

THE TTP INSURGENCY: REGIONAL SECURITY IMPLICATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Although the India-Pakistan rivalry has long-dominated the security discourse of the South Asian region, the biggest concern for the global community today is no longer their tensions, in spite of their four-day war in May 2025, but the growing hostilities between Afghanistan and Pakistan, which have escalated into a worrying pattern, with ramifications for the entire region and beyond. Indeed, the Pakistani establishment had nurtured the Taliban, from their inception to the US' withdrawal from Afghanistan, helping them come back to power for the second time, all in the hope of attaining Pakistan's long-standing policy of 'strategic depth'. The reverse appears to have happened. The jubilant remark by Pakistan's former Prime Minister Imran Khan, that Afghanistan had broken the shackles of slavery after the Taliban's August 2021 takeover, has since become an oft-quoted line, used to juxtapose Pakistan's expectations from a Taliban government and the realities that ensued. Although

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Pakistan pinned its hopes on the Taliban regime to become pliant to help settle the Durand Line dispute—given that no Afghanistan government to date has formally recognised it—and to rein in their ideological brothers, the Pakistani Taliban, these expectations have not materialised. The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has instead emerged as a critical sticking point between Pakistan and Afghanistan, frequently putting the two countries at loggerheads and, at times, triggering brief border clashes, or a war of recrimination, thereby warranting the need for analysing the broader regional consequences of the group's resurgence.

TTP'S TRANSNATIONAL NETWORK

Though the TTP's operational focus remains directed solely against the Pakistani state, its links with multiple militant networks, and its safe haven in Afghanistan, where a permissive environment is provided to terrorist organisations of varying stripes, mean that its revival carries security repercussions for both the South and Central Asian regions. Several reports from the UN's Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team have pointed towards al-Qaida regrouping in Afghanistan, mostly via strengthening cooperation with other terrorist groups in the region. That greater support from al-Qaida to the TTP could transform the latter into an "extra-regional threat" or an umbrella organisation for other terrorist groups operating in the region has also been brought out numerous times.¹ While al-Qaida's influence within the TTP's rank-and-file is not as overt as it used to be in the past, it still retains considerable sway by providing ideological and weapons support to the TTP. The TTP is also known to be sharing training camps with al-Qaida in Afghanistan. With al-Qaida serving as a common facilitator and financier, the TTP maintains ties with groups like the Jamaat Ansarullah (better known as the Tajikistani Taliban or Tehreek-e-

1. This factor has been highlighted by the thirty-fourth and thirty-fifth reports of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to Resolution 2734 (2024) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities (p. 18), and the fifteenth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to Resolution 2716 (2023) concerning the Taliban and other associated individuals and entities constituting a threat to the peace, stability and security of Afghanistan (p. 16).

Taliban Tajikistan), Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and the East Turkestan Islamic Movement/Turkestan Islamic Party (ETIM/TIP). The UN's Monitoring Team, in its July 2025 report, notes that fighters from the above-mentioned groups have been incorporated by the Afghan Taliban into their law enforcement and army units to provide domestic security, particularly in north Afghanistan.² This raises the spectre of the TTP's abiding transnational linkages, even as its *jihad* has become exclusively localised. On top of that, once the TTP's recruitment of cadres from the Afghan Taliban, and from other foreign nationalities besides Pakistanis, is taken into account, its avowal that its *jihad* is solely confined to Pakistan, appears slightly incongruous.

Beyond Afghans, the TTP is reported to be increasingly recruiting individuals of Bangladeshi origin. Bangladesh's Anti-Terrorism Unit has arrested a few suspects on the basis of intelligence linking them to the TTP, while Bangladeshi nationals have been killed in Pakistan during security operations against militants. For instance, in April 2025, a security operation in North Waziristan led to the killing of over 50 terrorists, among whom was a Bangladeshi national named Ahmed Zobaer.³ In May, a Bangladeshi digital outlet, *The Dissent*, reported that Zobaer was a member of the TTP, while further noting that approximately eight Bangladeshi nationals are presently active within the group in Afghanistan.⁴ In September 2025, reports surfaced of another Bangladeshi, Faisal Hossain, who was killed during a military operation in Pakistan's Karak district, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This was followed by a detailed *Dawn* piece published in December 2025, titled "Militancy: Bangladesh's Militant Pipeline to Pakistan". Quoting Bangladesh's Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit, the report noted that "another two dozen or so Bangladeshi nationals are currently in Pakistan,

2. Thirty-sixth Report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to Resolution 2734 (2024) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities, p. 17.

3. Ahmed Hussain, "Bangladeshi Nationals are Joining Terrorist Ranks: Bigger Problem is the Culture of Denial," *The Print*, May 19, 2025, <https://theprint.in/opinion/islamic-terrorism-in-bangladesh-ttp-isis-recruitment/2630196/>. Accessed on August 15, 2025.

4. Ibid.

fighting for the TTP and other militant organisations—a trend that experts say first emerged in 2023 and has alarmed authorities in Dhaka”.⁵ Beyond the TTP, Bangladeshi nationals, often coming from modest economic backgrounds or rural areas, have reportedly joined groups like the Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) and Ittehad-ul-Mujahideen Pakistan (IMP).⁶ In most cases, they appear to have been misled by promises of financial reward or employment abroad, with their families echoing similar sentiments and demanding justice for their sons.⁷

The TTP’s recruitment efforts in Bangladesh seem to be undergirded by a broader atmosphere supportive of religious extremism. For context, Bangladesh is undergoing a renewed wave of radicalisation, with heightened activity by Bangladesh-based Islamist militant groups and growing politico-economic disenchantment among a large chunk of the youth since the forced ouster of the former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in August 2024. Domestically, political turbulence and the Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh could provide Islamist militant groups, including the TTP, with a fresh pool of recruits. Internationally, ongoing tensions in the Middle East, especially the crisis in Gaza, along with perceived persecution of Muslims worldwide, may further radicalise susceptible individuals, not only in Bangladesh, but across the world. Here, the internet plays a key role, facilitating exposure to radical ideologies. The TTP’s use of digital platforms to indoctrinate and recruit disgruntled youth globally indicates that its recruitment process is, to an extent, transnational. In one such instance, a Bangladeshi citizen was arrested in Italy in 2023 for being a TTP member and inciting terrorism and intolerance toward other communities online.⁸ Even if the TTP is not transnational in its operational scope, it certainly is opportunistic and

5. Maruf Hasan, “Militancy: Bangladesh’s Militant Pipeline to Pakistan,” *Dawn*, December 7, 2025, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1959563>. Accessed on February 5, 2025.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. “Bangladeshi Arrested in Italy on Suspicion of Al-Qaeda Links,” *The Daily Star*, November 4, 2023, <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/world/europe/news/bangladeshi-arrested-italy-suspicion-al-qaeda-links-3460881>. Accessed on August 20, 2025.

adaptive in character, eager to capitalise on turmoil across borders to broaden its appeal. The case of Bangladeshis joining Pakistan-based militant organisations, however, is striking and ironic in equal measure, particularly in the light of the new-found bonhomie between Bangladesh and Pakistan. Islamabad has a history of playing up its shared Islamic heritage with Dhaka and framing the two as natural allies, that stand in stark contrast to a 'Hindu India'. This, however, could be a double-edged sword for both states. Once hardline Islamist beliefs and groups are nurtured in a society, their ambitions, at times, supersede their core political purpose. Repercussions are often transboundary in nature. Pakistan itself continues to grapple with the fall-out of this strategy, most remarkably in its support for the Afghan Taliban, which has ultimately emboldened their counterparts in Pakistan. In a similar vein, the very extremist ideologies that Pakistan might attempt to cultivate in Bangladesh could potentially backfire. Bangladeshi nationals in any case are joining the TTP, which remains an anti-Pakistan outfit for all practical purposes. And individuals driven by Islamist extremism frequently segue from one group to another, aligning themselves with whichever group offers the most benefits, financial or otherwise. Herein lies a lesson: if Pakistan wants to curb the TTP's transnational recruitment networks, it may have to consider abandoning any predilection and inclination to endorse Islamist elements in Bangladesh.

AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN TENSIONS SPILL OVER ACROSS DOMAINS

Pakistan's incumbent Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif thundered once, "Today, I want to give a clear message to Afghanistan to choose between Pakistan and the TTP".⁹ With Pakistan's patience wearing thin over unabating attacks by the TTP, the former has brought about a sea-change in its Afghanistan policy, which is now characterised by mass expulsion of Afghan refugees, recurring cross-border air strikes against alleged TTP leaders on Afghan soil, and applying diplomatic and economic pressure on the Taliban regime. But none

9. Umer Farooq, "Choose Between Pakistan and TTP, PM tells Kabul," *Dawn*, September 14, 2025, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1941848>. Accessed on February 2, 2026.

of these measures has compelled the Taliban to rein in the TTP, principally because the former do not view the latter as a 'terrorist group',¹⁰ but rather as an ideological ally, who had helped them during their years of *jihad*. If the Taliban were reluctant to give up al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden even when the costs were high, in the form of inviting the full force of US retaliation, the probability of the Taliban abandoning the TTP under far lower external pressure, appears remote. The evolution, or devolution, in Pakistan's Taliban policy has engendered repercussions for the region that extend well beyond the immediate security challenges posed by the TTP. Pakistan's handling of the Afghan refugees is a case in point. Aside from Pakistan having lost its standing among the Afghans, which, in any case, was on shaky grounds, the punitive nature of recent measures risked increasing sympathy for both the Taliban and the TTP. If the rationale behind the expulsions was to curb the alleged involvement of Afghan refugees in criminal and terror activities inside Pakistan, then its outcome seems to be counter-productive. A growing number of Afghan nationals and even Afghan Taliban cadres are beginning to join the TTP's ranks. According to the latest figures by the UN Refugee Agency, about 5.4 million Afghans have returned to Afghanistan since October 2023, around the time Pakistan unveiled its 'Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan', with Pakistan and Iran accounting for the bulk of these returnees.¹¹ Even those awaiting resettlement in third countries have been deported from Pakistan, with a significant number of Afghans, including the registered ones, being forcibly repatriated, a process that amounts to the violation of the key principle of non-refoulement under international human rights law. The pace and scale of these returns is pushing Afghanistan, already grappling with a humanitarian crisis, deeper into the abyss. This is further compounded by a steep decline in international humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, which has constrained the

10. Yumna Fatima, "From Friends to Foes: Pakistan Must Rethink its Approach to the Taliban. But What Does That Look Like?," *Dawn*, October 17, 2025, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1948883>. Accessed on February 7, 2026.

11. UNHCR, "UNHCR Seeks Support for Solutions as 5.4 Million Afghans Return Since Late 2023," February 13, 2026, <https://www.unhcr.org/in/news/briefing-notes/unhcr-seeks-support-solutions-5-4-million-afghans-return-since-late-2023>. Accessed on February 15, 2026.

availability of essential services for the returnees. The lack of such support is a recipe for disaster, as it creates conditions in which vulnerable returnees remain susceptible to recruitment by a melange of terror groups operating in Afghanistan. With the international community's attention largely diverted by crises in Ukraine and the Middle East, scaling up assistance or meaningfully investing in the reintegration of returnees is going to be an uphill task. At the global level, efforts, or even interest, to mobilise support for the returnees is encumbered by the Taliban's restrictions on women and girls.¹² The longer-term risks inherent in this lackadaisical approach toward the Afghan refugees continue to evade policymakers, not only in Pakistan but also in countries that had pledged to resettle Afghans who had worked alongside the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) forces.

In addition, Pakistan's recalibrated Afghanistan policy has also manifested in the economic domain, with Islamabad shutting its borders and suspending trade to pressure the Taliban into breaking with the TTP. A December 2025 report by the UN's Security Council corroborates precisely this: "At the time of writing...the closure of border crossings with Pakistan is estimated to cost the Afghan economy around \$1 million per day".¹³ The same report further notes that the sudden influx of Afghans has swelled Afghanistan's population by 10 per cent, exacerbating already difficult economic and social conditions, and has also led to a loss of remittances.¹⁴ Following deadly clashes with the Taliban forces in October 2025, Pakistan suspended border trade; although Islamabad had previously tightened transit trade regulations for Afghanistan and has sporadically shut border crossings, this suspension has proved to be a prolonged one, as the October clashes were arguably the fiercest to date. Here it is imperative to note that while both remain interdependent on each other's markets, Afghanistan is much

12. This aspect is highlighted by the sixteenth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to Resolution 2763 (2024) concerning the Taliban and other associated individuals and entities constituting a threat to the peace, stability and security of Afghanistan, p. 13.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

more dependent on Pakistan than vice versa, pushing Kabul to scramble for alternative markets. Yet, goods destined for Pakistan from Central Asia are piling up within Afghanistan, just as Kabul's exports routed through Pakistan's transit corridors remain stalled.¹⁵ Border areas from both countries are likely to bear a disproportionate brunt, particularly Afghanistan, which is at once dealing with a large influx of refugees, recurring natural disasters and declining humanitarian assistance. On this matter, trade representatives and economic analysts told *The New York Times* that both sides are "shooting themselves in the foot with a trade war".¹⁶ The economic fallout of protracted disruption in trade and border movement remains inadequately examined, with consequences likely to reflect across the region, already regarded as among the least economically integrated in the world. Alternative trade routes for both Pakistan and Afghanistan are more time-consuming, costly, and logistically complex, thereby reducing the competitiveness of their exports and imports alike.¹⁷ Ultimately, Pakistan would have to confront the necessity for the resumption of border trade, all the while balancing economic realities with its security concerns.

Beyond its implications for Afghanistan, the thorny TTP issue risks embroiling other actors in the conflict between the two conjoined twins. In any case, the equation between the rulers in Islamabad and Kabul has seldom been insulated from wider regional power calculations, or from the influence of third-party states in varying degrees. Perhaps nothing reflects this more than the events of October 2025. That month, when the Afghan Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi was in New Delhi—the first visit by a senior Taliban official since the group re-seized power—Pakistan conducted air strikes on Kabul. Although Islamabad did not officially claim responsibility, reports suggested the strikes were a targeted attempt to take out the TTP chief, Mufti Noor Wali Mehsud, who, subsequently, released

15. Mubarak Zeb Khan, "Afghanistan Bears Heavier Economic Cost as Pakistan Trade Suspension Bites Harder," *Dawn*, December 31, 2025, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1963939>. Accessed on February 4, 2026.

16. Elian Peltier and Zia ur-Rehman, "Between Pakistan and Afghanistan, a Trade War With No End in Sight," *The New York Times*, December 9, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/12/09/world/asia/afghanistan-pakistan-trade.html>.

17. Khan, n. 15.

a video proclaiming he was still alive.¹⁸ The timing of the strikes wasn't lost on observers, many of whom analysed that they weren't coincidental but were calculated by the Pakistan Army to signal its unease to both Kabul and New Delhi over their growing engagement. The Afghan Taliban retaliated by launching coordinated attacks on Pakistan Army posts along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, which, in turn, was met with counter-attacks by Pakistan. As significant military and civilian casualties mounted on both sides, Qatar and Turkey stepped in to mediate between Afghanistan and Pakistan, convening three rounds of peace talks. Though a tenuous ceasefire was reached in Doha in mid-October, further negotiations in Istanbul, extending into November 2025, ended in a deadlock, with each side accusing the other of obstinate demands.¹⁹ Within weeks, reports surfaced of Saudi Arabia mediating between the Taliban and Pakistani officials, but these efforts too failed to yield any breakthrough.²⁰ Similarly, China has offered its good offices to mediate on multiple occasions, including during the most recent clashes.²¹ Taken together with US President Donald Trump's stated interest in facilitating peace between Afghanistan and Pakistan²², it becomes clear that, despite the TTP's retreat from a transnational *jihadi* agenda, its activities carry far-reaching consequences beyond the Af-Pak region. Both regional and extra-regional actors appear to

18. Saeed Shah and Mushtaq Ali, "Militant Leader at Heart of Afghan-Pakistan Conflict Survived Strike that Provoked Clashes," *Reuters*, October 16, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/militant-leader-stirring-conflict-between-pakistan-afghanistan-2025-10-16/>. Accessed on February 4, 2026.
19. "Pakistan-Afghanistan Peace Talks in Istanbul Fail Amid Rising Border Tensions", *The Economic Times*, November 9, 2025, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/pakistan-afghanistan-peace-talks-in-istanbul-fail-amid-rising-border-tensions/articleshow/125195851.cms?from=mdr>. Accessed on February 4, 2026.
20. Baqir Sajjad Syed, "Riyadh Quietly Mediates Talks Between Pakistan, Afghanistan: Sources," *Dawn*, December 1, 2025, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1958546>. Accessed on February 4, 2026.
21. Shivam Shekhawat, "Afghanistan-Pakistan Quagmire Reveals the Limits of China's Leverage", Observer Research Foundation, December 5, 2025, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/afghanistan-pakistan-quagmire-reveals-the-limits-of-china-s-leverage>. Accessed on February 7, 2026.
22. Siyar Sarat, "Trump Says he is Ready to Mediate Between 'Afghanistan and Pakistan'," *Amu TV*, October 13, 2025, <https://amu.tv/204955/>. Accessed on February 8, 2026.

be stakeholders in the conflict, and would, therefore, be inclined to intervene in the case of a major escalation to preserve regional peace and stability.

ACCUSATIONS AND COUNTER-ACCUSATIONS

Having been unsuccessful in reining in the TTP, Islamabad has begun alleging that India, alongside the Afghan Taliban, is behind the group. Besides accusing India of backing the TTP, Pakistan, in particular its Defence Minister Khawaja Asif, has alleged that India has “penetrated” the Afghan Taliban’s leadership, and is using Kabul to wage a “low-intensity war” with Pakistan.²³ This serves a three-pronged purpose: it seeks to discredit the TTP in the eyes of the Pakistani public by portraying them as acting at the behest of hostile external actors; deflects attention from Pakistan’s own internal security and governance failures, and obfuscates Pakistan’s well-established history of sponsoring militant proxies in the region. Though such Pakistani accusations against New Delhi are not new, they were solely claimed in the context of Baloch insurgent groups. That Pakistan went to the extent of rebranding them as ‘*Fitna-al-Hindustan*’—a term suggesting Baloch insurgents operate at India’s bidding—immediately after Operation Sindoor, in May 2025, suggests that blaming India has become its single-point Balochistan policy.²⁴ Extending this logic to include the TTP, however, points to a deliberate recalibration by Pakistan to shape its broader narrative against India, while simultaneously attempting to delegitimise the group. Renamed *Fitna-al-Khawarij* in 2024, the TTP is now routinely described as an Indian proxy by Pakistan military’s media wing, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), following any TTP attack or in the aftermath of security operations against the group. Arguably, such narratives directly contribute to an atmosphere of sustained

23. “Pak-Afghan Talks in Istanbul Failed to Bring About any Workable Solution, says Information Minister”, *Dawn*, October 29, 2025, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1951912>. Accessed on February 4, 2026.

24. Bantirani Patro, “Balochistan in the Battle of Narrative: Pakistan’s Calculated Focus on India”, Observer Research Foundation, August 14, 2025, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/balochistan-in-the-battle-of-narratives-pakistan-s-calculated-focus-on-india>.

antagonism, detrimental to regional harmony. Not the least when Pakistan blames India even for attacks unconnected to the TTP or Baloch militant groups. The sequence of events that unfolded in November 2025 is telling. Following the Red Fort blast in New Delhi, India adopted caution and avoided pointing fingers at Pakistan, even as the latter's defence minister publicly speculated, "I won't be surprised if in the next few hours or tomorrow India blames us for this".²⁵ A day later, an explosion occurred at the entrance of Islamabad's District Judicial Complex. Although a TTP-faction, the Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, claimed responsibility for the attack, the central leadership of the TTP denied involvement, with Islamabad swiftly attributing responsibility to "India's terrorist proxies".²⁶ In early February 2026, following a deadly bombing at a Shia mosque in Islamabad, Pakistani leaders alleged India's and Afghanistan's involvement without presenting any evidence.²⁷ This was so even as an Islamic State-affiliated group claimed responsibility for it. India, while rejecting the allegations as baseless and condoling the loss of lives, stated: "It is unfortunate that, instead of seriously addressing the problems plaguing its social fabric, Pakistan should choose to delude itself by blaming others for its home-grown ills".²⁸ This response has more or less been India's standard template when addressing Pakistan's constant stream of accusations.

The Afghan Taliban, by contrast, have responded to Pakistan in an impassioned manner. Besides officially refuting Islamabad's accusations, the Afghan Taliban use their media mouthpiece, *Al-Mirsaad* (also spelled *Al-Mersaad*; Arabic for 'The Watchtower')²⁹, to

25. Sarah Shamim, "Who are India and Pakistan Blaming for Delhi, Islamabad Blasts?," *Al Jazeera*, November 12, 2025, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/11/12/who-are-india-and-pakistan-blaming-for-delhi-islamabad-blasts>. Accessed on February 5, 2026.

26. Ibid.

27. "Pakistan Arrests 4 Islamabad Bombing 'Facilitators' as Victims Laid to Rest," *Al Jazeera*, February 7, 2026, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/2/7/thousands-mourn-32-victims-of-islamabad-shia-mosque-bombing-in-pakistan>. Accessed on February 10, 2026.

28. Ibid.

29. BBC Monitoring, "Briefing: Pro-Taliban Media Outlet Challenges IS Narratives", *BBC*, May 18, 2023, <https://monitoring.bbc.co.uk/product/b0000f2w>. Accessed on February 3, 2026.

accuse Pakistan of sponsoring the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP). Accusations and counter-accusations have, thus, become a permanent fixture of Afghanistan-Pakistan relations. Although *Al-Mirsaad* denies being affiliated to the Taliban, ample evidence indicates that it operates as the latter's propaganda arm. With both Pakistan and Afghanistan trading pointed accusations over who is harbouring which militant group—largely as an upshot of the TTP's violence—it looks as though the group's activities now reverberate beyond Pakistan's internal security domain. This reflexive blame game, even in the face of conflicting claims, is only going to deepen mistrust, harden threat perceptions, and raise the risk of escalation in an already volatile South Asian region. More critically, it may muddle counter-terrorism efforts in the region at large.

CONCLUSION

Evidently, then, the resurgence of the TTP has implications beyond its immediate theatre of operations. With increasing and continued collaboration among the TTP, the Afghan Taliban, and al-Qaeda, the danger of the TTP evolving into an extra-regional security concern prevails. To that effect, the 34th report of the UN Security Council's (UNSC's) Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, had forewarned, "In the medium term, a potential merger of the TTP and AQIS could escalate the threat against Pakistan, and eventually India, Myanmar and Bangladesh".³⁰ The TTP's renewed insurgency may also embolden other self-styled 'Taliban-like' groups elsewhere in the region, such as the Tajikistan Taliban, to ramp up their militant rhetoric, or, even help prop up similar groups in other countries, like Bangladesh, particularly if the TTP continues recruiting its nationals. These sentiments are echoed in a brief from The Soufan Centre, which noted that continued clashes between the Taliban and the Pakistani state could spill across borders, destabilising the South Asian region, and it further observed, "The beneficiaries of a destabilized South Asia are the militant groups spread across Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and elsewhere, who thrive in areas where the

30. Thirty-fourth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to Resolution 2734 (2024) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities, p. 18.

government has little reach or influence”.³¹ And though the group has disavowed transnational targets, the materialisation of these potential implications could drive Pakistan to seek joint counter-terrorism partnerships with countries disposed to help in its battle against the TTP. While this could benefit Islamabad, it may carry portents of another phase of regional instability, reinforcing historical perceptions of a cyclical pattern between internal militancy and external intervention. For India, a vigilant approach against possible knock-on effects becomes crucial, given its strategic interests in Afghanistan, and also for those in close proximity.

31. “Tensions Between Afghanistan and Pakistan Destabilize South Asia,” The Soufan Centre, November 21, 2025, <https://thesoufancenter.org/intelbrief-2025-november-21/>. Accessed on November 22, 2025.