SPECIAL REPORT

The Evolution and Potential Resurgence of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan

By Amira Jadoon

A Pakistani soldier surveys what used to be the headquarters of Baitullah Mehsud, the TTP leader who was killed in March 2010. (Photo by Pir Zubair Shah/New York Times)

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Summary

- Established in 2007, the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) became one of Pakistan's deadliest militant organizations, notorious for its brutal attacks against civilians and the Pakistani state. By 2015, a US drone campaign and Pakistani military operations had destroyed much of the TTP's organizational coherence and capacity.

- While the TTP's lethality remains low, a recent uptick in the number of its attacks, propaganda releases, attempts to intimidate local populations, and mergers with prior splinter groups suggest that the TTP is attempting to revive itself.

- Multiple factors may facilitate this ambition. These include the Afghan Taliban's potential political ascendency in a post–peace agreement Afghanistan, which may enable the TTP to redeploy its resources within Pakistan, and the potential for TTP to deepen its links with other militant groups such as the regional affiliates of al-Qaeda and the Islamic State.

- Thwarting the chances of the TTP's revival requires a multidimensional approach that goes beyond kinetic operations and renders the group's message irrelevant. Efforts need to prioritize investment in countering violent extremism programs, enhancing the rule of law and access to essential public goods, and creating mechanisms to address legitimate grievances peacefully.

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VIOLENT EXTREMISM

ABOUT THE REPORT

Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), once one of Pakistan's most deadly militant groups, experienced a steady decline due to sustained counterterrorism pressure and internal fragmentation. This report, supported by the Asia Center at the United States Institute of Peace and drawing on datasets of militant violence and the TTP's own statements, traces the evolution of TTP thus far and assesses factors that could shape the group's future trajectory.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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A group of students paint "no more extremism" on a wall in the park in Lahore, Pakistan, where a suicide bombing linked to the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan killed dozens of people on April 3, 2016. (Photo by K. M. Chaudary/AP)

Introduction

In the years following its formation in 2007, the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) emerged as one of Pakistan's deadliest militant organizations. Maintaining close ties with al-Qaeda, the Afghan Taliban, and a host of other militant groups, the TTP marked the Pakistani landscape with some of the bloodiest terrorist attacks in the country's history. Among its most notorious attacks were an assault on the Pakistani navy's largest airbase in 2011; an attack on Karachi's international airport in 2014; and, also in 2014, a massacre at the Army Public School in Peshawar that killed 150 people, almost all of them students.

However, sustained efforts by the Pakistani government—most notably, the military's Operation Zarb-e-Azb, begun in 2014—and a US drone campaign, together with factors intrinsic to the organization, precipitated the TTP's steep decline, and by 2016 it was barely functioning when it came to conducting attacks. Today, the TTP is largely a fragmented and exhausted militant organization, dispersed throughout Pakistan and in bordering Afghanistan. But this may be about to change. A recent uptick in the TTP's activity suggests that the group is eager to consolidate its base and reinvigorate its violent campaign. In the first two months of 2021 alone, the group claimed at least thirty-two attacks—and while that number is surely exaggerated, more reliable sources do show a rise in TTP attacks in the past two years. Reports of TTP militants intimidating civilians and of splinter groups rejoining the TTP have also prompted concern. Although the TTP threat remains limited at present, early signs of an *attempted* comeback warrant a closer

examination of the various factors that could enable the group to rebuild itself— in particular, its relationship with an ascendant Afghan Taliban, links with deadly militant groups, and ongoing governance gaps in northwest Pakistan.

This report asks whether the TTP is capable of regaining sufficient strength and capacity to significantly intensify its violent campaign within Pakistan and exacerbate conflict in the wider region. To this end, the report addresses three key questions:

- How has the nature, intensity, and geographical focus of the TTP's organizational activity evolved over the years?
- How are the TTP's relationships with prominent regional militant groups likely to create opportunities and challenges for the group in the future?
- How are evolving sociopolitical dynamics likely to impact the future trajectory of the TTP, in particular, the political developments in Afghanistan, governance issues in northwest Pakistan, and the regional militant infrastructure?

Drawing on the TTP's own publications and statements, conflict datasets recording the TTP's violent activity, and secondary sources, the report charts the rise and decline of the TTP from 2007 through 2018, focusing on the organization's origins, goals, and leadership; the targets and trajectory of its violence; and its eventual degradation and decapitation. It then examines the evidence for the TTP's possible resurgence since 2018—including a rise in the number of its attacks, a revitalized propaganda campaign, and a tighter embrace of transnational jihadism— and how its resurgence might be influenced by its evolving relationship with other militant organizations in the region, particularly the Afghan Taliban, al-Qaeda, and Islamic State Khorasan (ISK). The report spotlights factors (such as the impact of the ongoing Afghan peace process) that could help the TTP reassert itself as a major threat to the Pakistani state, and presents recommendations for ways the Pakistani state, with cooperation and support from the United States, might stifle its resurgence: expanding efforts to counter violent extremism; addressing the TTP's links to other militant groups in the region; and tackling popular grievances in TTP strongholds by improving governance and economic conditions.

The Rise and Decline of the TTP, 2007–18

The emergence of the TTP is closely associated with the fall of the Afghan Taliban's regime in Afghanistan in 2001 and the subsequent development of an insurgency. After the US invasion of Afghanistan, thousands of Afghan Taliban and al-Qaeda members crossed over into Pakistan looking for safe havens in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), as well in parts of the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan. The resulting "Talibanization" of these areas saw Afghan Taliban leaders working with local tribal leaders to recruit Pakistani tribesmen and madrassa students to fight US and NATO forces.[1] Prior to the TTP's official formation in 2007, many of its members supported the Afghan Taliban's fight in Afghanistan by providing logistical support and facilitating recruitment.[2]

Pakistan Army soldiers cordon off the area of a suicide bombing near Peshawar, Pakistan. The February 15, 2017 attack, claimed by the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, targeted a government vehicle transporting court judges. (Photo by Mohammad Sajjad/AP)

Military operations by the Pakistan Army in North and South Waziristan in 2002 acted as a catalyst for widespread militancy in FATA and coordination among a diverse range of armed groups, which emerged around tribes, territories, and commanders.[3] The Taliban filled the power vacuum that was created in these areas by Pakistani military operations against al-Qaeda–linked operatives. Those operations brought seventy to eighty thousand soldiers to the region.[4] During this period, the nascent Pakistani Taliban, a decentralized network of various militant chapters in FATA, began to assert their own leadership, targeting local tribal elders, instituting their own version of Islamic governance, and clashing with the existing system of local political structures.[5]

It was in this environment that the TTP emerged in December 2007 as a loosely tied umbrella organization under the leadership of Baitullah Mehsud, a militant leader from South Waziristan. A shura (consultative committee) made up of forty senior local militant leaders—many with links to local criminal networks—came together to represent FATA's tribal regions and KP districts.[6] Unlike the Afghan Taliban leaders, Baitullah and other TTP leaders tended to be poorly educated in Islamic studies despite employing a religious vocabulary.

Espousing a Deobandi ideology—a revivalist movement originating in India that seeks to purify Islamic practices—the group's key goals included implementing sharia law, fighting US and NATO forces in Afghanistan, and engaging in jihad against the Pakistan Army (especially in Swat District and North Waziristan).[7] Indeed, a statement by Baitullah's spokesman, Maulvi Omar, in December 2007 made clear that a key reason for the creation of the TTP was to present a united front against the Pakistan Army's operations.[8] The decentralized nature of the TTP, however, meant that local commanders' decisions were influenced not just by the overarching goals of the TTP, but also by local political developments and tribal concerns. These differing and sometimes competing agendas eventually led to significant levels of internal dissension. The TTP's aggressive stance toward the Pakistani state contrasted with that of other local militants, such as Hafiz Gul Bahadur and Mullah Nazir, who diverged with Baitullah over the issue of protecting foreign fighters and targeting the Pakistani state.

The TTP operated in a highly decentralized fashion, with factions across tribal regions conducting their own violent, intelligence, and logistical operations. While the "Mehsud Group" formed the core of the TTP, the groups led by Bahadur and Nazir were not officially a part of the TTP.[9] In 2008, Nazir joined forces with Bahadur to create the Muqami Tehrik-e-Taliban (Local Taliban Movement), which was distinct from Baitullah's TTP and which opposed attacks on the Pakistani state. Both Nazir and Bahadur had strong ties with al-Qaeda, the Afghan Taliban, and members of the Haqqani Network (a prominent insurgent group, which operates in both eastern Afghanistan and northwest Pakistan and which is considered to be a semiautonomous component of the Afghan Taliban).

In February 2009, Baitullah, Nazir, and Bahadur formed an alliance known as the Council of United Mujahideen, which pledged to refocus efforts on international forces in Afghanistan.[10] Yet, as the United States intensified its drone warfare in the tribal regions of Pakistan and the Pakistani military continued its operations there, Bahadur aligned with Baitullah and claimed responsibility for a deadly attack in mid-2009 on a Pakistani military convoy.[11] Sustained military action provided the various Pakistani Taliban factions with incentives not only to cooperate with one another, but also to link up with Punjabi militants and foreign militants.

When Hakimullah Mehsud was appointed the TTP's new leader after Baitullah's death in a 2009 missile strike, he reinforced links with al-Qaeda and other foreign fighters. Under Hakimullah, there was increased cooperation with Sipahe Sahaba and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, which led to the TTP becoming more engaged in sectarian attacks against Shiites.[12] The TTP's links with other militant groups brought both material and reputational benefits; in exchange for safe havens and training camps in FATA, al-Qaeda offered financing and technical assistance, while Punjabi militants provided access to their infrastructure that enabled the TTP to carry out attacks in urban areas.[13]

In 2013, the TTP's leadership shifted outside the Mehsud clan, to Mullah Fazlullah from the Swat District. The Mehsud tribe make up about 60 percent of the population in South Waziristan, and given the critical importance of tribal loyalties in FATA and the rivalries among tribes, the

MAP 1. NUMBER OF TTP-LINKED ATTACKS BY ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT (2010–20)

Adapted from artwork by Rainer Lesniewski/Shutterstock.

TURKMENISTAN

CHINA

Aksai Chin

Gilgit-Baltistan
1 attack

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
727 attacks

Federal Capital Territory
4 attacks

Azad Jammu
and Kashmir

Islamabad

Federally Administered Tribal Areas
800 attacks

AFGHANISTAN

Jammu
and Kashmir

Punjab
42 attacks

INDIA

PAKISTAN

Area enlarged

Balochistan
98 attacks

IRAN

Sindh
108 attacks

Arabian Sea

N   200 km
     200 miles

leadership's Mehsud identity had helped cement loyalty to the TTP in South Waziristan. Fazlullah, who led the Swat and Malakand chapters, was considered an outsider by many of the tribal-based Taliban, which made it difficult for them to accept him as their leader.[14] Fazlullah's leadership not only undermined the cohesion of the TTP but also triggered more extreme attacks. Fazlullah presided over the TTP when the group attacked the Army Public School in 2014 and the Bacha Khan University in 2016. He died in June 2018 in Kunar, Afghanistan, and was replaced by Mufti Noor Wali, a member of the Mehsud tribe and a native of South Waziristan who was heavily involved in the TTP's operations in Karachi.[15]
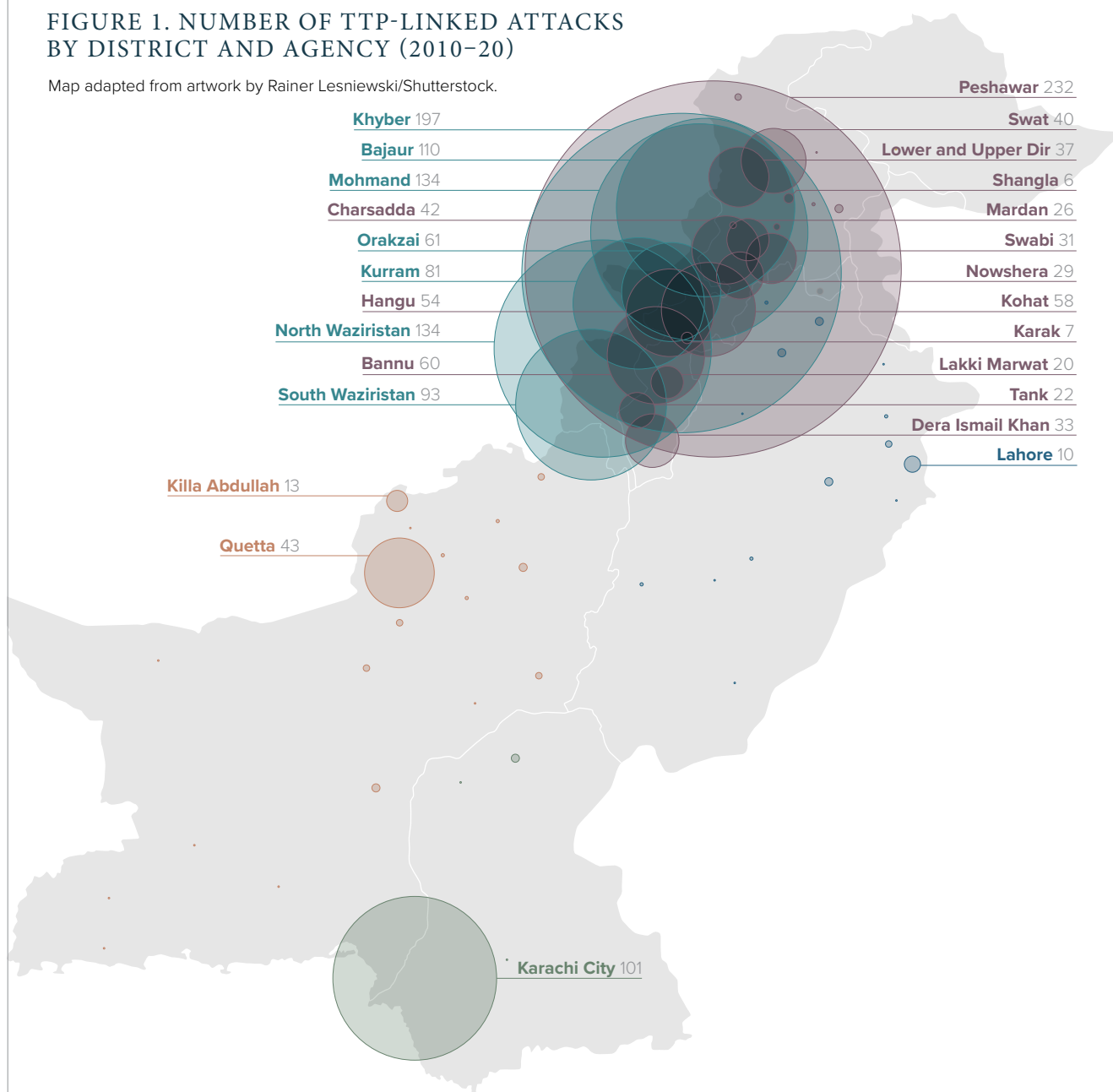
With the heavy losses inflicted on the TTP during Operation Zarb-e-Azb (described below), its members' relocation to Afghanistan, and the death of Fazlullah, it was widely believed that the TTP's complete dissolution was near. However, two notable developments at this point may have laid the foundations for a possible resurgence. One was the return of the TTP leadership to the Mehsud tribe. The second was the release of a new "Code of Conduct" for TTP members.[16] The code showcased the TTP's new goals of uniting the differing factions under the group's central leadership and instilling more structure and discipline through laying out clear lines of authority and responsibilities, introducing a process for identifying legitimate targets, and providing guidelines for martyrdom operations.[17] Under Noor Wali's leadership, in addition to targeting security personnel, the TTP renewed its attacks against state politicians, such as its attack on Awami National Party (ANP) leader Haroon Bilour in July 2018, and on Tehreek-e-Insaf's Ikram Ullah Gandapur two weeks later. The ANP, which governed KP between 2008 and 2013, has long opposed the Taliban and supported military operations. Gandapur, who belongs to a politically powerful family, was elected to the administrative division (Kulachi Tehsil) of Dera Ismail Khan located near the border of South Waziristan.[18]

THE TTP'S TARGETS AND TRAJECTORY OF VIOLENCE

Data for TTP's operational activity before 2010 are limited, but according to the Global Terrorism Database, the group was involved in 269 attacks between 2007 and 2009, primarily in FATA and KP. From 2010 on, data are available from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), which has compiled comprehensive records of various kinds of violent events

FIGURE 1. NUMBER OF TTP-LINKED ATTACKS BY DISTRICT AND AGENCY (2010–20)

Map adapted from artwork by Rainer Lesniewski/Shutterstock.

Peshawar 232

Khyber 197   **Swat** 40

Bajaur 110   **Lower and Upper Dir** 37

Mohmand 134   **Shangla** 6

Charsadda 42   **Mardan** 26

Orakzai 61   **Swabi** 31

Kurram 81   **Nowshera** 29

Hangu 54   **Kohat** 58

North Waziristan 134   **Karak** 7

Bannu 60   **Lakki Marwat** 20

South Waziristan 93   **Tank** 22

Dera Ismail Khan 33

Lahore 10

Killa Abdullah 13

Quetta 43

Karachi City 101

Districts and agencies with five or fewer attacks

Balochistan

Khuzdar 5	Dera Bugti 4	Mastung 4	Sheerani 3	Sibi 2	Awaran 1	Gwadar 1	Nasirabad 1	Pishin 1
Loralai 5	Kalat 4	Zhob 4	Killa Saifullah 2	Ziarat 2	Chagai 1	Kech 1	Panjgur 1

Federal Capital Territory

Islamabad 4

Gilgit-Baltistan

Diamir 1

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Mansehra 5	Chitral 4	Batagram 2
Buner 4	Malakand PA 4	Kohistan 1

Punjab

Chakwal 5	Attock 2	Khanewal 2	Khushab 1
Faisalabad 5	Dera Ghazi Khan 2	Bahawalpur 1	Multan 1
Rawalpindi 5		Gujrat 1	
Sheikhupura 4	Gujranwala 2	Kasur 1	

Sindh

Shikarpur 5	Hyderabad 1	Larkana 1

involving the TTP.[19] For the purposes of this report, that data were re-coded for analysis. Event summaries were used to extract events where, according to media reports, the TTP had claimed an attack or local authorities suspected that the TTP was the perpetrator.[20]

The data reveal clear geographical and chronological patterns (see map 1). At the provincial level, between 2010 and 2020, the vast majority of TTP-linked attacks occurred in FATA and KP—800 (45 percent) and 727 (41 percent), respectively, out of a total of 1,780—but a significant number of attacks were also recorded in Balochistan and Sindh (98 and 108, respectively) as TTP militants dispersed across Pakistan and expanded their links with Punjabi militants. Fatalities were also the highest in FATA and KP—1,851 (38 percent) and 2,241 (46 percent), respectively—out of a total of 4,880 people killed by the TTP in these years. Peshawar, the capital of KP, experienced the highest level of TTP attacks, including the highest number of TTP-linked suicide attacks compared with other districts.[21]
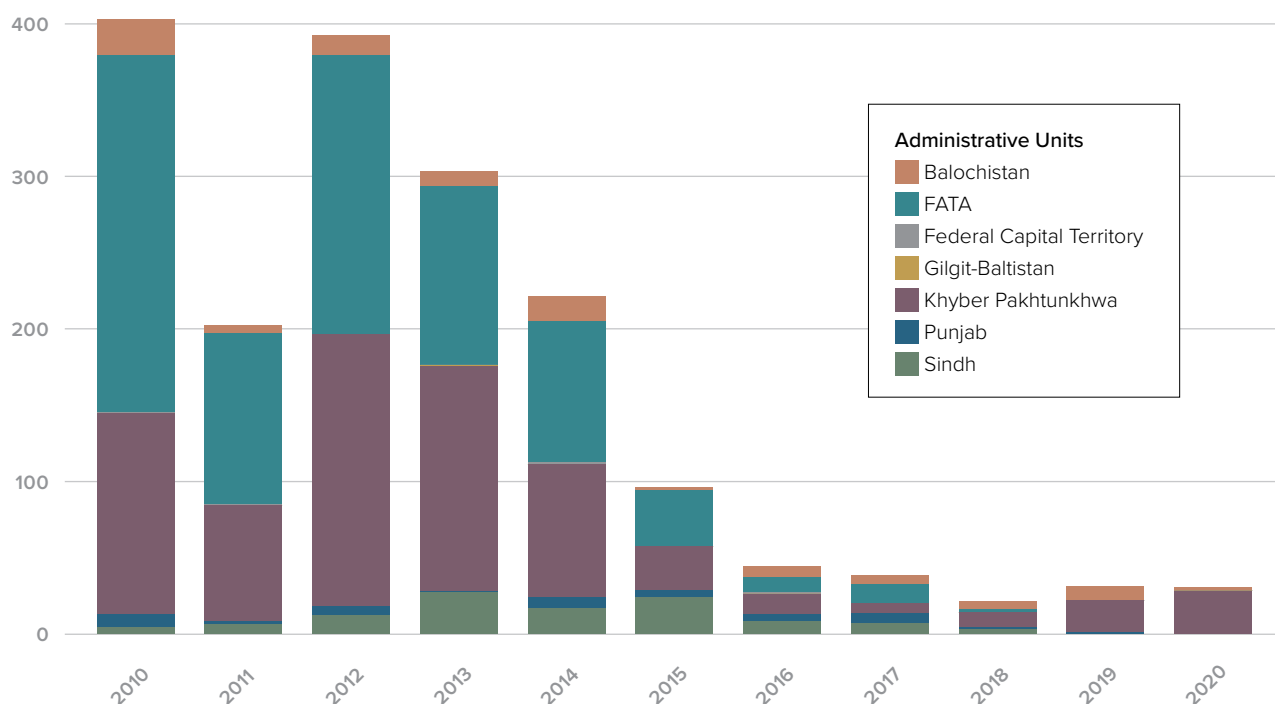
Much of the TTP's reach outside of FATA and KP was concentrated in urban areas such as Quetta, Karachi, and Lahore. Operating in densely populated cities allowed the TTP to escape US drone strikes and Pakistani military operations in the northwest and to use urban areas to re-group, recruit, and establish lucrative links with criminal gangs.[22] Karachi witnessed some of the TTP's most audacious attacks, such as the 2011 attack on the Mehran naval base, during which TTP militants fought a fifteen-hour battle with security forces that left thirteen people dead and maritime surveillance aircraft destroyed.

As figure 1 shows, most TTP attacks have occurred in areas along the border with Afghanistan. The TTP has always had close ties to Afghanistan, but these became yet stronger in the wake of Operation Zarb-e-Azb, which forced many of the group's members and leaders to cross over into Afghanistan.[23] In recent years, Pakistan has often blamed Afghanistan for enabling terrorists to cross the border into Pakistan, attack Pakistani security personnel, and then return to their safe havens in Afghanistan.[24]

Figure 2 (on page 10) shows the pattern of the TTP's activity from 2010 to 2020 across Pakistan's main administrative units. In 2010, the TTP was already at what was to prove to be the peak of its activity in terms of numbers of attacks (402), but after a significant drop to 202 the following year, the 392 attacks in 2012 nearly matched their earlier peak. The next two years saw steady and significant declines, but that drop-off became precipitous in 2015, during which the TTP launched only ninety-six attacks, its operational capacity clearly damaged by Operation Zarb-e-Azb, which had been announced in June 2014. By 2016, TTP was profoundly weakened as an operational force, and it hit its lowest point in 2018, when it carried out just twenty-one attacks. As discussed later, the last two years have seen a modest but nonetheless worrying increase in TTP attacks.

Between 2010 and 2014, a large number of the TTP's attacks focused on the military, as well as civilians. However, after 2014, the TTP appeared to make the police its main target. An examination of state-led operations against the TTP suggests that this reorientation may be linked to a change in the tactics of the security forces: between 2010 and 2015, drone strikes made up a sizable portion of efforts against the group, whereas after 2015 most operations consisted of armed clashes between the police and TTP militants. In 2017 and 2018, for example, about 40 percent of all security operations against the TTP involved raids by police personnel. The TTP's decision to increasingly target the police may therefore be retaliation for these raids.

FIGURE 2. NUMBER OF TTP-LINKED ATTACKS PER YEAR (2010–20)

LEADERSHIP DECAPITATION, INTERNAL STRUGGLES, AND SPLINTERING

Many of the early military operations against the TTP yielded limited success, which allowed the TTP to consolidate its strength. Actions taken against militants between 2004 and 2007 consisted of Pakistani military raids on the towns of Mir Ali, Miramshah, Razmak, and Shawal in North Waziristan, plus a limited number of US drone strikes.[25] Yet in the aftermath of these raids, the military often failed to hold the territory it had secured and ensure protection for civilians. The lack of a coherent long-term strategy was underscored in 2007–09 by the fact that while it was conducting raids on TTP militants, the Pakistan Army was also negotiating with TTP leaders.[26] In February 2009, the military capitulated after failing to regain control of Swat and sought to cut a deal with militants, specifically with Sufi Mohammad of Tehrik-i-Nifaz-i-Shariat-i-Mohammadi, a militant group that has long advocated for the implementation of sharia law in Pakistan's Malakand Division. The result was the Malakand accord, a peace agreement that was intended to end military and militant operations and permit sharia law in the Pakistan's northwestern districts of Malakand, Swat, Shangla, Buner, Dir, Chitral, and Kohistan.[27] However, in April 2009, militants began to occupy government buildings, moved into neighboring areas such as Buner, and launched attacks on police stations and the Frontier Constabulary.[28] The TTP's attacks peaked in 2010, underscoring the failure of the military's divide-and-conquer approach.

These violations of the agreement, along with consistent pressure from the United States, triggered a series of military operations. In October 2009, the Pakistani military initiated ground operations in South Waziristan focused on clearing TTP strongholds, while negotiating with Nazir and Bahadur. While these operations likely accounted for the dip in TTP's attacks in 2011, they also displaced many people from their homes, fueling resentment that the TTP is believed to have exploited for recruitment purposes.[29]

Meanwhile, the US counterterrorism campaign against the TTP and al-Qaeda operatives, largely in North Waziristan, was undermining the TTP's leadership and internal cohesion. After 2008, the United States ramped up its aerial surveillance and analysis capacity via Predator and Reaper drones and enhanced cooperation with Pakistan through a renegotiated pact between the Central Intelligence Agency and Pakistan's Inter-services Intelligence agency.[30] This cooperation, combined with permission from the Pakistani government for the CIA to undertake drone strikes against al-Qaeda leaders and other suspects within FATA, ushered in the decline of the TTP. That decline was hastened by Operation Zarb-e-Azb, which ran from mid-2014 until early 2017 and saw the Pakistan Army target TTP militants in North Waziristan as well as other groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and al-Qaeda.

Past research indicates that in situations in which militant groups are able to maintain financial networks and the state is unable to provide adequate law enforcement, military operations may lead not to the elimination of militants but to their dispersal to low-threat areas within the same country or to neighboring countries.[31] This seems to have occurred in the case of the TTP. Although intense targeting of TTP's members and leaders undermined the group's strength, Pakistani and US operations also resulted in the dispersion of its members to other tribal areas and across the border into Afghanistan.[32] Another unintended consequence of pressure from security forces was that the TTP initiated an intense campaign of suicide attacks in Pakistan's urban centers.[33]

However, even as the TTP sought to respond to the increased pressure against its forces, leadership decapitation and combat deaths began to degrade its cohesion. Following Baitullah Mehsud's death in an August 2009 drone strike, his successor, Hakimullah Mehsud, relocated many of his personnel to Karachi and other urban areas in Pakistan.[34] Further power struggles developed after Hakimullah's death in late 2013 in a US drone strike in North Waziristan.[35] Internal succession disputes eventually resulted in the splintering of the TTP into three main groups: the Shahryar Mehsud group, the Khalid Sajna group, and the Asmat Muawiya group.

Research is inconclusive about the effects of leadership decapitation on a militant group's life, but in the case of the TTP the death of successive leaders appears to have amplified decentralization of an already loosely tied organization and exacerbated internecine conflict.[36] Internal rivalries and external pressures also resulted in a significant fall in the number of TTP fighters over time. In mid-2009, the TTP was estimated to have between sixteen and twenty thousand members, and that number was estimated to have risen to between twenty and twenty-five thousand members in 2012.[37] By late 2019, however, the US Department of Defense estimated the number of TTP fighters in Afghanistan to be a mere three to five thousand, and a UN report in 2020 put this figure only a little higher, at around six thousand.[38] However, the dispersion of the TTP outside of FATA and KP means that the current strength of dormant TTP cells in urban centers remains unknown.

Signs of a Resurgent TPP, 2019–Early 2021

In an interview with Al Jazeera in April 2020, the former spokesman of the TTP, Ehsanullah Ehsan, remarked, "We cannot say that the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, Jamaat-ul-Ahrar [a TTP splinter group], or other anti-Pakistan groups are completely finished. . . . They definitely have a set-up and perhaps they have gone silent as part of a plan."[39] This assessment seems accurate. Although the TTP has lost significant operational capacity in the past five or six years and has been plagued with internal disputes, breakaway factions, and defections to ISK, the group has continued to wage a sporadic jihad against the Pakistani state. For example, during the 2018 national elections in Pakistan, the TTP conducted a series of attacks against politicians and was suspected to have deployed a female suicide attacker in KP in July 2019.[40] Clearly the United States still sees the TTP as posing an operational threat, hence its designation of Noor Wali Mehsud as a "Global Terrorist" in 2019 and the killing of two prominent TTP members in Afghanistan in 2020 by Afghan security forces.

The ACLED data support this view of the TTP as a greatly diminished force but not a toothless one. Indeed, there are signs of modest growth in its operational capacity. The data show increases in 2019 and 2020 in the TTP's attacks in FATA and KP (combined), though the overall number has remained low. TTP's total attacks in FATA and KP increased to twenty-one and twenty-eight in 2019 and 2020, respectively, compared to a low of only twelve attacks in 2018. (A UN report released in early 2021 stated that in the last six months of 2020, the TTP was responsible for more than one hundred cross-border attacks from Afghanistan into Pakistan. The significant difference between this number and the tally of twenty-eight for all of 2020 based on ACLED data reflects, among other things, reliance on different sources and using different criteria to define attacks.) Most of these attacks have targeted Pakistani security personnel, the police especially, although the number of fatalities has been generally low.[41] Additionally, the TTP has maintained its campaign against the polio drive in Pakistan, which it labels a Western conspiracy, frequently targeting health workers and accompanying police officers and at times disrupting government efforts. For example, in April 2019, attacks on health-care workers were reported across the Bannu and Buner districts in KP, and in Quetta, Balochistan, leading to a suspension of the government's national polio drive.[42] In December 2019, TTP militants shot two police officers who were protecting a vaccination team in KP in Lower Dir District.[43]

Since the start of 2021, TTP's activity has increased significantly, at least in terms of attacks claimed by the group. In the first two months of 2021 alone, the group claimed at least thirty-two attacks, the majority of which occurred in former TTP strongholds or in Pakistan's western border regions, while a few occurred in urban areas. For example, four female development workers were killed in an attack in North Waziristan in February 2021; and the deaths of two police officers killed in Islamabad and Rawalpindi in March 2021 were suspected to be linked to the TTP.[44] In April 2021, the TTP claimed a suicide attack on a luxury hotel in Quetta, Balochistan, indicating the group's intentions to expand operations beyond northwestern Pakistan.[45]

Ambulances park near the site of a bomb blast detonated in the parking lot of the luxury Serena Hotel in Quetta, Pakistan, on April 21, 2021. The Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan claimed responsibility for the attack. (Photo by Arshad Butt/AP)

Beyond violent operations, the TTP has remained active in propagating its ideology and goals via its media wing, Umar Media, launching its first official magazine in 2016 and a new website in January 2020. Increasingly, within its publications, the TTP has embraced the "globalization of jihad" and sought to extend its fight to Kashmir and India. The TTP's venture into global jihad is likely influenced by its close relationship (discussed below) with al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) and its competition with ISK, the local affiliates of al-Qaeda and Islamic State, respectively, both of which have attempted to tap into the Kashmiri jihad. The TTP's efforts to infuse its propaganda with a transnational narrative appear to be an attempt to remain competitive with other militant groups and exploit a larger recruitment base. The TTP has also renewed efforts to exploit preexisting grievances against the state. For example, a TTP propaganda video released in December 2019 features interviews with civilians complaining about the actions—including extrajudicial killings and forced displacement because of military operations—of Pakistani military and intelligence service officials.[46]

In assessing the threat posed by the TTP, it is important not to overlook its splinter groups, such as Jamaat-ul-Ahrar and Hizbul Ahrar, and the TTP's attempts to reintegrate those factions back into the core group. Jamaat-ul-Ahrar was formed in August 2014 under the leadership of Omar Khalid Khorasani and is believed to operate from the border region of Afghanistan and Pakistan.[47] When

> The TTP's protracted (albeit low-level) jihad against the Pakistani state, its frequent propaganda releases, its reintegration of former splinter groups, and its efforts to intimidate local communities are signs of an organization that appears to be committed to reinvigorating itself.

Khorasani died in a US drone strike in 2017, commander Mukarram Khan broke away to form Hizbul Ahrar, with a focus on targeting Pakistani security personnel.[48] Hizbul Ahrar publicly announced the launch of Operation Shamzai, a jihad against Pakistani security personnel.[49] Both Jamaat-ul-Ahrar and Hizbul Ahrar have been responsible for highly deadly attacks within Pakistan, surpassing the TTP's level of activity in recent years. For example, Jamaat-ul-Ahrar cooperated with ISK in at least nine attacks between 2015 and 2018 that killed 219 people and injured 490.[50] Between mid-2018 and mid-2020, Hizbul Ahrar was involved in at least thirteen deadly attacks across the country, including two suicide attacks.[51] Recent notable attacks by Hizbul Ahrar include a suicide attack on a well-known Sufi shrine in Lahore in May 2019 and an explosion in a mosque in Quetta in January 2020.[52]

In August 2020, Umar Media announced that Jamaat-ul-Ahrar and Hizbul Ahrar had formally rejoined the TTP in an effort to consolidate their efforts against Pakistani security personnel, with Noor Wali retaining leadership of the group.[53] This announcement came on the heels of other TTP announcements in July 2020 regarding mergers. In early July, the TTP had announced that the Hakimullah Mehsud Group under Mukhlis Yar had rejoined the TTP. Later in the month, the group announced that the Amjad Farouqi group (affiliated with al-Qaeda) had joined the TTP; this statement was shortly followed by the announcement that the Usman Saifullah Kurd group of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, under Maulvi Khush Muhammad Sindhi, had pledged allegiance to Noor Wali.[54]

These developments have reinforced concerns about a potential TTP resurgence, as the group seems intent on rebuilding its operational capacity by consolidating various factions and groups. While it is too early to determine the durability and security implications of these mergers, they should not be ignored; cooperation between groups can often enhance groups' longevity and their ability to plan and execute deadly operations. These mergers may well result in an uptick in the TTP's activity—including extortion, intimidation, and targeted attacks—in areas near the border.[55]

Targeting of TTP leaders by the Pakistani security services has continued, suggesting that leadership decapitation of the TTP remains an important goal. For example, in February 2020, Pakistani security forces killed five TTP militants near Peshawar and another two commanders in Tank District in South Waziristan.[56] In addition, several senior members of the TTP were killed in Afghanistan, including Sheikh Khalid Haqqani, one of the higher-ranking members of the TTP. Soon after the killing of Haqqani, TTP leader Sheharyar Mehsud was targeted in a blast in Afghanistan's Kunar Province.[57] Although it remains unclear who was responsible for the attacks, members of the TTP linked them to Pakistani intelligence services.[58]

Another sign of the TTP's revival has been its renewed use of intimidation. After years of subdued activity, in August 2019 reports began to emerge that TTP militants were threatening the residents of Miranshah, North Waziristan, warning them against playing music or women leaving their homes without a male guardian.[59] In nearby Wana, South Waziristan, the TTP was reported to have warned the Pakistani police, via pamphlets, to leave the area.[60] In an apparent attempt to remain relevant in the public political discourse and engage in intimidation, the TTP boldly made a public statement against the "Aurat March" (Women's March) —a nonviolent

demonstration advocating women's rights—held across Pakistan in early March 2021, accusing women activists of blasphemy and obscenity.[61]

Taken together, the TTP's protracted (albeit low-level) jihad against the Pakistani state, its frequent propaganda releases, its reintegration of former splinter groups, and its efforts to intimidate local communities are signs of an organization that appears to be committed to reinvigorating itself.

Regional Alliances and Rivalries

The TTP's prospects of accomplishing its goal of reenergizing itself are likely to be significantly influenced by its evolving relationships with other militant organizations in the region. Historical bonds between TTP members and other groups, and their role in facilitating intergroup operational and logistical activities, have meant that membership in these organizations is often fluid and hard to distinguish. At an organizational level, the TTP's relationships with other militant groups—particularly the Afghan Taliban, al-Qaeda, and ISK—have been critical in providing the group with material benefits, as well as legitimizing its ideology.

AFGHAN TALIBAN

Negotiations between the Afghan Taliban and the United States led to the February 2020 "Doha Agreement" on conditions for a US troop withdrawal from Afghanistan and paved the way for the ongoing political negotiations between the Afghan Taliban and the government in Kabul. These negotiations have caused much speculation regarding the implications for the Pakistani Taliban. In general, the TTP views the Doha Agreement as a major win for all jihadists and their ideology.[62] The group's video released in April 2020, *Abtal-ul-Amat* ("Heroes of the Nation")*, commemorating Hakimullah Mehsud, highlights the TTP's relationship with and reverence for the Afghan Taliban. The video includes footage of various TTP Taliban leaders, including Hakimullah and Noor Wali, in meetings with Mullah Sangeen Zadran, a key Haqqani Taliban commander. One interpretation of this video is that the TTP was eager to advertise its close relationship with the Afghan Taliban, as well as its unflagging support for the group.

Despite the well-known ideological and operational linkages between the Afghan Taliban and the Pakistani Taliban, a source of friction and a stark distinction between the two is that the former do not attack the Pakistani state. Indeed, far from targeting the Pakistani state, the Afghan Taliban receive support from Islamabad.[63] Both Afghan Taliban and Haqqani Network leaders, such as Mullah Omar and Sirajuddin Haqqani, have repeatedly attempted to convince the TTP to focus its jihad in Afghanistan.[64] These efforts have always been fruitless, because waging jihad against the Pakistani state forms the basis of the TTP's separate identity.[65] In 2009, the Afghan Taliban openly denied their affiliation with the TTP through their spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid, stating that their support for the TTP only went as far as "sympathy for them as Muslims."[66] In 2014, the Afghan Taliban openly condemned the TTP's attack on the Army Public School.[67]

Despite such discord in their goals, both groups have maintained a mutually beneficial relationship, and the Afghan Taliban have not spoken directly about the TTP recently.[68] The cooperation between the two groups has been rooted in their individual pragmatic goals. In the past, TTP leaders have given the Afghan Taliban valuable logistical and operational support, including providing

suicide bombers.[69] Although it is difficult to measure the impact of their cooperative relationship, for the Afghan Taliban, links with the TTP have boosted their membership and enhanced their ability to recruit from Pakistan's tribal areas. For the TTP, remaining aligned with the Afghan Taliban allows it to capitalize on the widespread support among Pashtun tribesmen for the Afghan jihad, which in turn boosts the TTP's own resources and legitimacy.[70] In addition, a working relationship with the Afghan Taliban has allowed the TTP to escape US drone strikes and military operations in Pakistan's tribal regions by fleeing to Afghanistan. Viewed through this lens, the TTP's future will depend in part on the extent to which the Afghan Taliban see the TTP as a liability going forward and their willingness to distance themselves from the group.

Although an Afghan political settlement would obviate the need for the TTP's support for the Afghan jihad, it would also reduce the Afghan Taliban's need to rely on the Pakistani state. The future relationship between the TTP and the Afghan Taliban could unfold in several ways. It is possible that the Afghan Taliban might attempt to use their influence to persuade the TTP to curtail its attacks and become amenable to negotiations with the Pakistani state, especially if the Afghan Taliban wish to maintain a healthy relationship with Pakistan. Were the TTP to adopt that course, however, it would likely trigger the formation of more extreme TTP splinter groups that would continue to target the Pakistani state and cooperate with groups such as ISK. This pattern has been observed in the past, as when groups such as Jamaat-ul-Ahrar cooperated with ISK at an operational level.[71] However, if TTP leaders refuse to give up arms against the Pakistani state, the Afghan Taliban might seek to distance themselves from the TTP in order to preserve their cooperative, albeit strained, relationship with Pakistan.

Another possible and perhaps more likely outcome is that the Afghan Taliban avoid becoming entangled in the TTP-Pakistan conflict, preferring to stay neutral and maintaining their historic ties with the TTP as well as the Pakistani state. If so, the TTP may continue to enjoy safe havens within Afghanistan in the near future and be able to focus all its resources on its fight in Pakistan. The Afghan Taliban have shown themselves keen to become more independent of the Pakistani state, especially since 2010 as they gained strength within Afghanistan; as Tricia Bacon highlights, the Afghan Taliban have already sought new patrons, acquired independent sources of support, and gained extensive territorial control.[72] As such, dissuading the TTP from targeting the Pakistani state is likely to be a lower priority for the Afghan Taliban than before.

AL-QAEDA

Al-Qaeda's relationship with the TTP is rooted in the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and proved to be pivotal in the TTP's early growth. US operations against the Afghan Taliban and al-Qaeda operatives in Afghanistan resulted in an influx into Pakistan's tribal areas of their senior leadership, including Mullah Omar, Mullah Dadullah, Mullah Obeidullah, Jalaluddin Haqqani, Osama bin Laden, and Ayman al-Zawahiri.[73] Most of these figures found refuge in South Waziristan, along with other Afghan, Arab, and Central Asian fighters.

Al-Qaeda played an important role in providing money to local militants to rent space for training camps, recruit local tribesmen, and take other steps that allowed for the later emergence of the TTP.[74] In addition to material benefits, the TTP, especially its senior leadership, received ideological support from al-Qaeda, which supported the TTP through various media outlets and, in

> Al-Qaeda's relationship with the TTP is rooted in the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. . . . US operations against the Afghan Taliban and al-Qaeda operatives in Afghanistan resulted in an influx into Pakistan's tribal areas of their senior leadership.

contrast to the Afghan Taliban, encouraged its jihad against the Pakistani state.[75] Leaders of al-Qaeda and other Islamist groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan recognized the TTP as *ansar* ("local protectors"), which bolstered the TTP's legitimacy.[76] Al-Qaeda benefited from access to safe havens and local hospitality, rebuilding itself in South and North Waziristan and, by 2007, setting up bases in Data Khel, Dosali, Mir Ali, and Miramshah.[77]

The TTP became an ally of al-Qaeda, organizationally independent of it but liaising with al-Qaeda operatives for the purpose of conducting attacks. A suicide attack on the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad in September 2008, for instance, was suspected to involve both al-Qaeda and TTP militants.[78] Even after bin Laden's death on May 2, 2011, TTP leaders declared that they would continue to provide sanctuary to al-Qaeda and to support the organization.[79] The TTP's attack on the Mehran naval base in Karachi on May 22 was conducted, the TTP stated, to avenge the death of bin Laden.[80]

The presence of al-Qaeda in the region morphed into al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent in 2014, fulfilling bin Laden's ambition to have an al-Qaeda affiliate in South Asia. Asim Umar (now deceased), a Pakistani native and a former commander of the TTP, was named as AQIS's emir in September 2014.[81] Like the TTP, AQIS has launched major attacks within Pakistan. For example, in September 2014, AQIS was linked to the assassination of Brigadier General Zahoor Fazal Qadri, which was followed by the attempted hijacking of the Pakistan Navy frigate *Zulfiqar* in October 2014.[82] In 2016, security officials suspected the involvement of AQIS militants in a grenade attack on a police complex in North Nazimabad in Karachi.[83]

There are signs that AQIS's relationship with the TTP remains strong, even though AQIS seems to have limited operational capacity at present. In July 2018, AQIS publicly demonstrated solidarity with the TTP by releasing a statement expressing condolences over Fazlullah's death, followed by the posting of a video eulogy from Ayman al-Zawahiri. More recently, in July 2019, officials of the National Counter Terrorism Authority exchanged fire with six suspected al-Qaeda and TTP militants during an operation in Punjab Province, indicating continued links between the two groups.[84] AQIS lost its emir, Asim Umar, and six other senior members in Afghanistan's Helmand Province in September 2019, in an attack by US and Afghan security forces.[85] Given AQIS's leadership losses and its limited activity in the region apart from its propaganda efforts, TTP's relationship with AQIS is unlikely to provide the TTP with any substantial material benefits, although it may enhance the group's legitimacy.

ISLAMIC STATE KHORASAN

Setting aside the TTP's relationship with al-Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban, both of which are ISK's rivals, the TTP would seem a natural ally of ISK. Emerging in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region in 2014–15, ISK unleashed a wave of propaganda and violence that was characterized by Islamic State's trademark *takfiri* (deeming other Muslims as apostates or nonbelievers) and antinationalist agenda. Like the TTP, ISK seeks the implementation of sharia law and is opposed to nationalist movements and groups that are actively or passively supported by the Pakistani state.

Members of Pakistani civil society take part in a candlelight vigil on December 16, 2014, for victims of the attack by Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan on the Army Public School in Peshawar that killed 150 people, almost all of them students. (Photo by Anjum Naveed/AP)

Initially, there seemed to be a possibility of a wholesale alignment between the TTP and ISK: a series of pledges of allegiance (*bay'a*) were made by six TTP leaders, who publicly expressed their commitment to Islamic State's leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, in October 2014.[86] However, it soon became apparent that there was a split within the TTP about aligning with the Islamic State affiliate, largely driven by the TTP's preexisting alliances with the Afghan Taliban and al-Qaeda. Internal disputes within a floundering organization, combined with an unremitting anti-Pakistan agenda, resulted in key TTP leaders defecting to ISK.

Although the core of the TTP has not aligned with ISK, the two groups do not seem to have clashed directly. This is probably because the TTP perceives some tactical utility in ISK's campaign against the Pakistani state, and because ISK has a history of cooperating with local militant groups. However, the fact remains that ISK has actively and consistently bolstered its own resource base with former members of the TTP, eroding the TTP's strength. The vast majority of ISK's emirs have prior affiliations with the TTP, including the first emir, Hafiz Saeed Khan, who was a native of Orakzai District in KP and a former TTP commander.

At the organizational level, if TTP leaders are able to leverage the Afghan Taliban's growing influence in Afghanistan, TTP loyalists are likely to strengthen their relationship with the Taliban

rather than associate with ISK. However, if the Afghan Taliban seek to distance themselves from the TTP's jihad against the Pakistani state, this may generate space for cooperation between the TTP and ISK, at least in the operational realm for tactical gains. The TTP's pragmatic future needs are likely to trump any ideological differences, as has been the case with the Haqqani Network and ISK, which were reported in 2019 to be cooperating operationally within Afghanistan.[87]

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Much of the TTP's strength in the past has been derived from its network of relationships with the Afghan Taliban, the Haqqani Network, al-Qaeda, and other Punjab-based groups. As long as these relationships are sustained, the TTP is likely to exist in one form or another. A particularly worrisome development is the recent merger of splinter groups Jamaat-ul-Ahrar and Hizbul Ahrar with the TTP. Not only do these groups contribute to the TTP's operational capacity, they also bring with them their links to other deadly groups in the region, such as ISK. Additionally, one of the most dangerous features of the TTP is that it provides a deep pool of experienced jihadists who are regularly recruited by other organizations, such as AQIS and ISK. While this does not bolster the strength of the TTP as an organization, it does play an important role in the indirect amplification of violence and terrorism across the region.

Conclusion:
Keeping the TTP at Bay

At present, four key characteristics of the TTP stand out as its most dangerous attributes: its evolving nature, its resolve to revive itself, the potential appeal of its message to aggrieved populations, and its immersion within the broader militant landscape. In order to undermine the appeal of the TTP's ideology, constrain its propaganda and recruitment, and disrupt its collaboration with other deadly groups, the Pakistani state needs to adopt measures that go far beyond kinetic approaches. Pakistan has already undertaken some notable initiatives in this realm, such as establishing the Saboon Centre, which focuses on the deradicalization of teenagers, and the Mashal Centre, which works with the families of Islamist militants. Such efforts should be carefully evaluated for continuous improvements and prioritized for funding.[88]

The Pakistani government would be unwise, however, to devote significant effort to attempting to negotiate with the TTP. Aside from the fact that the government has little reason to negotiate with a terrorist group that has not posed a major threat to the state for five years or more, negotiations are likely to be unproductive because the core TTP group has shown no indication of wanting to seek a peaceful resolution or of renouncing violence. The difficulties of negotiating a settlement with the TTP include not only its checkered history of violating previous agreements, such as the Malakand accord, but also its fragmented nature. Peace negotiations often fail to work with a fragmented organization, because competing groups will feel threatened if any political deal empowers their rivals.[89] The TTP is not internally cohesive like the Afghan Taliban, and power struggles within groups can result in heightened and prolonged violence

as factions engage in outbidding and fratricidal violence.[90] Internal competition can also result in defections, and in the TTP's case, ISK has been and may continue to be an attractive alternative home for TTP members.[91]

While the negotiating track is effectively closed, several other more promising avenues are open to the Pakistani state if it wants to stifle the possibility of the TTP reviving. In the first place, much effort and many resources need to be poured into countering violent extremism (CVE) measures, deradicalization efforts, and the potential reintegration of combatants in TTP-affected regions. The Pakistani government (with US financial support) should proactively facilitate the activities of existing grassroots organizations engaged in CVE, including by providing security, and possibly supplement that effort with government-led organizations. Additionally, the Pakistani government could support research efforts that focus on uncovering the local dynamics shaping radicalization and recruitment to develop carefully targeted CVE programs.

Relatedly, the government and local communities need to be willing to integrate former combatants who may be willing to give up arms. Winning over communities, however, is not an easy task as it requires governments to build trust and legitimacy through sustained socioeconomic initiatives. One of the key obstacles for such government-sponsored programs is the Pakistani state's long record of nurturing jihadist groups, either actively or passively, in support of its strategic goals on both its eastern and western borders. In other words, the Pakistani state has indirectly played a significant role in the diffusion of extreme ideologies.[92] Shielding vulnerable populations of Pakistan from violent extremist ideologies must be prioritized, which would include revising state security strategies that exploit and inadvertently normalize jihadist activity. This is especially important because the networked infrastructure of militancy in Pakistan and Afghanistan tends to generate militant cooperation at both the individual and organizational levels, often blurring the lines between groups' distinct agendas.

Moreover, the TTP's efforts to incorporate a transnational jihadist agenda must not be disregarded. While the TTP's official magazine generally discusses the group's Deobandi ideology, Islamic theology, and the group's targets, those publications also feature articles about a globalized jihad, with specific references to Kashmir and India. This suggests that the TTP is seeking to follow AQIS and ISK in exploiting grievances of the Kashmiri population. Although the TTP is unlikely to break the hold of the groups that dominate the Kashmiri jihad, such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba, it may seek to recruit individuals disillusioned by these groups. Given AQIS's close ties with the Mehsud tribe, there is a risk of the TTP forming closer links with AQIS to appeal to a wider audience. This indicates that tackling the TTP adequately requires employing intelligence-driven operations to identify, monitor, and disrupt interlinked militant networks. Such an approach is likely to be the most productive when there is collaboration between law enforcement, intelligence, and the military across provinces.

Political actions by the state should include concerted efforts to improve governance in areas where the TTP has maintained strongholds and where it seeks to retain political relevance and boost recruitment by tapping into local grievances. The roots of many of these grievances can be traced back to the Frontier Crimes Regulation, a colonial-era law applied to the five million

residents of FATA, that denied them basic constitutional rights, including political representation, judicial appeal, and freedom from collective punishment.[93] FATA was merged with KP in 2018, but it remains one of the poorest regions of Pakistan, with limited access to health care, education, employment, and other public services. By some estimates, two-thirds of the population of the former FATA live in poverty.[94] Residents have also complained about rampant human rights violations and being caught in the cross fire between militant groups and the Pakistani military.[95] One manifestation of this frustration has been the growing popularity of the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement, whose leader, Manzoor Pashteen, has spoken up for victims of abductions and extrajudicial killings and demanded that the Pakistani military vacate the tribal districts. The merger of FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province through a constitutional amendment in May 2018 was intended, in part, to help alleviate issues of insecurity and underdevelopment, but how expediently these challenges can be tackled remains highly uncertain. The dangerous combination of a pervasive perception of injustice and suppression of any nonviolent protest movements provides fertile ground for the TTP to attempt to capitalize on grievances against the state.

Given this risk, limiting the appeal of the TTP and rendering its message irrelevant within Pakistan depends on securing the tribal regions through nonmilitary means. The TTP's operational capacity has been considerably degraded by military means; the biggest challenge now lies in making sure the appeal of TTP's narrative and ideology do not rebound from the decline they experienced following the group's attacks on schools and universities.

Specifically, there is a need for poverty alleviation through employment, education, and healthcare provisions, in addition to enhancing policing capacity. The government also needs to provide venues and a transparent process through which civilians can voice legitimate grievances and to work with or co-opt, rather than repress, peaceful protest movements. Repressing them will only alienate the population and increase the appeal of violent movements. Therefore, making long-term investments in socioeconomic development projects and in building the competencies of law enforcement units in TTP-affected areas that are frequent targets of the TTP is crucial. Moreover, efforts in northwest Pakistan need to move beyond local political empowerment and focus on the rule of law, the delivery of justice, and the provision of essential public goods to reinforce human security. Such measures are ever more critical in a period when states are burdened with the COVID-19 pandemic and gaps in governance may be exploited by violent actors. Although the merger of FATA and KP is a step in the right direction, the government needs to dedicate significant resources to correct decades of neglect and help keep the TTP's influence at bay.

If it takes such steps, the government of Pakistan should receive support from the US government. The two countries share an interest in ensuring that the TTP does not stage a revival, and US-Pakistani cooperation on this front would benefit both sides. From the Pakistani perspective, the TTP, even with its diminished capacity, will continue to pose a threat to the Pakistani state and its civilians as long as it propagates its extremist ideology and continues to recruit and conduct attacks within the country.

From the US side, although the TTP may not pose a direct threat to the US homeland, the group's evolving goals and increasing targeting of state officials rather than civilians could become a source of instability in the region and be detrimental to US interests and dangerous to US personnel there. The TTP is widely known to have provided sanctuary to al-Qaeda and

facilitated its operations in the past, and the TTP appears unlikely to sever these ties. In this context, the United States and Pakistan could leverage their overlapping interests in constraining militant groups such as the TTP through nonkinetic approaches that may also improve the overall US-Pakistan relationship. Key areas where Pakistan's fight against extremism and militancy could be bolstered through US support are enhanced CVE measures, educational and economic initiatives, and governance reforms in conflict-affected regions. Such assistance could take the form of sharing knowledge and expertise in the area of CVE. The United States is already Pakistan's biggest bilateral aid donor and should redirect some development assistance to support such initiatives.

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