

Pak economy's collapse: India monitoring fallout

OPINION

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In a direct challenge to the sovereignty of Pakistan, the Tehrik-e-Taliban (TTP) has announced its own government in Northern Pakistan and declared various ministries, including Defence, Judiciary, Information, Political affairs, Economic Affairs, Education, a fatwa issuing authority, Intelligence, and a department for construction, in a statement as quoted by its mouthpiece The Khorasan Diary (TKD) publication. This announcement followed the accusation made by the TTP against the Pakistani government of violating the ceasefire agreement when they carried out various security operations in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Since then, the Pakistani army are carrying out offensive actions against the TTP in that region as the borderlands are witnessing an alarming rise in kidnappings for ransom and extortion. These incidents are ringing a bell in South Asia amid the possible complete collapse of Pakistan's economy. The different newspapers have quoted that India is seriously observing the situation and is concerned over the situation in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Both states are economically at the edge of collapse and engaged in civil war. This may create a rise of militants in the entire region. This place may turn into a harbour for world terrorists. The core of the issue lies in the western border of Pakistan where the military actions against the TTP are questioned by the Taliban. They have argued that by attacking inside Afghanistan, Pakistan has violated the sovereignty of their state. However, this claim by the present Taliban government which is the de facto government is certainly questionable. Whereas Pakistan internally has argued that as their sovereignty over their land is threatened, they have the right under Article 51 of the United Nations charter to act under self-defense. According to a United Nations report, there are several thousand TTP fighters who are waging war against the Pakistani state which is the largest terrorist group fighting against Pakistan. This terrorist group has a strong presence on both sides of the border of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Although the strong action by Pakistani Military forces and the United States drone attacks significantly reduced them during 2014-2018, soon after the fall of the Afghan government in Kabul, the TTP again started gaining strength. The strong resurgence is seen just after the United States and Afghan Taliban signed a peace deal in 2020. In this light, the questions that arise are who exactly are the TTP who have declared their own government in Northern Pakistan? What are the international repercussions of the same? And the possible way forward to overcome the ongoing crisis? The Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) was established in 2007 as a loosely tied umbrella organization under the leadership of Baitullah Mehsud, a militant leader from South Waziristan that has become one of Pakistan's deadliest militant organizations, and has carried out brutal attacks against civilians and the Pakistani state. Among its most noted attacks include an assault on the Pakistani navy's largest airbase in 2011; an attack on Karachi's international airport in 2014; and, also in 2014, a massacre at the Army Public School in Peshawar that killed 150 people majority of them being students. The emergence of the TTP is closely associated with the fall of the Afghan Taliban's regime in Afghanistan in 2001 and the subsequent development of an insurgency. After the US invasion of Afghanistan, thousands of Afghan Taliban and alQaeda members crossed over into Pakistan looking for safe havens in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), as well as in parts of the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan. The resulting "Talibanization" of these areas saw Afghan Taliban leaders working with local tribal leaders to recruit Pakistani tribesmen and madrassa students to fight US and NATO forces. What needs to be understood is that the TTP's key goals include sharia law and engaging in jihad against the Pakistan Army,

especially in Swat District and North Waziristan. This TTP and Pakistan army conflict has given rise to several important international legal issues. Both the TTP and Taliban have announced the government in Afghanistan. Soon after the Ghani government fall in Kabul, the Taliban formed a new government there. Most of the states are yet to grant recognition to the Taliban government. Therefore, the de facto government in Afghanistan is helping another terrorist organization to form a government in the territory of another state. Thus, it is imperative to hold the Taliban responsible under Article 10 of the Draft Articles on State Responsibility, which declares that "the conduct of an insurrectional movement which becomes the new government of a State shall be considered an act of that State under international law". The question remains about the validity of the government declared by TTP as there exist serious consequences for the individuals under the influence of this de facto regime (DFR) of the TTP which has a strong religious and sectarian undertone, and would become a strategic disaster for Pakistan whose impact would evade peace and stability for the people. In simple terms, the DFR is an entity that exercises at least some effective authority over the territory within a state. The words 'de facto' signify the regime's factual control but illegal or extra-legal foundations. It is an entity that is in factual control over the complete territory of a state but is not recognized as that state's government by the international community. At a larger level, efforts need to be made in countering violent extremist programs, enhancing the rule of law and access to essential public goods given the grim economic condition of Pakistan and creating mechanisms to address legitimate grievances and governance issues in northwest Pakistan. Further, limiting the appeal of the TTP and rendering its message irrelevant within Pakistan depends on securing the tribal regions through nonmilitary means which requires focusing on the need for poverty alleviation through employment, education and healthcare provisions, in addition to enhancing policing capacity.

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