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Pakistan-Afghanistan War

# A war neglected by the world — Afghanistan and Pakistan

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**The recent war between Afghanistan and Pakistan has been overshadowed by the attack on Iran by U.S. and Israeli imperialism. Yet the Afghan-Pakistan war, which began 21-22 February 2026 has resulted in heavy casualties on both sides. It was launched by the Pakistan Air Force airstrikes on Eastern Afghanistan (Nangarhar, Paktika, and Khost provinces).**

The right-wing Pakistan Government of Mian Shahaz Sharif described these strikes as a response to consistent militant attacks inside Pakistan. He called them “targeted” on the camps of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Islamic State – Khorasan Province.

On 26 February 2026, the Afghan Taliban government launched retaliatory attacks beginning with massive border clashes. Pakistan then launched a military campaign called “Operation Ghazab Lil Haq.” Pakistan’s defense minister announced the countries were in “open war” after several days of fighting. Airstrikes and artillery exchanges reportedly hit areas including Kabul, Kandahar, and Paktia. As of 5th March 2026, heavy shelling continued along the disputed Durand Line border between the two countries.

While both sides claim heavy military losses, actual numbers are disputed. Yet civilians are the main casualties as in any war, and tens of thousands of people are displaced near the border.

Despite’s Trump initially describing the Pakistani Air Force attack on different districts of Afghanistan as “good”, the coordinated attack on Iran by the United States and Zionist Israel has shifted world attention and Trump has also forgotten to comment on this war.

## How Has Religious Fanaticism Spread in Afghanistan and Pakistan?

With complete silence by all the main imperialist countries toward this escalating war between Afghanistan and Pakistan, the role of U.S. imperialism in promoting religious fundamentalism in Afghanistan during the 1980s has been forgotten. Yet to understand the present war we must revisit the past.

A radical Afghan military officers’ group led by Noor Mohammed Tarakai was able to bring down the corrupt Daud government in 1978. A year later, the Soviet Union sent forces to shore up the new government.

This triggered Washington to work with the Saudi Kingdom to pour modern weapons and unleash massive economic support to the religious fanatic groups interested in bringing down the regime. Along with its support to these reactionary forces, U.S. foreign policy felt no shame in siding with the Zia Ul Haq military dictatorship in Pakistan. This despite the regime’s having just hanged deposed Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in April 1979 on a false accusation of murder.

For over 10 years after the suspicious death of dictator Zia Ul Haq in an airplane accident, U.S. imperialism supported religious fanaticism in both countries. This meant support to the Pakistani governments led by Benazir Bhutto and Mian Nawaz Sharif, while aiding the Mujahidin in Afghanistan to come into power in 1992.

The Taliban used Pakistan to educate and train itself before being able to take over Kabul in 1996.

The Pakistan ruling elite welcomed Taliban government and gave an impression that this was their act. The Taliban's first actions on assuming governmental power were the public hanging of Najib Ullah (who had remained in the UN headquarters in Kabul after being deposed in 1992) and the banning of girls' education.

However, after 9/11, NATO forces led by the United States overthrew the Taliban. Despite the Taliban's control over less than half of the country, toppling the regime and occupying the country was Washington's demand, while other options were available for removing Taliban from power. By installing a pseudo-civilian government, the NATO occupation of Afghanistan led to the spread of religious fundamentalism in Pakistan.

In Pakistan General Musharraf had overthrown the Mian Nawaz Sharif right-wing government in 1999. The Khaiber PukhtonKhwa province, bordering Afghanistan, was led by the religious fanatic MMA (Islamic coalition—ed.) government, which provided support to the Taliban fleeing to Pakistan in the aftermath of the NATO attack. They encouraged the setting up of thousands of Madrassas, since 1980 which enabled the Taliban to capture real street power.

Following the withdrawal of U.S.-led forces on August 15, 2021, the Taliban returned to power. Despite vague promises, they established an all-male government led by Supreme Leader Mullah Hibatullah Akhundzada. This "second time" regime, following their 1996–2001 rule, prioritizes Taliban interpretation of strict Sharia laws.

## The Indian Connection

As of early 2026, the relationship between the Taliban government in Afghanistan and Indian right-wing government of Modi instituted a pragmatic relationship. While India does not formally recognize the Taliban regime, it upgraded its technical presence in Kabul to a full embassy and is actively engaging to protect its strategic, economic, and security interests in the region.

This relationship was created in response to the changing geopolitics of the South Asian region. Following the India-Pakistan four-day war in May 2025, U.S. imperialism lowered its relationship with India, apparently because Trump was annoyed at Modi's refusal to stop the war. Although Pakistan had received and spent US\$45 billion from China for developing the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Trump was favored by military generals and civilian government of Shahbaz Sharif over China.

## The Trump Card

Trump, to ensure that Pakistan was on his side before attacking Iran in June 2025, invited and warmly welcomed to the White House field marshal Asim Munir, anointing him as his "more favored general". Days later, the U.S. Air Force and Navy attacked three nuclear facilities in Iran as part of its Twelve-Day War, carried out under the code name Operation Midnight Hammer. President Trump said the strikes "completely and totally obliterated" Iran's key nuclear enrichment facilities. Despite this claim, Trump has again attacked Iran with the same excuse this February.

Meanwhile, Indian imperialism responded to the deepening U.S.-Pakistan relationship by providing more support to the Taliban. This resulted in more attacks inside Pakistan during the last six months,

# The War

Pakistan's launching a full-fledged attack on the Taliban-led government is related to escalating terrorist activities in KP province. It is estimated that almost 30% of the Khaiber Pakhtunkhawa (KP) province is effectively controlled by Tehreek Taliban Pakistan (TTP) at least at night, with full support from the Taliban in Afghanistan.

In January 2026, Pakistan recorded 87 militant attacks nationwide, 38 of them in KP, the highest among provinces. According to statistics released by the Islamabad-based think tank Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS), combat-related deaths in January 2026 rose by 43% compared to December 2025. A total of 361 people were killed during the month.

In February 2026, there were major terrorist attacks in Khaiber Pakhtunkhwa Province. In a 6 February 2026 suicidal attack on an Islamabad Mosque, 40 were killed and more than 170 injured. The Islamic State–Khorasan (IS-K) targeted the Shia Mosque during Friday prayers.

In another major attack on 16 February 2026 at Bajaur district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 11 security personnel plus one child) were killed. The TTP claimed responsibility for bombing and shooting what were merciless and unrelenting attacks on mosques and markets. They were daring enough to take on hard targets, including army bases and airports, and shameless enough to take on soft ones, such as schools and shrines. They decapitated Pakistani police officers and soldiers, then uploaded videos to social media for the world to see.

The growing influence and persistent terrorist attacks are becoming a challenge to the Pakistani state. Between 2018-2022, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan from the Tahreek Insaf (PTI), promoted negotiations with religious fanatics as a way to counter their influence. While he was in office, 12 hard-core members of the TTP were released from custody. In fact, Pakistan has previously negotiated at least a half-dozen "peace deals" with the TTP. These negotiations have reinforced the influence of religious fanatics, turning Pakistan into another Afghanistan.

As Ashan Butt, Associate Professor at George Mason University, wrote in Aljazeera on 27 Oct 2021 in an article titled "Imran Khan's talks with the Pakistan Taliban will not bring peace".

The TTP's desire is to overthrow, violently or otherwise, the Pakistani state and impose their interpretation of Sharia throughout the country. There is no offering short of this, no concession or act of generosity, that Islamabad will be able to buy TTP forbearance with.

In fact, all a peace deal will do – all it has ever done, when it comes to the TTP – is allowing it to regroup, reorganise, rearm, and bolster its capacity for death and destruction.

Imran Khan was the avatar for a deeply sympathetic position towards the Taliban. Not for nothing did he earn the moniker 'Taliban Khan'.

Negotiation with religious fanatics is never an option for peace. Imran Khan, now imprisoned on corruption charges, later revealed that he had invited 5000 Taliban to Pakistan in the name of rehabilitation. After his government lost a vote of no confidence, the Taliban terrorist activities grew to a record level in all parts of Pakistan. Still till the present day, the PTI government in KP province continues to promote negotiations with fanatics.

Over 50,000 Pakistanis have been killed by terrorist attacks by the Taliban in Pakistan over the past 20 years.

After a series of disappointing performances by consecutive civilian governments since the departure of General Musharaf's dictatorship in 2008, the overall Pakistani political landscape has moved further right. This is very favorable constituency for promotion of religious fundamentalist groups and ideology.

The civilian governments, instead of learning lessons, promote one or another other religious groups, only turning against them on another occasion. Then they attempt to rid the country of these state-sponsored religious fanatics by banning, jailing and killing them.

None of these religious fanatic organizations are Indigenous to Pakistan.

Despite these experiences, the military-dominated civilian governments never sever their relationship with those ideologies or develop effective strategies to counter them. Yet the military remains the de facto power broker, forging and dissolving alliances and governments, however best suited its interests. As a result, of Pakistan's 29 Prime Ministers since independence in 1947, none has completed a full five-year term.

Military operations have never been a real solution to end the domination of religious fanaticism.

## Military operations by Pakistan Army

Pakistani forces have conducted at least 10 major military operations, along with numerous smaller operations, since 2001:

1- Operation Enduring Freedom (2001–2002),

2- Operation Al Mizan (2002–2006),

3- Operation Zalzala (2008),

4- Operations Sher Dil, Rah-e-Haq,

5- Rah-e-Rast (2007–2009),

6- Rah-e-Nijat (2009–2010).

7- Operation Zarb-e-Azb (2014–2016): Launched in June 2014 in North Waziristan after the Karachi airport attack, this massive, sustained offensive aimed to dismantle the TTP and allied foreign fighters, displacing hundreds of thousands.

8- Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad (2017–Present): A nationwide, broad-spectrum operation launched to eliminate the "residual/latent threat" of terrorism, combining military action with intelligence-based operations (IBOs).

9- Operation Azm-e-Istehkam (Announced 2024): A proposed, highly contentious, and, in some accounts, unlaunched operation aimed at curbing the resurgence of militants in the frontier regions.

10- Recent Kinetic Actions (2025):

None has resulted in the elimination of fanaticism, on the contrary more fanatic groups emerged.

The military has continued targeting militant hideouts in mountainous regions near the Afghan border, often using helicopters and, according to recent reports, initiating "open war" against the TTP due to increased insurgency.

Pakistan has two religious states on its borders: Iran and Afghanistan, but while the Taliban is always seeking to expand their religious revolution to Pakistan, Iran has never done so because of minority Shia community. The presence of these two states with religious extremist in power is another favorable objective reality for the spread of religious fundamentalist ideas.

After failing to curb the consistent rise of religious fanatic groups, a war has been started but it cannot lead to a permanent solution for either Afghanistan or Pakistan.

There will be more bloodshed despite a possible ceasefire between the two.

We cannot support this war. The bombing of Afghanistan or terrorism in Pakistan will not bring peace. Instead, we demand war and terrorist activities by the Taliban must stop immediately.

Neither Pakistan nor any other nation should recognise the Taliban government as the legitimate Afghan government. Trade must be restored with Afghanistan through the traders' community independently of Afghan government.

Pakistani government must change its policies towards the fanatic religious groups. They must sever their state links to help them. There should be no state subsidies and no discriminatory laws against any religion or religious minority.

Further, the government must separate itself from the U.S. Trump administration. There should be no Pakistani representation on Trump's so-called Board of Peace and a withdrawal of nominating Trump for the Noble Peace Prize.

These transitional measures cannot be expected of the present government of Pakistan, which has broken all records of sycophancy in support of Trump.

We must build our own political power independent of these capitalist and feudal led parties. That would be a permanent solution to the rise of religious fundamentalism — and a road towards Socialism.

*5 March 2026*

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