

## QUESTION #4:

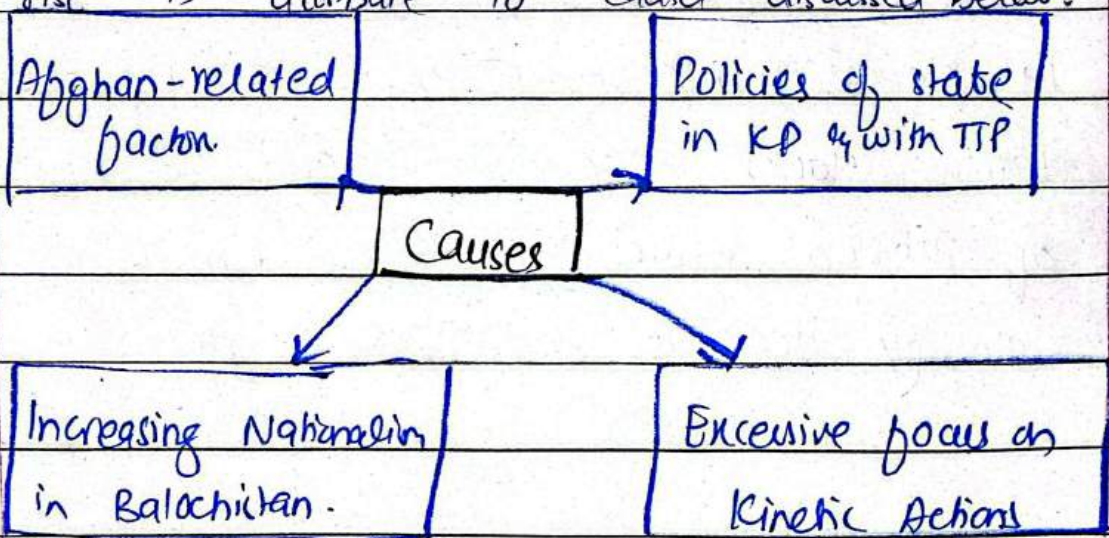
### 1- INTRODUCTION:

Pakistan is facing 'fourth wave' of militancy as of December, 2025. Unlike previous insurgencies, this one is hybrid in nature combining religiously motivated insurgency (KP) with ethno-nationalist insurgency (Balochistan). Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) is conducting terror attacks in areas of KP and other parts of Pakistan while Balochistan Liberation Authority (BLA) is active in Balochistan and Sindh. Both militant factions are targeting security forces, Chinese nationals and BLA is specifically targeting CPEC developments and state infrastructures. This revival is attributed to external factors (Afghan Taliban), socio-economic deprivation, and strategic error. However, through diplomacy, kinetic and soft actions, the surge in militancy be countered.

### 2- REASONS FOR THE DANGEROUS REVIVAL OF MILITANCY IN KP AND BALUCHISTAN:

According to data

from Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), 2025, the first 11 months of 2025 were 25% more violent than the entire 2024. This shows the dangerous revival of militancy in KP and Balochistan is the grave threat to the security of Pakistan. This rise is attribute to causes discussed below.



#### a - Afghanistan Related Factors:

The fallout of Afghanistan was an external factor that gave TTP space and time to breathe and plan. The takeover of Kabul by Afghan Taliban in 2021 failed to secure western border of Pakistan but it gave strategic space and depth to TTP to organize, recruit and plan attack on Pakistan soils while

being in safe heavens in Afghanistan. Moreover, TTP and BLA both have acquired the NATO-caliber weaponry left behind during US withdrawal. This eliminated the previously advantageous position of Pakistan army. Also, the ideological relations with Afghan Taliban and porous Pak-Afghan border further compounds the security vacuum. Thus, the takeover of Afghanistan by Taliban has resulted a spillover in TTP-related militancy in Pakistan.

## 2. Policies of state in KP and with TTP:

After fall of Kabul (2021), Pakistan adopted the policy of appeasement with TTP pursuing talks and negotiations with them. This gave them strategic space to return, regroup and relaunch their terror campaign. This also provided them with an opportunity to settle in districts of Swat, Bannu and Lakhi Marwat. Also, states unfulfilled promises after FATA merger (25th Amendment) also a sense of being wronged by state in general public. Hence, ineffective policies and -

unfulfilled promise led to rise in militancy again.

### c. Increasing Nationalism in Balochistan:

The deprived factions of Balochistan are supporting and promoting BLA agenda. Economic deprivation and enforced disappearances have created a trust vacuum between public and government which is successfully exploited by BLA. BLA is recruiting educated middle class to lead their terror campaign. These insurgents are adept in technology and cyber warfare which is further complicating the issue. Intelligence reports suggest that a tactical nexus between TTP and BLA exists despite ideological differences. So, the exclusion of deprived segments of Baloch societies are playing active role in this militancy under BLA.

### d. Excessive Focus on Kinetic Actions:

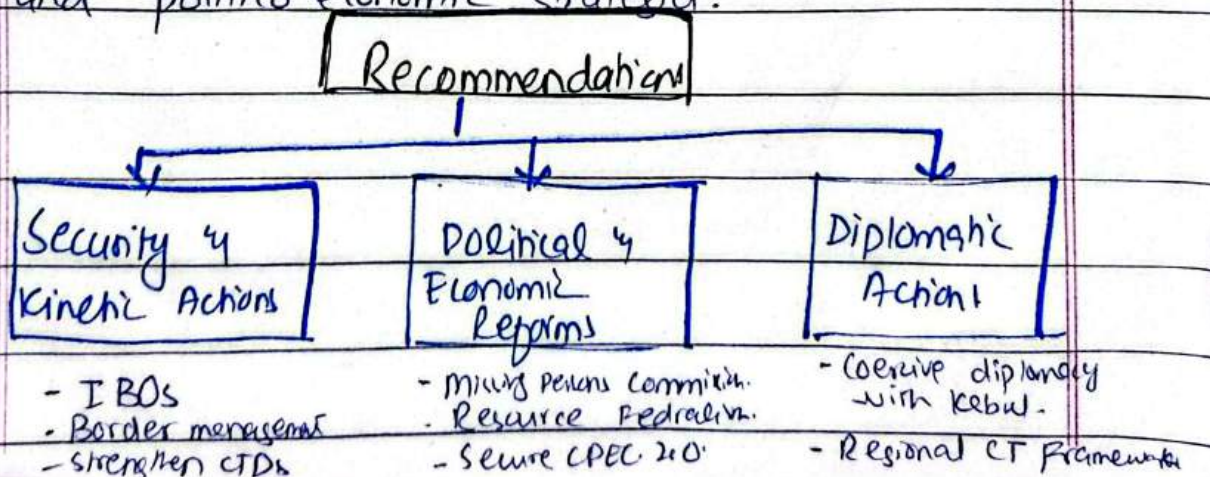
Military actions alone cannot weaken militancy. The new targets of militancy are police and frontier corps (FC). The policing is inefficient due to

death of personnel and resources. Police is using weaponry of Russia against NATO-weaponry of BLA and TTP. Difficult terrain further adds to the policing challenges. as 70 percent of the merged districts of Balochistan are on hilly areas. This difficult terrain contributed to the

Jaffer Express incident at Bolan mountains in 2025. Hence, policing has proved ineffective to the use of military and is an easy target for insurgents. Attacks on Law Enforcing agencies further weakens the security apparatus of the state.

### 3- RECOMMENDATIONS:

To counter this multi-faceted challenge, a "whole-of-a-system" approach is required. State should move beyond just kinetic actions and inculcate diplomatic and politico-economic strategies.



## a- Security and Kinetic Actions:

Due to economic constraints and compromised security apparatus, major operations are not feasible. Pakistan can switch to Intelligence-Based Operation (IBO) after gaining public confidence. Surgical strikes can be conducted at hide-outs of militants using drones and other modern-tech weaponry.

Moreover, Counter-terrorism Department must be reinforced with adequate strength of human resource and funds. They require immediate provision of thermal scopes and drone surveillance capability to outsmart and outsource the militants.

Also, border fencing of Durand Line must be ensured. Cross-border crossings must only be allowed on the basis of passports to curb militant movement.

## b- Political and Economic Reforms:

The state must transparently address the missing person cases. The state must address and eliminate the whole

biggest recruiting tool for separatists. This will also reduce the mistrust gap between public and the government. The government should also ensure proper devolution of powers and resources to ~~ex-FATA~~ ex-FATA tribal areas and Balochistan to address the grievances of general public. Efforts should be made to secure CPEC 2-D by involving local communities of Balochistan into the project. This will create a sense of ownership for the project and will reduce the incentive for targeting its infrastructure and Chinese personnel.

### C- Diplomatic Actions:

Pakistan must adopt coercive diplomacy with Kabul and use the trade routes and economic dependence to pressure Afghan Taliban to take actions against FTP.

Moreover, Pakistan should engage countries like China, Iran <sup>and</sup> Russia to form a mechanism to counter terrorism. It should make use of regional platforms like SCO to form a

collective action against insurgency and militancy.

By taking these actions, Pakistan can not only deal with the militants from head to toe but can also eradicate.

#### 4- CONCLUSION:

Pakistan is once again trapped in a more virulent wave of insurgency. The threat is a hybrid one combining the religious (TTP) and ethno-nationalist (BLA) elements to weaken the state. The recent upsurge is attribute to faulty policies of state in KP, Ex-FATA tribal areas and Balochistan. The ideological closeness of Afghan Taliban with TTP is also a contributing factor. Pakistan can work towards eradicating the militancy by first through diplomatic actions like coercive diplomacy with Kabul and operationalizing regional platform to form a collective anti-counter-terrorism system. The root cause of militancy (deprivation) can be reduced by addressing the problems of decentralization of resources and streamlining

the deprived sections into national economy.  
By taking these actions, Pakistan can not only put a stop on military iron handedly but can also eradicate it from roots.

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## QUESTION # 2

### PAK - AFGHAN RELATIONS

#### 1- INTRODUCTORY NOTE:

The relations of Pakistan and Afghanistan are in a state of 'cold peace' as of 2015. Despite diplomatic interventions by Beijing and later Türkiye and Qatar, no breakthrough has been achieved. The 'strategic depth' policy of Pakistan after fall of Kabul (2001) has effectively inverted, and Afghanistan is now being used as a launching pad by Tehrik e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) for cross-border terrorism.

The root cause for these tensions lies in TTP cross-border terrorist attacks, trade cut off and its weaponization, repatriation of Afghan refugees, and recent closeness of Afghanistan with India.

Pakistan has options of diplomatic leverage

and kinetic actions on its side. It ~~can~~ <sup>should also</sup> be careful towards the tilt of Afghanistan towards India. Though China's diplomatic intervention stopped the missile strike exchange to develop into a full-fledged war but it failed to address the major rupture of bilateral relations among both neighboring countries.

## 2- REASONS FOR PERSISTENT TENSIONS:

The tense

tensions are rooted in structural issues and are not situational. China's efforts of mediation were limited due to the fact that Afghan Taliban view TTP as their ideological brother and are reluctant to take any solid step against them. Following are few reasons that contribute to the persistent tensed relations among both.

### Reasons

- TTP - sticking Point
- Border Management
- Trade Weaponization
- Repatriation of Afghan Refugees
- Cross border strikes by Pakistan

### a- The TTP sticking point:

Tensions between Kabul and Islamabad are mainly due to this issue and it is a deal breaker issue. Afghan Taliban shares an ideological kinship with TTP while Pakistan asks Tehreek-e-Taliban Afghanistan (TTA) not to allow its soil to TTP for use against Pakistan. Even the proposal to relocate TTP away from Pak-Afghan border has not materialized yet and TTP continues to infiltrate border.

### b- Border Management:

To counter militancy, terrorism and cross-border smuggling, Pakistan decided to fence its western border in 2017. Now, it is 98% complete. This fencing of border also creates tense relations between Kabul and Islamabad. Pakistan is concerned about its security and fully supports fencing of international border while Afghanistan sees the fencing as a division of tribes and ethnic groups. Hence, border management and fencing is an issue resulting in persistent tensions.

### c- Trade Responzization:

Despite failure in multiple talks and negotiations with TTP and insibility of TTA to honor Geneva Accord, Pakistan cut off its trade relations with Afghanistan in 2021. Afghanistan is a land-locked country and it depends on transit routes of Pakistan to access warm water. This affected business on both sides. According to statistics of State Bank of Pakistan (2025), the trade between Afghanistan and Pakistan dropped to \$475 millions in 1st quarter of FY2026. Moreover, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2025) reported a 36% export decline till September 2025. Hence, decreased business and fading trade relations further added fuel to already tense relations.

### d- Repatriation of Afghan Refugees:

Pakistan started a national drive to send back Afghan refugees to their state as it has a proper government now. It was an effort

to counter insurgency, terrorism and higher crime rates. This repatriation of refugees fired a backlash from TTA and relations between both neighboring countries further worsened.

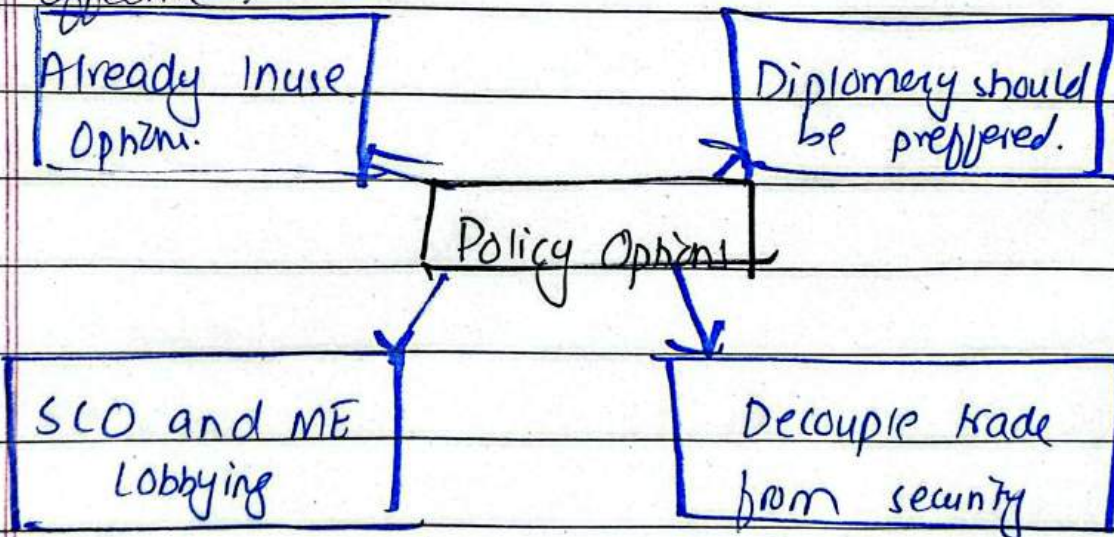
#### e. Cross-border surgical strikes by Pakistan:

The recent surgical of Pakistan across border in Afghanistan was the last straw that ended any formal relations between both states (2015). Pakistan took this step in retaliation for major terrorist attacks on its soil and due to Afghan Taliban's refusal to eliminate militant safe havens. According to reports of Royal United Service Institute (RUSI) London (2011), TTP and affiliated groups carried out about more than 600 terror attacks in Pakistan, mostly originating from cross-border sanctuaries. Despite the evidence, Afghan Taliban refused to take any step against TTP and these surgical strikes made the relations so tense that it needed mediation efforts from China, Türkiye and Qatar to revert to 'cold peace'.

### 3- POLICY OPTIONS FOR PAKISTAN:

Improving relations depend on Pakistan demands that require written guarantees from Afghans that their soil must not be used against Pakistan for terror attacks. Moreover, Pakistan is ready to provide any military assistance to TTA to fight insurgents and cross-border terrorists. The strategy of Pakistan must shift from 'expectation of cooperation' to '~~isolation~~ containment and isolation'.

Following are policy options that can prove effective.



#### a- Already Inuse Options:

Pakistan must continue with the already in use options. These include

coercive diplomacy, intelligence-based operations to eliminate TTP hide out, regio building pressure on TTA to take steps against TTP and highlight the role of TTP in the dangerous surge of militancy in Pakistan.

### b+ Diplomacy should be preferred:

To continue

with this 'cold peace' doctrine, Islamabad and Kabul must share data. and Mullah Jeck be used by Pakistan to exert an informal pressure on clergy of Afghanistan to take steps against TTP. It should also be careful to avoid any hint of TTA towards India.

### c- SCO and ME Lobbying:

Pakistan must make

use of Regional Anti-terrorism Squad of SCO to deal with militancy. Moreover, it should pressurize Afghanistan to not let it self used as a launching pad against Pakistan by providing evidence to Central Asian Republics, Russia, and China.

Pakistan can also lobby middle

eastern countries like Qatar, UAE and KSA in religious content to pressure Afghan Taliban take decisive steps against TIP.

#### d) Decouple Trade from Security:

Border closer and weaponization of trade has hurt economy of Pakistan more than Afghanistan's economy. Hence border markets must be established in areas close to border which <sup>permit</sup> ~~encourage~~ local currency trade for specific goods.

#### 4- CONCLUSION:

The tense relations of Afghanistan and Pakistan are deeply rooted in cross-border terrorism of TIP, border management and fences, weaponization of trade and repatriation of refugees. The surgical strike of Pakistan is retaliation to cross-border terrorist attacks. Brought me both countries at the brink of war. However by using already in use options, pressuring Afghan Taliban may SCO, ME, Russia and China and decoupling

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trade from security, Pakistan can ease out  
the tension and relations can be restored  
only if its conditions and demands  
are met.

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