**Power Dynamics within the TTP**

[Sajjad Shaukat](https://www.nation.com.pk/columnist/sajjad-shaukat)

July 13, 2023

[Opinions](https://www.nation.com.pk/opinions), [Columns](https://www.nation.com.pk/columns)

During his tenure, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa performed the heroic task of the merger of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province.  
It is mentionable that the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban-e-Pakistan (TTP) is an umbrella terror outfit of various militant groups, belonging to different nationalities, ethnicities and tribes, operating along the Afghan–Pakistani border. Formed in 2007 by Baitullah Mehsud, its current leader is Noor Wali Mehsud, who has publicly pledged allegiance to the Afghan Taliban’s Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Both the entities share a common ideology which assisted them in the war against the NATO.  
Due to certain differences however, some groups also maintain their separate status. Among the stated objectives of TTP, there is one that aims to overthrow the government of Pakistan by waging a terrorist campaign against the state and its armed forces. A marked sectarian tinge has coloured the TTP ideology. This is most likely owing to the injection of leaders and cadres from different sectarian backgrounds. TTP leaders now appear to have adopted a rigid anti-democracy stance—spreading Sharia—as alliances are often formed for the purpose of political posturing, rather than reflecting an actual alignment of agendas or ideologies.  
Baitullah Mehsud, Hakimullah Mehsud, and Maulvi Nazir have their own interpretations of what the larger vision is. Based on Islamic fundamentalism, it is unclear whose interpretation of the Sharia will be endorsed as the final product, as religious distinctions prevail between different militant groups based on their specific brand of Islam–i.e. Deobandi, Wahhabi, Ahl-e-Hadith, and so on.  
After Pakistan’s military operations, a majority of the TTP militants fled to Afghanistan where some of them joined the Islamic State, while others remained part of the TTP.  
In 2020, the TTP under the leadership of Noor Wali Mehsud underwent reorganisation and reunification. But, because of various differences, Mehsud steered the TTP in a new direction, sparing civilians and ordering assaults only on security and law enforcement personnel, in an attempt to rehabilitate the group’s image and distance them from the Islamic State militant group’s extremism.  
Notably, Swat peace accord was signed on February 15, 2009, between the government and the militants led by Sufi Muhammad, head of the TTP. It was agreed to establish Nizam-e-Adl in Malakand Division and Kohistan District of Hazara in return for Maulvi Fazlullah (Sufi’s son-in-law), activists, surrendering of arms and refraining from all sorts of violent acts.  
By transgressing the peace pack in Swat, the Taliban re-initiated their past anti-social, anti-Islam and inhuman tactics through the practice of beheadings, kidnappings, attacks on the check posts of security forces, on government buildings, girls’ schools, video shops, using car suicide bombers, and more. Hence, military operations were conducted to restore peace in Swat, Dir and Buner. The public supported these military operations as a majority of the people condemned the violence, and advocated against such religious extremism. In June 2022, the federal government and the military started talks with the TTP to conclude a peace deal, and the Afghan Taliban were acting as mediators between the two sides.  
Sources pointed out that the TTP had put forward several demands such as the reversal of the merger of FATA with the KP, which rid the tribal people of the Frontier Crimes Regulation and brought the population into the mainstream. The TTP also wanted Pakistan’s laws and courts to be replaced by Sharia laws enforced by Sharia courts in Malakand, followed by other tribal areas, and allowing the TTP group to keep their arms. But the Pakistani side wanted them to lay down their arms and had also refused to restore the status of FATA.  
The TTP on November 28 last year ended the ceasefire and ordered its militants to stage attacks across Pakistan. The country’s armed forces and the ISI have gotten involved to put an end to these atrocious practices. But in the recent past, terrorist attacks especially in Balochistan show that some external agencies might also have a hand in destabilising Pakistan and also want to damage the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.  
Taking cognizance of the latest terror assaults by the TTP on the police through a suicide blast at a mosque in the Peshawar Police Lines, a high-level Pakistani delegation led by Defense Minister Khawaja Asif along with Lt. Gen. Nadeem Ahmed Anjum visited Kabul on February 22, 2023, with the main agenda of countering terrorism and the use of Afghanistan soil by the TTP militants.  
The Afghan intelligence agency briefed Pakistan’s delegation and accepted the problem of terrorism originating from Afghanistan soil. They also presented details of the solution, but these were found to be unsatisfactory. Therefore, Islamabad warned the Afghan Taliban administration that if TTP involved in cross-border attacks are not eliminated, Islamabad would take action against them within Afghanistan.  
In the recent past, Pakistan’s Islamic scholars have clarified in their joint fatwa, and separate statements, that the killing of innocent people, target killings and suicide bombings are against the spirit of Islam…the terrorists’ self-adopted interpretation of Islam was nothing but ignorance and digression from the actual teachings of the religion. Islam does not forbid women’s education.”