States and Western countries cut ties with the Taliban government after withdrawing their troops from Afghanistan. The US also froze \$9.5 billion in Afghan Central Bank assets, fearing they would fall into the hands of the Taliban. However, despite this official break, the US has maintained a secret connection with the Taliban government. It has utilized humanitarian organizations and NGOs to provide aid to the Afghan people and support the Taliban government economically. In addition, there have been meetings between Taliban leaders and US officials in Doha, Qatar and other locations. The US State Department has described the future relationship between the US and Afghanistan as a practical one. Despite the US withdrawing its troops from the country, there is still communication and cooperation between the US and the Taliban. The US is also maintaining connections with different political, religious, and social groups in Afghanistan, showcasing the unique approach of their diplomacy. Additionally, the US has built positive relationships with various members of Afghan civil society. The citizens of Afghanistan are receiving aid and support from various organizations such as the United Nations, non-governmental organizations, international governmental organizations, and multinational

corporations. Additionally, the United States has maintained a strong relationship with the Taliban government to ensure the successful implementation of the US-Taliban agreement, which is beneficial for both parties. We have also made sure that the Taliban is not allowing any other country to use Afghan soil for malicious purposes. Taliban officials are working to fulfill the terms of the agreement, except when it comes to Pakistan. Pakistan has been using Afghan soil to support terrorist activities against their own country, which is causing harm and chaos for both nations. It goes against the spirit of the agreement and must be addressed for the sake of peace and stability in the region. The United States never addressed the fact that the Afghan Taliban Government provided unwavering support to Fitna Al Khawarij, the primary terrorist group responsible for carrying out attacks in Pakistan. After the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan in August 2021, the country has still maintained its political and economic ties with the Afghan Taliban. In fact, the U.S. continues to be the largest donor state to Afghanistan, as stated in the Evaluation Report by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) in January 2024. The U.S. has provided a significant amount of funding, approximately \$2.6 billion, to the United Nations, NGOs, and other Public International Organisations (PIOs) for the betterment of the Afghan people. These efforts highlight the U.S.'s commitment to supporting Afghanistan even after their military presence has ended. Washington has consistently been the main source of humanitarian aid for Afghanistan. However, it is important to note that this aid may not be entirely selfless, as there may be political, economic, or strategic interests behind it. In the world of international politics, there is often a give and take relationship, and different strategies are employed to achieve goals, both directly and indirectly (Khan & Khan, 2021).

The Use of US Military Equipment and the Threat of Fitna Al Khawarij

As the United States withdrew from Afghanistan, they left behind a significant amount of weapons and ammunition. It included advanced technology such as weapon systems, surveillance equipment, Night Vision

Goggles, and aircraft. These materials were left in the hands of the Afghan government and military, but there are concerns about them falling into the wrong hands and being used against innocent civilians. It raises questions about the long-term consequences of the U.S. military's withdrawal and the impact it will have on the security and safety of Afghanistan and its people. The US Military has publicly stated that they took measures to ensure that aircraft were no longer functional before withdrawing from Afghanistan. However, it has recently been revealed that outlawed terrorist group Fitna Al Khawarij has gained access to weapons left behind by the United States. This has greatly endangered the security of the region, leading to a significant increase in terrorist activities, especially in neighboring country Pakistan. The US Department of Defense has reported that the former Afghan government left behind military equipment worth an estimated \$7.12 billion when the US forces withdrew from Afghanistan in August 2021. This is a concerning amount of valuable equipment that is now in the hands of the Taliban, posing a potential threat to the region and the world. The US government is currently working on a plan to address this issue and ensure the safety of its citizens and allies. The US government has provided war munitions to the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF), as confirmed by the Pentagon. Pakistani officials in the military and police have reported that American war munitions have been used by Fitna Al Khawarij terrorists against Pakistan. These munitions were obtained by Pakistani security agencies either from arrested terrorists or from those killed in attacks on Pakistani security forces (Razia, 2025). It has been confirmed by Pakistan's Defense Minister, Khawaja Asif, that the terrorist group Fitna Al Khawarij is now using sophisticated weapons provided by the US against Pakistani security forces. The use of these modern American weapons has greatly increased the danger posed by the Fitna Al Khawarij, as their attacks are now more precise and deadlier. Pakistani security officials have reported that the terrorists are able to use US-made night vision devices to spot and attack their targets from far distances, resulting in heavy casualties for their victims. The use of American-made weapons and equipment by terrorist groups, particularly the

Fitna Al Khawarij, has greatly increased their power and threat. The majority of the weapons used by these terrorists, apart from those previously used by the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces, were left behind by the American Military during their withdrawal. It has given the Fitna Al Khawarij an unfair advantage and made it more difficult for the Afghan government to combat them (Budihas, 2011).

Policy Recommendations and Way Forward

In light of the current situation in Pakistan where terrorism is a serious threat to the safety and well-being of the country and its people, we must adopt a two-pronged approach to move forward. This means combining both military action and diplomatic efforts to combat terrorism and ensure the protection of our nation and its citizens. Together, we must work towards creating a safer and more secure future for Pakistan.

➤ The military should focus on physically combating terrorism as the first part of their strategy for security. The second part, involving political forces, diplomats, intellectuals, and civil society members, should focus on a socio-political strategy for dealing with terrorism in Pakistan. It includes addressing the socio-economic factors that contribute to terrorism and promoting peace and stability through diplomatic efforts and discussions with various societal groups.

➤ Given the current state of global security and the ever-present threat of terrorism, it is essential for both domestic and international forces to work together in a coordinated effort.

➤ In the realm of security, the Pakistani Military remains committed to fighting terrorist activities across the country through Operation "Azme-Istehkam". This operation is centered around promoting stability by addressing the threats of extremism and terrorism. It is important that this operation is carried out in a way that does not disrupt or displace innocent civilians, and that collateral damage is minimized.

➤ The Pakistani military and security forces must prioritize implementing a strict border monitoring system through consistent physical checks, vigilant surveillance, and

intelligence gathering using all available resources.

➤ By implementing effective border management strategies and utilizing surveillance and intelligence systems, we can greatly reduce the chances of terrorists entering our country and causing harm.

➤ Another important aspect of our security strategy is to identify and target the terrorists who are already present in different parts of the country. This will be a difficult task as these terrorists, mainly from groups like Fitna Al Khawarij, have deeply infiltrated our society through religious indoctrination and coercion. We must work diligently to root them out and protect our citizens from their harmful ideologies and actions.

➤ In order to successfully combat this group of terrorists, the military must gain the trust and cooperation of the locals in the affected areas. Rebuilding trust and initiating confidence-building measures with the communities in these areas will be crucial in defeating terrorism. By involving and working closely with the people most affected by terrorism, we can increase our chances of success and create a safer environment for everyone.

➤ Pakistan must make significant efforts in the socio-political field, both domestically and in cooperation with the government and stakeholders of Afghanistan. There is a need for open communication and collaboration between the two countries to address mutual concerns and work towards a peaceful and stable region.

➤ It is also important for Pakistan to prioritize the well-being and needs of its citizens, while also considering the impact of its actions on the people of Afghanistan.

Conclusion

To sum up, the current tension between Pakistan and the Afghan Taliban Government has multiple external factors at play. It is evident that Afghanistan has been used as a base for terrorist activities against Pakistan, and this has serious consequences for both countries in terms of politics, society, and economy. The strained relationship between these two neighboring countries and the increasing threat of terrorism in Pakistan is a cause for concern for both sides. It is crucial for both Pakistan and Afghanistan to

address these issues and work towards a more peaceful and cooperative relationship as brotherly nations. As tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan continue to rise, it is crucial for both Islamabad and Kabul to have open and honest discussions about the strategies being used by external forces. This is especially important before it is too late and the situation escalates further. While Pakistan is currently the only country facing terrorism from across the Pak-Afghan borders, it is possible that other neighboring countries may also be affected by militancy and terrorism in the future. It is imperative for all countries involved to work together and address these issues before they become larger problems. The countries bordering Afghanistan, including China, Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Pakistan, must work together to combat the terrorism originating from Afghan soil. This can be achieved by forming a regional security mechanism that will actively engage and hold discussions with the Afghan Taliban Government. Through this dialogue, we can aim to bring an end to the ongoing terrorist activities in the region, promoting long-term peace and stability. It is crucial that we work together as a united front to address this pressing issue and protect the safety and well-being of our citizens.

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