

Q) There is an alarming revival of Militancy in Pakistan since the beginning of 2022. Critically evaluate the reasons and give policy recommendations.

Ans: 1. Introduction: After almost a decade of fighting against terrorism, Pakistan was finally able to purge the terrorists from their hideout. Military operations such as Zarb-e-Azb played an imperative role in disintegrating militancy in the country. However, this peace was short-lived and now faces resurgence of militancy once again.

2. Evidence of growing militancy: The resurgence of militancy is evident from the increasingly suicide bombings that are primarily targeted at military, para-military and police. These attacks include attacks on Police Station in South Waziristan, attack of Military in north Waziristan and multiple attacks in Lakki Marwat. These attacks are also aimed at the Chinese and Shia population, e.g. the suicide bomber attacked a van near University of Karachi, killing three Chinese academics. Moreover, the mosques are also being targeted which is evident from the attack conducted on Peshawar mosque, this was the most deadliest attack after APS. There has also been an increase in strategic attacks, the attack on CDT office in Bannu serves as a good example, where the fight lasted for 40 hours before the armed force were able to eliminate the militants. Further more, there have also been attempts made to enter the capital and the recent car bomb detonation is the testament of this.

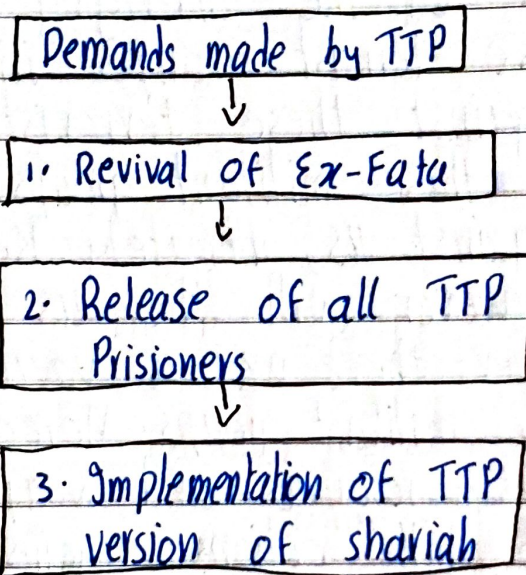
3. Reasons: There are many reasons which have contributed to the revival of militant activities in Pakistan.

3.1. US withdrawal from Afghanistan: US withdrawal from Afghanistan is one of the underlying causes of resurgence of these terrorist groups in Pakistan. The US was fighting against these terrorist group in Afghanistan, therefore these militant groups were pretty occupied with war against US, ultimately keeping terrorist activities at bay. However with the US gone, and Afghan Taliban in power, there was a vacuum created which was exploited by these militant groups. Moreover, the Afghan Taliban do not possess resources and weapons like the US, hence they fail to take ^{serious} actions against terrorists residing in their country.

3.2. Afghan Taliban's soft spot for Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan: Afghan Taliban and TTP are known as ideological brothers. They have fought many wars alongside against USSR and US. Afghan Taliban are hesitant to take any serious actions against TTP, harboring in their country. TTP leverage this soft spot to conduct cross border terrorism and other infiltration insurgencies by using Afghan soil as a launching pad.

3.3. Negotiations between TTP and Pakistan failed: The negotiations between TTP and Pakistan that were mediated by the Afghan Taliban have failed. Pakistan, as a gesture of good will, even allowed the militants to come back and settle in their

areas on the condition that they will remain peaceful, in an attempt to keep the negotiations running smoothly, However, The demands put forward by TTP were unacceptably.



When the dialogue failed to produce any fruitful results, TTP resorted to terrorist attacks.

3.4. Fragile Economy and Political instability in Pakistan:

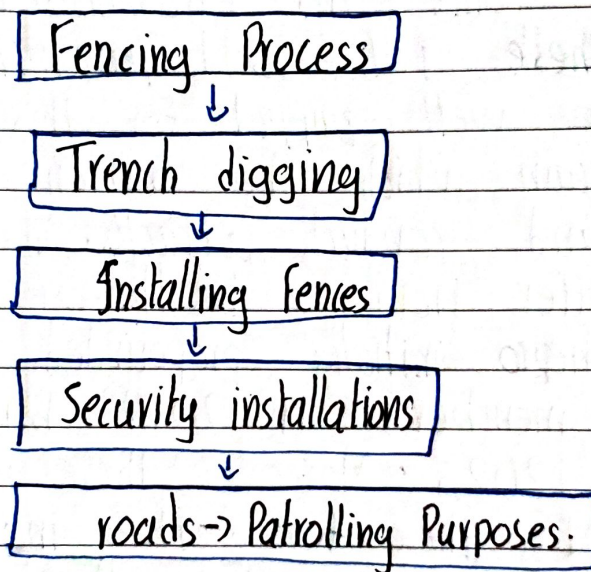
The weak economy and the political turmoil that Pakistan has been facing, especially after the former premier was ousted, has exacerbated the terrorist activities in the country. This is evident from the drastic increase in terrorist attacks from April 2022 onwards. These turbulent times, where the country is already suffering from chaos, have given an opportunity to the terrorists to conduct attacks inside Pakistan.

4. Solutions: The terrorist activities, albeit, rapidly increasing, can still be alleviated by employing stern measures.

4.1 Untrained Police and Paramilitary: The areas the Army fought to purge out the militants are now handed over to Police and Paramilitary to retain control. However, the police and paramilitary forces are not trained nor well equipped for this purpose, this creates a vacuum, which the militant groups can take advantage of and conduct attacks. In addition, these institutions suffer from a dearth of recruits. This is evident from the initially propounded proposal of inducting 6000 members in 2018, but only 600 are inducted till 2023. Moreover, there is poor planning and management by these forces. The incident of Bannu speaks volumes of this, where the office was situated in a civilian area and also contained a prison cell. The TTP members held in that prison cell got a chance to attack and as a result they were able to hijack the office for several hours before the Army came to the rescue.

4.2 Military operations: There is an urgent need for military operations to purge the terrorists. However, given the fragile state of the economy, the country cannot afford operations such as Zarb-e-Azb, which results in major displacements of locals. Instead, there is a need for intelligence based operations that have no or least collateral damage.

4.3. Border management: Open border with Afghanistan acts as a catalyst for militant insurgencies. Pakistan has taken a profound initiative to fence all the border with Afghanistan. Pakistan has already sealed 80% of the border already, however the remaining area is a hilly belt which is quite difficult to fence.



Pakistan should expedite the process of fencing and, thereby close the main gateway of terrorism.

4.4. NO more Talks with TTP: Pakistan should stop any with TTP. There should be talks held with Afghan Taliban, and the message should be delivered to them in pressing tone about the retaliation from Pakistan if these terrorists activities initiated from Afghan soil go unpunished.

4.5. approach all neighbours: Pakistan should approach all the neighbouring countries who are directly or indirectly affected from terrorist insurgencies origination from Afghanistan.

These countries should develop a collective policy to persuade Afghanistan into taking strict actions against these threats.

4.6. Dialogue on Pakistan's terms: Wars are eventually solved on Table. Military can dominate on grounds but unless there is a peace agreement from both sides, threat of attack never fade. The experience of US serves as a good example, where the mightiest army had to resort to dialogue after fighting in Afghanistan for two decades. If Pakistan has to once again talk with TTP, it should be from the point of strength not weakness. Pakistan should clarify that the demands put forward by TTP are unacceptable and that concession would be given to militants, including allowing ^{them} back to settle in their areas, on the condition that they surrender peacefully.

5. Conclusion: There is no doubt that Pakistan is one of the most affected country from terrorism. Pakistan has suffered heavy loses, and yet again, the same threat emerges. However, the resurgence of militancy, albeit seems daunting, can be dealt by stern measures emplaced and a collective national policy aimed at eradicating militants from the country. Inspiration should be drawn from the fact that the country was able to disintegrate militancy once before, so doing it a second time should also be achievable.