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Countering TTP: Evaluating Military and Non-Military Strategies for Sustainable Peace in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

The resurgence of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has given Pakistan a daunting security threat and it is important that both military and non-military solutions for sustainable development of peace are analyzed. In this study, the effectiveness and fallacies of counterterrorism policies of Pakistan was covered on the basis of military campaigns, socio-economic development, governance reforms, counter-radicalization policies and regional security concerns. It stresses that while the military has played a major part in reducing the military capacities of the militants, it has not been able to do much in terms of the "root causes" and "ideology" if any, and that supports and maintains extremism. The study emphasizes the need to integrate security measures and institutional reforms, community engagement, and development activities to conflict-affected areas. Moreover, it also highlights importance of cross border cooperation in dealing with regional aspects of the TTP challenge. This study finds that the bottom line for durable peace and stability in Pakistan is a holistic strategy that works both militarily and in a non-military approach to peace building.

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Introduction

Since the inception of the TPP in 2007, one of the most enduring and complicated security threats which confront Pakistan is a movement called the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). The TTP is an umbrella body of different militant factions and they have been waging armed jihad against the Pakistani state aiming at undermining constitutional system and subsequently introducing their sense of Islamic governance on the Pakistani soil through violent means (Abbas, 2015). Since then, the group has engaged in several attacks, causing significant loss of life and

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property, such as those on security personnel, civilians, educational institutions and government installations (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2024). The success of military operations in Pakistan for reducing militant violence after 2014, however, has made considerable efforts monitored by the ISI, has spurred concerns about the long-term efficacy of existing counterterrorism strategies (Akhtar & Ahmed, 2023) with the re-emergence of the TTP after the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in 2021.

It is not possible to analyze the emergence of the TTP without taking into account the regional security context. Militant networks arose on the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan because of the instability caused by the war between Afghanistan and Pakistan, international interventions after the 9/11 attacks, and poor governance in Pakistan's former FATA (Fair, 2014). Since the TTP used the political neglect, weak state control, socio-economic vulnerability, and various narratives to acquire power among vulnerable groups (Johnson, 2018), their presence is now expanding in the region. The TTP has demonstrated, in contrast to conventional terrorist organizations, locally based recruitment, propaganda, as well as threats to the state's legitimacy, and its activities (Abbas, 2015). Pakistan's action against the TTP has been mainly military and intelligence-led. Militant infrastructure was significantly impaired and important leadership was eliminated during major operations like Rah-e-Rast (2009), Rah-e-Nijat (2009), Zarb-e-Azb (2014) and Radd-ul-Fasaad (2017) while in several conflict affected areas, government authority was restored (Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies [PIPS], 2024). They helped to greatly lower the number of security-related incidents that were of terrorist nature and proved the efficacy of coercive operations to tame the immediate security risks (IEP, 2024). Insurgencies can't be defeated with military force, however, with scholars claiming that military operations target the militants, not the political, social, and economic environment that allows them to be recruited and radicalized (Kilcullen, 2010).

A key tenet of modern counterinsurgency studies is that enhanced state legitimacy is a prerequisite at the heart of any successful peace. Worthy of mention in modern writings on counterinsurgency is the need to reinforce the legitimacy of the state through good government practice, improved economic conditions, education, political integration, and community engagement (Galula, 2006). The integration of erstwhile FATA in KPK by Twenty-Fifth Constitutional Amendment was an important gesture in order to resolve decades of institutional exclusion in Pakistan. Still, lack of developmental progress, weak state capacity and lack of jobs and services by the public have hinders the state in resolving conflict affected areas and stopping the regrowth of militant (International Crisis Group [ICG] 2022; United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] 2021). The post 2021 security environment is even more challenging for Pakistan in the affected region. The TTP gained more operational space, gained confidence ideologically and opportunities of reconstruction ideologically (UNSC, 2024). However, discussions between Pakistan and the TTP have not yielded lasting peace as they continue to clash on topics ranging from disarmament, to constitutional arrangements, to demands by the militants (ICG, 2024). The rise of these developments has shown that there is a need of having multidimensional approach to deal with countering of the TTP and not solely relying on one approach.

This study provides a glance at the military and non-military policies followed by Pakistan towards the TTP and tries to analyze their effectiveness in achieving sustainable Peace. It states that, although military action will likely continue to serve as a tool for breaking militant networks and safeguarding state authority, longer term stability will need to involve greater security measures and security governance, socio-economic development, counter-radicalization efforts and regional cooperation. The study aims to aid in the larger discourse of counterinsurgency and to understand how a sustainable framework of peace and security in Pakistan can be created, through evaluating both approaches.

Literature Review

The available literature on combating the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) reveals a general dichotomy among scholars that discuss military strategies and other that hold for comprehensive measures involving dealing with political, social, and economic roots of militancy in Pakistan. The early research centered on terrorism in Pakistan and its security aspects which argued militant groups like 'TTP' were a result of the 'monger of conflicts' in the region, weak governments, and ideology/networks. According to Abbas (2015), the ascendancy of the TTP was largely related to the unstable situation in Afghanistan, unstable tribal areas in Pakistan, and the propagation of extremist ideologies post-9/11. Islam study likewise, writes Fair (2014), in Pakistan the approach of using military solutions has historically defined its counterterrorism policies, but has been referred to offer tactical success without significantly tackling root causes of militants.

There is a substantial amount of literature that delves into the efficacy of Pakistan's military efforts in combating the TTP. Scholars recognize the success of operations like Rah-e-Rast, Rah-e-Nijat, Zarb-e-Azb and Radd-ul-Fasaad that brought a change in the situation and strengthened the internal security and state control in certain conflict-stricken areas (Abbas, 2015; PIPS, 2024). Furthermore, the Global Terrorism Index's data on the incidence and severity of terrorism in Pakistan shows that the country experienced a significant decrease in terrorism after years of military operations, especially in the mid-2010s (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2024). These kinds of approach, however, address the symptoms of insurgency, rather than the causes of it. Thus, Kilcullen (2010) argues that eliminating insurgents is never going to be sustainable without political legitimacy, good governance, and civilian involvement within the context of counterinsurgency campaigns. In recent years, more and more is being written about the weaknesses of Pakistan's security-fixated strategy. After the Taliban's success in Afghanistan in 2021, Akhtar and Ahmed (2023) believe that the TTP is finding opportunities to exploit the regional instability and have bounced back. Their analysis points to group reorganization by integrating with smaller militant groups, including better coordination in the operational level and for cross-border dynamics. As a similar example, think about how political dynamics in Afghanistan combined with militant groups operating in the Afghanistan-Pakistan area have created strategic space for these groups (United Nations Security Council 2024).

The governance and socio-economic conditions are one of the central drivers towards militancy in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. According to scholars, weak institutions, political exclusion, unemployment, lack of education, and low quality state services lead to the opportunities for extremist groups to attract vulnerable groups (UNDP, 2021). The merger of the former Federally Administered Tribal

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Areas (FATA) with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was identified as an important reform and experts showed that administrative, judicial and developmental reforms have not been implemented well, limiting the impact of this merger (International Crisis Group [ICG] 2022). This literature indicates that there needs to be more to state legitimacy than policing, it must be constructed through inclusive governance. This literature argues that there must be more to state legitimacy than punishment, it should be established through a process of inclusive governance. Other non-military approaches, such as counter-radicalization measures, education, community involvement, and economic development have been increasingly analyzed in scholarly work. Galula (2006) concludes that the core of a successful counterinsurgency lies in winning the support of the people and in giving heed to grievances. In the Pakistan context, scholars note that prevention necessitates a long-term approach that involves investment in reforming education, youth engagement, and building social resilience throughout the country. Meanwhile, problems recognized in literature are also weak institutional coordination, lack of resources and inconsistencies in policy implementation.

There are recent studies showing valuable insights on how Pakistan has engaged in counterterrorism activities; but in the post-2021 environment, there is still a lack of comparative research on military and non-military initiatives after the resurgence of the TTP. Existing studies focus on either governance or operational requirements or on the two in isolation, with few looking at how they could reinforce one another to bring about sustainable peace. This study seeks to fill this gap by analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of Pakistan's kinetic and non-kinetic policies, and by proposing the idea of "joining" with the two measures in order to create a counterterrorism framework.

Discussion and Analysis

The TTP Threat and Pakistan's Security Challenges

The Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) is one of the greatest internal security threats facing Pakistan today, a multifaceted terror-insurgency movement which combines international militancy, concepts of fundamentalism, militancy, and ideology. The TTP was formed as an umbrella organization of different militant groups in 2007 with the goal of upsetting the authority of the Pakistani state and to put forth an alternative vision of Islamic governance based on armed struggle (Abbas, 2015). While the traditional terrorist groups generally operate through sporadic attacks, the TTP has established the characteristics of an insurgent movement, which goes beyond maintaining peace by means of violence, but instead engages in creating a climate of instability in the state and fostering distrust in and undermining state institutions, as well as influencing local communities. (Fair, 2014)

The TTP's security threat has changed in many aspects with time. In the initial stage, the group strengthened itself in the formerly Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Swat and in certain parts of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province due to weak government, absence of the state and socio-economic weaknesses. Lack of any effective administrative structure in these regions provided scope for militant recruitment and their ways of setting up their parallel systems of governance (Siddiqi 2022). Security threats here and there in Pakistan can be linked to the governance shortcomings, exclusion and development shortage along with the use of local grievances by the TTP. The TTP has perpetrated many attacks on security

forces, civilians, political leaders, and public institutions. The attack on Peshawar Army Public School in 2014 was significant in Pakistan's counterterrorism history as it demonstrated their ability to launch big time attacks on symbolic state and civilian targets (Yusuf, 2014). Pakistan stepped up the formation of their national-level plans on combating terrorism, both military and institutional. The Global Terrorism Index (GTR) shows that the country has seen considerable decrease in terrorism despite the extensive security operations carried out by the Pakistani forces to date, which can however continue to threaten the country with resurgence, as they are highly skilled at reorganizing and capitalizing on the new security gaps (Global Terrorism Index [GTR] 2024).

The revitalization of the TTP in 2021 has only added to Pakistan's security challenges. Post-Taliban Afghanistan opened the opportunity for restructuring and gaining more operational activity for the TTP. The group enjoyed ideological links, border linkage, and changing political policies in Afghanistan (Akhtar & Ahmed, 2023). This regional perspective has begun to shape the TTP threat from a domestic security problem to a regional security problem, which calls for regional domestic reforms as well as diplomatic solutions. The approach adopted by Pakistan so far with regard to the TTP is centered on military and intelligence related action. The operations in Pakistan including Rah-e-Rast, Rah-e-Nijat, Zarb-e-Azb and Radd-ul-Fasaad had a major impact on the weakening of militant infrastructure and regaining state control in several conflict affected areas (PAKINSTIT, 2024). The military fact, however, is that the militancy networks are not being eradicated and therefore the ideological and socio-political roots of extremism cannot be eliminated by military means. Research on counterinsurgency recognizes that in order for peace to be sustainable the security response must be accompanied by a governance response, development and measures to improve public legitimacy of the state (Kilcullen, 2010).

The influence of the threat from TTP is therefore multidimensional which calls for a comprehensive call to action. Combating militancy requires not only the breaking up of armed networks, but symptom removal of structural conditions conducive to radicalization, as well, such as poverty, weak institutions, less educational opportunities and political marginalization. There is a need to strike an effective balance between military and non-military measures that can help communities to become more resilient and legitimize the state as a relevant actor in the response.

Evaluating Military Responses against the TTP

The military action against the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has been the main pillar of Pakistan's counterterrorism policy since the group's establishment in 2007. Corded by the increasing violence in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and former Federally Administered tribal areas (FATA), with operational bases being built by the militant groups, military became more visible in the area. The military presence was more noticeable in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) following the rise in violence (Fair, 2018) by the activities of militant groups in these areas.

The first conflicts saw the state expend combat forces against the militants in Swat and South Waziristan, who threatened its authority. Some operations like Rah-e-Rast (2009) and Rah-e-Nijat (2009) succeeded in eliminating the militants' control in certain places and in restoring government presence and control there. But the

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most important military operation launched against TTP was Operation Zarb-e-Azb in 2014 which came after the Army Public School attack in Peshawar. The operation attacked the militant sanctuaries located in the areas of North Waziristan and destroyed the training camps, command structures and communication networks of various militant groups (Jones, 2017). The ongoing counterterrorism operation, namely Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad (2017), discussed a transition from a large military-led approach to an intelligence-led approach and pivot toward nationwide security actions by the state. Trying to curb these helped curb terrorist activities and thus made Pakistan's internal security environment far more secure. The success in the military area was shown by a decrease in militant activities, enhanced security of the major cities, and decreasing the ability of the TTP to carry out big scale attacks (PIPS, 2023).

Notwithstanding these successes, the impact of military actions can be assessed. Military operations had been successful in decreasing the physical capacity of the TTP, but had not been as effective in destroying their ideological network and thwarting their militant 'rebirth'. The resurgence of the TTP in 2021 shows that the influence of the militant cannot be eradicated from the society through military means. One drawback of military-driven solutions is the difficulty with post-conflict stabilization. Though they took over some of the areas, the lack of institutional development of civil society and delay in reconstruction processes were problematic for transforming military gains into peaceful outcomes (Waseem, 2019). The right to effective governance and for their communities to see economic opportunities, education, and justice systems and processes is vital to preventing that militant groups will be able to sow social grievances in communities that are plagued by conflict.

Moreover, military strategies have been undermined by the 'region normalization' due to the 'return to power' of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Both the presence of external operational space and providing cross-border networks has helped the TTP in rebuilding itself after the setbacks of the past (Sayed & Hamming, 2023). So, military action is still a prerequisite, but not a sufficient measure in itself. The approach Pakistan has taken which is actually military operation has been effective in destroying the infrastructure of the TTP and reasserting the sovereignty of the state, providing positive results. Their effectiveness with political reforms, socio-economic development and counter-radicalization strand are still needed for their long term effectiveness. Security measures and non-military interventions need to be implemented in tandem for sustainable peace.

Challenges of a Security-Centric Approach

The overall tactics adopted by the Government of Pakistan under counterterrorism policy against Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) have been quite security-focused/centered, with a focus on military operations, intelligence-gathering and coercive tactics. This perception led to the strategy being adopted, which was that TTP posed a direct threat to state sovereignty and national security. While kinetic operations made it difficult for the militant groups to acquire the potential, the persistent presence and resurgence of the TTP show that predominantly using military solutions are a limitation. A security strategy frequently responds to the symptoms of militancy, rather than solving underlying political, social or economic issues, that might drive violent extremism (Khan, 2019).

A security-centric approach has difficulty tackling system causes of militancy. The creation of the TTP stemmed from a mixture of low government authority, political marginalization, socio-economic deprivation and the lack of state presence in the periphery. While military action can disorient militant networks, it can't solve every problem that leads to social alienation, weak institutions, and lack of education and job opportunities that allow extremists to recruit young people for their militancy (Marten, 2015). Thus, if there are no sweeping changes, terrorist groups can "regenerate" even if they are losing a lot of their operations. But another challenge is the difficulty of transferring military success to lasting peace. Attacking the militant infrastructure in operations like Zarb-e-Azb and Radd-ul-Fasaad helped, but capable civilian institutions are needed to secure stability in the long-term. Studies on post conflict societies have argued that after a conflict, if a counterinsurgency is to succeed, a nation-state must be able to deliver governance, justice and service provision (Egnell, 2013). The effectiveness of the military gains in the former conflict areas has been constrained due to the delay in the administrative reforms, reconstruction and developmental plans in these areas in the country of Pakistan. The pace of administrative reforms, reconstruction and developmental measures in war torn areas have hindered the effectiveness of military achievements in Pakistan.

A security-driven attitude also poses a threat to gap between state and communities. There are seven lessons we can draw from counterinsurgency experience around the world about the importance of local support for counterinsurgency success. Insurgencies can only be defeated with the help and cooperation of the public, for the public is fundamentally the source of intelligence, its source of legitimacy, and its source of resistance to the militants' version of the story (Kilcullen, 2010). Hyper-institutionalization and inadequate civilian involvement can lead to insufficient local accountability for peace building. Rebuilding trust between citizens and the state institutions is a precondition for sustaining security in conflict-affected areas. Moreover, military-based responses to ideologically radicalized individuals tend to be ineffective. The idea behind the TTP's strength is not just their military power, but their ability to spread extremist ideologies and attract young individuals. However, educational change, counter-narratives, religious activity, and social interventions are necessary conditions for change of ideology, not simply bullets and bombs (Schmid, 2013). If not, these preventative tactics can work in the short term to quell militants, but will not quash the drive toward extremism.

Military operation is still a very functional way of defending a country's security and eliminating militants, but a purely security-approach has shortcomings. A focus on eradicate militants is not enough for sustainable peace as governance, developmental, ideological and regional factors support militancy must be tackled. Security measures, therefore, need to be integrated into a more comprehensive peace building framework as integral components of an effective counterterrorism framework.

Non-Military Strategies for Countering Militancy

The continued incidence of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) as a security threat proves that security measures cannot make a sustainable peace. Militant infrastructure and militant organization capacity have been undermined due to kinetic operations; however, the political, ideological and socioeconomic environment that facilitates militancy has not been eliminated. Thus, the need for non-military counterterrorism action has also gained great importance to the overall

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counterterrorism process. Such strategies emphasize good governance, development, anti-radicalization, quality education and other building blocks to make communities more resilient and less vulnerable to the influence of extremist groups in the long-term.

The non-military action in which “strengthening governance and state legitimacy in conflict-affected areas” is one of the most important approaches. In Pakistan, over the years the institutional framework was found to be weak, political participation was low and access to justice and public goods was inadequate in the peripheral areas, especially in FATA (Former Federally Administered Tribal Areas). The shortcomings in governance allowed for the grassroots use of grievances and the emergence of other structures of authority, particularly by the militant groups (Grare, 2013). These areas must be transformed through institutional reforms, empowered local governments, a better justice system, and increased civilian presence, if they are going to be useful to effective counterterrorism. A proper integration of the former 'conflict areas' within Pakistan's constitutional and administrative system is paramount for avoiding a re-emergence of the militancy trend. Another key aspect of non-military counterterrorism is socio-economic development. Many studies have shown that highly motivating economic issues, joblessness, and social isolation are some of the drivers that lead to the recruitment of youth to groups of violent extremists (Kfir, 2020). In the conflict affected areas of the country, lack of jobs, poor infrastructure and inadequate educational facilities have added to the sense of marginalization. Investing in youth employment, development, vocational training, health programs and infrastructure can help minimize the risk of radicalization for young people by offering other opportunities for social and economic progress. But, for development programs to be owned and effective they should be inclusive and locally driven.

Education is also a key support in the fight against radicalization and social fragility. Organizations of extremists often draw in individuals through ideological narratives, misinformation, social networks etc. Educational access and using critical thinking, tolerance and civic values will help decrease vulnerability to extremist propaganda (Davies, 2018). Educational reform efforts in Pakistan should not only stress access to further education but, equally important attention should be paid to the development of better curriculum content, teacher training programs and institutional capacity. The changes in the curricula as well as the interactions with moderate religious scholars are also crucial in tackling with the extremist narratives and countering with peaceful religious teachings. The issue of counter-radicalization and rehabilitation is also an important part of non-military strategies. The process of radicalization can be explained in multifaceted terms and is driven by factors that range from individual experiences to social environments, identity problems and political deprivations. As such, it is necessary to implement interventions that address psychological, social and ideological aspects to prevent VE (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2017). The reintegration into society can be supported by rehabilitation programs for former militants, such as counseling, education and vocational training. There are studies in Pakistan which show that well-constructed programs can help minimize radicalization and extremist networking system (Abbas, 2019).

Moreover, there is a need for effective communication strategies and alternative explanatory approaches to tackle extremism. Propaganda, social media and religious rhetoric can be employed by violent groups like the TTP to drum up support for their cause and motivate violent behavior. There are ways to counter extremist messages through "counter-narrative" efforts that may be undertaken by scholars, community leaders, educators, media outlets, etc. (Conway, 2017). Although non-military solutions are important, they have some drawbacks such as low institutional coordination, inadequate financial means, political fragility and failure transfers. Such strategies call for long-term commitment as a campaign against radicalization and social transformation must not be realized by short-term policies.

Governance Reforms and Peace building in Conflict-Affected Areas

Sustainable peace building in conflict prone zones of Pakistan requires the emphasis on governance reform, especially in the areas where Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has traditionally taken advantage of institutional deficiencies and concerns of the public. Reconstructing civilian institutions, strengthening systems of public service and fostering trust between communities and the state are essential and will take longer to restore, and these steps will happen only in the context of sustainable peace following military operations, where security threats are lessened. Throughout the past history, weak governance, political exclusion and low institutional capacity have provided space for the emergence and proliferation of militant organizations in Pakistan that have been capable of contesting the authority of the state (Nawaz, 2016).

The failed governance of the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan also illustrates the link between governance failures and militancy. The inclusion of FATA in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in the context of merging its administrative and political system with the province under the Twenty-Fifth Constitutional Amendment was crucial for moving towards political and administrative integration but will require implementation in order to achieve concrete improvements in citizens' lives. One of the most difficult tasks of post-conflict governance is moving out of military "stabilization" and into civilian "peace building. At times of instability, security forces may take a leading role as they are the ones who are able to restore order. But on going peace requires civil establishments to provide justice, handle local affairs and react to the needs of the local community. International experiences of peace building suggest that building enduring peace requires strengthening institutions and not establishing continuing dependency on coercive security strategies (Paris, 2010). To consolidate peace gains, there is a need to strengthen local governance structures and ensure effective provincial and district level governance in Pakistan.

Another crucial aspect of governance-based peace building is socio-economic development. These and other factors, such as poverty, unemployment, weak infrastructure, and curtailed access to education common in conflict-affected communities can make them targets for recruitment by militant groups. Grievances could be overcome with policies of human security, employment creation and social inclusion which lessen the allure of extremist groups (Stewart, 2016). There is particular loss of investment opportunities in the development of youth where the generational unemployed or marginalized ones are attracted towards militant recruitment network. Significantly, justice and rule of law reforms are important in addressing the threat of militant resurgence. Poor judicial systems, slow judicial

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response and low access to formal legal structures can lead to mistrust of the state, and open space for informal or extreme structures of authoritativeness to flourish. Strengthening the institutional capacity of the judiciary and/or police, and ensuring equal access to justice is essential to improve the legitimacy of the state and community access to non-state actors (Chesterman, 2014).

Cross-Border Challenges in Countering the TTP

The Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) is not only a domestic security problem but also a regional security problem as it has strong cross-boundary networks and ties to Afghanistan's developments. Historical, social and geographical links between the two countries have rendered Pakistan's security situation complex as it is open to exploitation by militant groups by exploiting weak and porous borders, political instability and ambiguous state readiness. To counter the TTP, therefore, is to take on the task of addressing inherent security concerns and external elements fostering the resilience of militants.

Border defense and control has been an ever challenging task along the border lines of Pakistan and Afghanistan because of the hilly nature of the region, a sparse presence of the state and traditional habits of the border people in making cross border movements. The situation has facilitated the development of militants' mobility networks, capability of taking shelter, and the ability to regroup after military defeats. Afghanistan's woefully protracted instability had made it easier for non-state armed groups to translate across borders, adding measure of complexity to traditional counterterrorism tactics (Rubin, 2013). The Taliban' comeback to power in Afghanistan in 2021 has reshaped regional security. The new Afghan government had some hope for better security engagement but this was marred by some differences over activities of the TTP and the presence of militant sites. The group has established itself operationally and has restructured its command chain and expanded strikes inside Pakistan since 2021 (Sayed, 2021). It was a sign that domestic military actions are not enough to destroy a militant group working in regional security environment.

Border management has thus emerged as a key element of Pakistan's fight against TTP. Pakistan has taken various steps to close the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and introduce legal crossing points, in order to curtail the movement of illegal Pakistani nationals and to increase the control. However, such measures have been constrained due to geographical issues, opposition by the local community and intricate social dynamics between border communities. As per Khan (2022), ensuring the security of a border necessitates not just physical measures, but also diplomatic outreach, financial openness, and institutional coordination. The aspects of counterterrorism cooperation that need to be strengthened include intelligence sharing, coordination of border management and mutual pledges against militant groups. But political clashes and differing security perceptions between the two countries have hampered cooperation. If not coordinated between the regions, militant groups may be able to take benefit of the diplomatic conflicts without any operational limitation.

Moreover, the TTP problem is linked to regional dynamics of other militant groups, ideologies and geopolitical rivalry. Cross-border South Asian collaboration is critical when it comes to the counterterrorism battle because extremist groups are interconnected and unrest in one region can affect the other. However, a national-

level strategy is insufficient when dealing with groups that are using less national and more transnational networks of action (Bajoria, 2021). Overall, cross border issues play a very important role in Pakistan's efforts to combat TTP and strive for sustainable peace. It is not only domestic issues but regional instability, border vulnerabilities, and political affairs in Afghanistan that are associated with the groups' resilience. Thus, an effective approach should be synthesized between border security, diplomatic interaction, intelligence cooperation and regional coordination, and some domestic institutional change. Militancy has been built up with a cross border dimension, addressing this dimension is critical in order to prevent resurgence of TTP in Pakistan and for ensuring long term security in the nation.

Integrating Military and Non-Military Approaches for Sustainable Peace

For sustainability, there is a need for a comprehensive combination of the military capability with governance as well as socio-economic development, political inclusion and counter-radicalization strategies. Military action is still part of the strategy that Pakistan has designed for the fight against the TTPs because still these groups have formidable capability to threaten state institutions and civilian population. Pakistan's counter-insurgency effort has thrown off militant groups, by dismantling the networks and slaying influential leaders, and has curtailed the operational prowess of extremist groups. But examples from around the world of counterinsurgencies suggest that military victory does not necessarily lead to political stability. There are two important points to bear in mind when dealing with insurgent groups: one is that, in addition to neutrality in their armed aspect, they must be countered in their social and even political world; the other is that they may possess strong social and political ties in their areas. Firstly, "to neutralize an insurgent organization and then neutralize its social and political environment where it can survive" (Connable, 2016).

Distributed approach demands building up civilian institutions following military action. A move away from security-based control towards effective civilian government is key to sustaining peace in conflict-affected areas. Poor governance, lack of public services and political stoicism may provide opportunities for militant groups to assert themselves again. Thus, the need to strengthen local governments, enhance justice systems, and ensure good services delivery in order to consolidate the security gains (Boege, Brown, & Clements, 2009). Another area of least-denominated dimensions of sustainable peace is socio-economic development. Some circumstances in which militancy flourishes are when people are structurally excluded, meaning they are cut out of society, they might have no education or simply not be able to access it to such a level that they can compete in society, and the unemployment rates are high and poverty rates are high. By providing employment, education, and infrastructure, along with having youth engaged, these challenges can be mitigated and potentially lessen communities' vulnerability to extremist recruitment. To achieve positive peace, however, Galtung (1996) states that there must be attention to structural inequalities, and, conditions that reduce the risk that this violence might happen again. Fighting the TTP demands a balanced approach of military strength and non-military peace building efforts. Military operations can help to establish a secure environment, while governance reforms, development efforts, ideological battles, and regional cooperation are vital to ensure that there is no resurgence of militant groups. Since all these efforts are linked

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together, they must be done through an integrated approach for achieving sustainable peace and stability in Pakistan.

Conclusion

The threat of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) clearly shows that there are non-military means to deal with militancy in Pakistan. Security operations have helped to weaken militant networks, diminish the violence of Islamist terrorists and regain state control, but the continued presence of the Islamist militants argues that a more comprehensive and long-term approach is crucial. The findings of this study demonstrate that the genesis of militancy is brackish in various factors such as governmental failures, social and economic disparities, political polarization, ideologically radicalization and regional instability. Hence, an integrated counterterrorism approach is needed in Pakistan that would incorporate both military and non-military mechanisms including institutional changes, development initiatives, education, counter-radicalization and outreach and engagement with the community. Moreover, managing cross-border problems and regional collaboration, especially with Afghanistan is crucial to stemming the resurgence of militants. To build sustainable peace requires consolidating the legitimacy of the state, acting on public grievances, and inclusive development in conflict situations. The proper balance of security actions with peace building activities provides the best path forward in negating the TTP and towards long-term stability in Pakistan.

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