

# Understanding the Phenomena of Pakistani Taliban

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**Abstract:** *Marking a new chapter of extremism as well as terrorism in South Asia, Pakistani Taliban movement is a product of the regional geo-political changes. Taliban's penetration into Pakistan and its expansion from FATA and NWFP to the hinterland have been well-known as "the Talibanization of Pakistan". As a matter of fact, this process is "the Pakistanization of Taliban" too. Since its birth in December 2007, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has been evolving some new characters which in some sense differs from its Afghanistan counterpart. Notwithstanding Pakistan military establishment's massive action since 2009, TTP is now integrating kinds of militant groups into its terrorist enterprise, which not only puts Pakistan into difficulty but also breeds new variables for the regional politics.*

**Key Words:** *Political Islam; Terrorism; Pakistan; Taliban; TTP*

"Taliban" has become the key to Pakistan's current political situation and the future direction. In recent years, there has been a large number of terms related to this, such as the Talibanization of Pakistan, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Punjabi Taliban, Balochistan Taliban, Swat Taliban, and South Waziristan Taliban.

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Since 2007, the terrorist attacks in Pakistan have mostly related to the Taliban. After completing the Rah-e-Haq and the Rah-i-Nijat large-scale military operations in 2009 in the Swat Valley and South Waziristan, the military started actions that wiped out TTP at the end of March 2010 in Orczy.

At the end of October 2010, the military announced the victory of the strike in Orczy. But it was reported that there had been the TTP in Khyber, Swat and South Waziristan again. When the Pakistani government and military made their efforts to fight against TTP, the US officials have repeatedly claimed that bin Laden and the Taliban leader of Afghanistan Mullah Mohammed Omar hid in Pakistanian territory; India and Afghanistan accused Pakistan of supporting the Afghanistan Taliban, which makes the Taliban phenomenon more complicated and confusing.

Then, how was the Pakistani Taliban formed? What is its relationship with the Taliban in Afghanistan? What is the relationship between the Pakistani Taliban and the TTP? What impact will it have on Pakistan and the regional situation?

## **I. The Formation of the Pakistani Taliban and Establishment of TTP**

"Taliban" is the plural form of "Talib" which means students from the Islamic religious schools (madrassas), compared with the mullahs who are Islamic religious school teachers. Therefore, Talib had no political significance until the rise of the Taliban movement in Afghanistan in 1994 and they seized power in Kabul in 1996. Then, "Taliban" has acquired a special political meaning.

But today, people's evaluation of the "Taliban" has been diametrically opposed: as a prototype of the Taliban movement, the Afghanistan Taliban declared its goal: peace restoration, disarmament, implementation of Sharia (Islamic Law) which are designed to defend

the unity of Afghanistan and its Islamic identity (Rashid, 2000: 22). Western observers tend to feel that the Taliban is a fundamentalist theocratic despotism which is retro, xenophobic, anti-Western, and anti-modern. However, few people dispute the membership of Taliban: the majorities are madrassas students.

Most citizens of Pakistan have learned the *Qu'ran* and religious knowledge in madrassas, but that does not mean the inevitability of the current phenomenon of the Pakistani Taliban. In fact, the Taliban movement was mainly an Afghan political phenomenon before October 2001, according to the scope of its activities, personnel, and political objectives; and not all Pakistanis support (let alone participate in) the Taliban movement. It is closely related with the Afghanistan Taliban movement, but not the same that the Pakistani Taliban is a phenomenon caused by international relations in this region and geopolitics. Its birth and evolution can be divided into three stages in general.

**The first stage:** the Pakistani Taliban nurturing period was from 1994 to October 2001: Pakistan began to have Taliban forces, but mainly in the form of Pakistanis joining the Afghan Taliban movement which belongs to the Afghanistan Taliban and also within the territory of Afghanistan.

At the beginning of the Taliban movement, thousands of people in Pakistani tribal areas crossed the border and fought with the Afghanistan Taliban against the Northern Alliance. They were the earliest Pakistani Taliban and have achieved importance for seizing power in Afghanistan.

Nek Mohammad, Qari Saifullah Akhta, and Abdullah Mehsud as well as the Harkat-ul-Jihad-i-Islami (HUJI) are all typical representatives (Mir, A.).<sup>①</sup> At the same time, there were some people and militant groups in Pakistan supporting, echoing and trying to emulate the Taliban in Afghanistan. At the end of 1994, Sufi

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<sup>①</sup> There are 3 ministers and 22 Judges from HUJI in the 1996 Taliban.

Muhammad led the Tehrik-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM) to seize the controls in parts of Swat Valley and imposed the Sharia system (Munir, 2009: February 17). In 1998, there was an armed political organization named Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan following the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and trying to implement Sharia in the local system. It is said to be the first development of TTP in the newspapers, but it soon went silent (Herald, 1999: February).

After the Afghan war in October 2001, the Taliban in Afghanistan has more closely linked with Pakistani radical organizations and tribal people: TNSM actively raised funds and materials for the Taliban and organized more than 10,000 people to go to Afghanistan to participate in the "jihad" against the US Army. To Abderrasheed Ghazi, Faqir Mohamed and others initiated and organized large scale protest demonstrations in the big cities; there were some 40 political parties and religious organizations jointly organized as "the Front for the Defense of Afghanistan" to support the Taliban in Afghanistan.

History shows that Pakistanis who joined early in Afghanistan Taliban have been the seed and germ of the Pakistani Taliban forces. Neck Mohammed, Abdullah Mehsud and others played a crucial role in the development process. The Pakistani public who had sympathy and support for the Taliban in Afghanistan were the hotbed for the Pakistani Taliban. The Afghan War launched by the United States provided extremely important extrinsic motivation which in fact played a catalytic role.

**The second stage:** the Taliban took root and develop in Pakistan from the end of 2001 to June 2007. With the Taliban remnants hiding in Pakistan to survive and reorganize, the Pakistani Taliban movement has gradually formatted and seized some control of the tribal areas increasing their relationships with military tensions.

In October 2001, the Taliban regime in Afghanistan had to disintegrate rapidly under the powerful offensive of the US military and a large number of remnants fled into the Pakistani territory which

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was a turning point in history: before this war, the support of the Afghanistan Taliban from the Pakistani tribal people and militant groups were scattered or they just supplied limited human resources and material in their moral support. Since then, Pakistan has provided them with their daily living and local shelters; the tribal areas in Pakistan have become the new base of the Taliban. During this period, the ideology of Taliban gradually penetrated into the local social and political system and the Pakistani Taliban has been ready to emerge. The Taliban seized power in South Waziristan, the Swat valley, North Waziristan, Orczy and other places to impose Taliban-style political and social orders which prohibit shaving and attack video stores and close girls' schools which are considered to be "immoral" and "not consistent with Islamic law" institutions.

The Musharraf government's counter-terrorism measures objectively created an advantage for the survival and development of the political environment for the Taliban. Beginning from 2002, some banned extremist organizations have had to move to the tribal areas and some individuals and organizations have joined the Taliban. Before 2005, the Taliban's fiefdom was mainly in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), and the Provincial Administered Tribal Areas (PATA) in the North-West Frontier Province. In the summer of 2006, the Taliban began to spread to the North West Frontier provincial capitals Peshawar and Islamabad (Johnson & Mason, 2008: Spring, 44-77), which is generally referred as the "Talibanization of Pakistan" by observers. Actually this is also the "Pakistanization" of the Taliban movement: We will see that the Pakistani Taliban gradually formed a number of local characteristics which are different from the Taliban in Afghanistan.

During this period, the Taliban have had some conflicts with the government and military; some Taliban forces have plotted and implemented assassinations against the military and political officials including Musharraf; Pakistani troops have carried out small-scale

combat in tribal areas. But there was no comprehensive confrontation in general, but the shootout and negotiations existed at the same time. From 2004 to 2006, the government has increased the military attacks, but has had little effect: military actions in the Swat, South Waziristan and other northern regions faced strong resistance and had to make peace. One detail of the peace treaty is the government approval of implementing Sharia in the relevant areas. However, the treaty did not mean a real peace. The extremist organizations made use of the treaty time to obtain opportunities of respite and restructuring, which consolidated their position and increased their strength in a tribal region.

During this period, the coexistence of regional forces and their similar ideological and political practices objectively challenged the authority of the federal government, but the regional Taliban did not actually form formal coalitions, which still fought separately.

**The third stage:** after the Red Mosque incident on July 29, 2007, the Pakistani Taliban has broken the original decentralized, undercurrent-like slow growth and converged to a huge flood; taking TTP establishment as a symbol, part of the Taliban forces united and under the banner of anti-America and supporting Afghanistan liberation, they focused on Pakistan's internal politics to expand political control in the tribal areas and carry out terrorist activities throughout the country which openly challenged the Pakistani central authority. Their mobility was significantly enhanced. From the second quarter of 2008, confrontation between TTP and the government intensified which led directly to large-scale military operations of the federal government.

After the Red Mosque incident, the local Taliban forces terminated peace agreements and dispersed activists started to join hands. On December 14, 2007 more than 20 representatives of militant groups from North Waziristan, South Waziristan, Karam, Bajour, Orczy, Khyber, and Mohmand tribal areas and North West Frontier

gathered in South Waziristan and announced the establishment of the TTP and its central leadership and organizational systems: Baitullah Mehsud from South Waziristan was Emir, Gul Bahadur from North Waziristan was the First Deputy Emir, Fakir Mohammed from Bajaur for the Second Deputy Emir; the convention also set up Shura Council of 40 representatives from seven tribal areas and parts of North West Frontier Provinces. The TTP claims that the main objective of the armed groups in the tribal areas had been to help the Afghan Taliban in their fight against foreign forces in their country. "However, due to the wrong policies of the Pakistani government, we were forced to resort to a defensive jihad in our country." (Abdul-Baqi).

The Pakistani government did not immediately take coercive measures against the TTP. On August 25, 2008, the Ministry of the Interior outlawed the TTP and froze all their funds in Pakistan banks. Since then, under the influence of Carl Schmitt's "political logic", there has been growing confrontation between two parties: TTP terrorist attacks were increasing as well as the level of violence. According to statistics, Pakistani violence and terrorist attacks in 2009 were a total of 2586, an increase of 48%. Eighty percent of the Pakistanis believed that public places were unsafe (Pakistan Security Report 2009, 2010: 2-4); the army launched a large-scale military attack in the Swat valley and South Waziristan in April and October of 2009. During a powerful military offensive, the TTP saved arms in the transfer and spread and expanded sectarian goals. And then, the sectarian conflicts in Pakistan and terrorist attacks on sectarianism increased rapidly around 2010.

## **II. The Reasons for the Pakistani Taliban Movement's Forming**

After understanding the history of Pakistani Taliban Movement, the question emerges: why did the Pakistanians participate and support the Taliban in Afghanistan? Why did the Afghan Taliban

choose to flee to Pakistani tribal areas? How did the Pakistani Taliban successfully occupy and seize control of the tribal areas and carry out terrorist attacks in other areas?

**First**, the religious awareness and national identity are the inherent basis for the Pakistani people supporting the Taliban movement in Afghanistan, while the special geopolitics in the past three decades created a real unity.

The Afghan Taliban movement was originally initiated by the Afghan Pashtuns. <sup>①</sup> Pashtun is a cross-national area on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. Six out of seven major tribes of FATA live in a cross-border situation. They connected with Afghanistan by blood, ethnic relationships, history and culture. Most Pashtuns are devout Muslims and strict practitioners of Islam (Alvi, 2006: 105). National identity and Islamic faith have united people on both sides of the border.

An appropriate platform and political opportunities for the recognition of ideas and feelings are needed for turning into solidarity in real political action; the past 30 years of South Asian geopolitics provides precisely these conditions. Iran's Islamic revolution in 1979 and the subsequent comprehensive Islamization policy carried out by Zia Haq promoted the rise of the Pakistani radical and extremist religious political forces/movement. Its political and social implications for Pakistan were greatly enhanced. After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1980, 300 million Afghans could not bear the pain of successive wars and then fled to Pakistan (*The News*, 2001: November 6). During the anti-Soviet war in the 1980s, the Pakistani tribal region was the center for the CIA and Pakistani ISI supporting the Afghan jihad and the hinterland and distribution center for Mujahideen. The FATA and PATA from the North West Frontier Province were completely open to the jihadist and the various radical/extremist movements and a large number of weapons were

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<sup>①</sup> But we cannot equal the concept of Pushtun with Taliban.



scattered among people; many radical new Madrasa and military training camps in the region made people remain at a high state of enthusiasm for jihad; Pakistani tribal people had a closer link to the Afghanistan Taliban whose many key members were born in Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan and had Madrasa education in the border areas of Pakistan.

It was seen that Pakistani support of and participation in the Taliban movement show the concern and sympathy on the Afghan Pashtun population as well as the extent of jihad culture in the 1980s and Mujahideen spirit. However, in Pakistan, it is not only the common people and some radical extremist groups on grass root level but some of the political elite who also had close relations with the Taliban in Afghanistan, such as the JUI and other religious parties and the Pakistani army and the federal government. In fact, before the war in Afghanistan, the close relationship between the Pakistani government and the Taliban was the key reason for the Taliban fleeing to Pakistan.

**Second**, the reason that the Afghan Taliban has been able to flee to Pakistan tribal area and put down roots first is the Durand Line as the Pak-Afghan national boundaries were absent of the legal effect, and secondly is the special political culture of Pashtun and the political management system in Pakistani tribal areas.

For tens of millions of Pashtuns living in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border area, the "Durand Line" designated by the British in 1893 never had authority as the national boundary; before the 1970s, territorial disputes caused by the Durand Line had been one of the sticking points of two sides. But for Pashtuns, the freedom of movement across the Durand Line has been a part of their daily lives. The Durand Line area has a varied topography which increased the difficulty of the jurisdiction, therefore, there is "no implementation and can not implement" the sovereign governance (Johnson & Mason, 2008: Spring 41-77). When the Soviets invaded and

occupied Afghanistan, Pakistan was the major destination for Afghan refugees. They could cross the border easily; when the United States launched the Afghan war, tribal areas in Pakistan have become the primary escape way for the Taliban. In September 2001, Musharraf decided to join the US war on terror, but failed to effectively improve the defense status of the Pak-Afghan border. The Pakistani intelligence and law enforcement agencies actually cannot control foreign militants crossing the border including the Taliban and al Qaeda in Afghanistan (Hussain, 2007: 121). The lack of legal effects provided a realistic possibility of the Afghan Taliban and the unity of the local Pashtun.

Since the foundation in 1947, the central government of Pakistan has not had direct jurisdiction in the Pashtun tribal areas. From FATA to the NWFP and PATA, Pashtun tradition preserved the basic social order: taking one-thousand-year old "Pashtunwali" as the basis and cornerstone; the "Jirga" formed by tribal elders resolves civil disputes, maintains order and tribal dignity. In its political management, for a variety of considerations, the Pakistani central government retains the "indirect rule" system of the British Empire, that is to entrust the local tribal elders (malik) on behalf of management: "In these areas, Pakistani national government authority is very weak, even illusory (Haq, 2005: 45-48)." In such a traditional environment, the Pashtun principle of "badal, mailmastia, nanawati" and other core values sheltered Taliban members, which resulted in the tribal areas of Pakistan being known as the "terrorist paradise." Thus, although Musharraf gave high-profile support for the United States against the Taliban in Islamabad, the tribal areas showed the situation differently: the Afghanistan Taliban enjoyed the enthusiasm and protection of local people. They could survive under the umbrella of public support.

**Thirdly**, there are four complementary reasons that the Pakistani local Taliban movement continued to grow in the tribal areas:

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(1) The situation in Afghanistan remained turbulent. After the war in Afghanistan, it took 9 years to rebuild the social and political order but it failed, which gave living space for the Taliban ideology and attractiveness. After the reconstruction of the Taliban, they have increased the attacks against the US and NATO forces in 2004. The United States in the autumn of 2009 publicly acknowledged that the Taliban in Afghanistan had regained control of more than 75% of Afghanistan and adjusted its strategies and policies toward Afghanistan, but so far there have been no significant results. "Liberation of Afghan" has been always the banner and motion of Pakistan radical and extremist forces which promoted the development and rise of the Pakistani Taliban.

(2) The domestic anti-American sentiment in Pakistan and the special political and economic situation in tribal areas remained. Because of the 9/11 incidents and the US-led war on terrorism, Pakistan's political and religious enthusiasm keeps rising and mainly expresses as a strong anti-American sentiment. In this context, the Musharraf decision to join the US war on terror were interpreted as breaking faith and following the infidels. The atmosphere did not only inspire the public support and acceptance of the Pakistani Taliban ideology, but also have given the local Pakistani Taliban a new political agenda, that is to fight against the Pakistani government.

Many scholars have stressed that the FATA has a serious lag in the economic and cultural development which is an important foundation for the tyranny of the Taliban regime (Taj & Hyat). At the same time, some scholars also highlight the importance of culture and religions. They think that "despite the poverty, high unemployment, illiteracy, maternal and infant mortality rate in the tribal areas and life expectancy is almost lowest in the world, but in the absence of external pressures, most Pashtuns lived a peaceful and idyllic life ... " (Johnson & Mason, 2008: Spring, 41-77).

If we take the rise of the TNSM in the Swat valley and the

evolution of the Taliban as a reference, it might be able to see a more comprehensive picture: following the geo-political logic, in the 1980s, the importance of this terrorist paradise was raising in the political life. As one of settlements and distribution areas of large numbers of Afghan refugees, this region's political and economic situation was deteriorating; all kinds of criminal activities and violence have occurred. The conflict between the political and legal needs of local people and lack of government performance accelerated the awakening of the people. The year 1988 experienced the appearance of radical movements asking for change as the represented by the TNSM and the systematization of the local religious and political power increased as well. Since 1994, inspired by the Taliban movement and influenced by the changes in the situation in Afghanistan, the TNSM has become more radical; some members who followed after Qazi Fazlullah around 2002 became the backbone of the Swat Taliban.

(3) Taliban militants seized and implemented political controls. As an organization formed of political Islam ideology (Qian, 2009: May), the Taliban is bound to pursue political power and control and make every effort to eliminate obstacles to their power and authority. Since 2002, Taliban has taken assassinations and become a menace to get the power of tribal elders. In 2005, in the name of Sharia and "punishing the US spy", Waliur Rehman Mehsud killed about 600 tribal elders who publicly criticized and resisted him (Levy & Clark, 2009: January 10). Having taken a series of attacks, killings and coercive measures, the Taliban seized political control: "The local military leaders and tribal elders have assimilated into the fundamentalists, or been systematically cleared out" (Varma, 2009: March 12).

(4) There has been limited success of political governance for extremist forces and the military strike taken by the federal government. Since 2002, the Pakistani government formulated a series of measures on radical extremist groups and took military strikes in

the tribal areas and efforts have been enhanced. For various reasons, these measures were limited, but continued and intensified hostilities between the two: the Taliban fought against the government which led to the establishment of the TTP and large-scale military operations in 2009.

### **III. The Main Characteristics of the TTP Structure and Its Impacts**

Many observers said that the TTP is the "umbrella organization," but the TTP called itself a "Tehrik" in the early days. From the internal structure, in late 2007, the TTP had more than 20 independent organizations which had their own bases and leaders, but they had a common leader and appointed a consultative body Shura which is responsible for discussing, planning and coordination of action plans; they also have common goals and ideologies and similar modes of action. They collaborated with each other, such as during 2007 to 2008, Waliur Rehman sent troops twice to support the Swat Taliban against the Pakistani military.

Since 2008, the above elements such as members, top leaders, and combat strategies have changed as well as its relationship with the Afghan Taliban. There is no doubt that the evolution of the TTP will directly determine Pakistan's political situation and even the trend in South Asia. Although it is impossible to predict how it would change in the future, according to the historical facts in the past few years, it can identify some its structural features and find similarities and differences with the Afghanistan Taliban as well as political opportunities and variables in this region.

**First**, the TTP is an important actor in the wave of the Pakistani Taliban movement. As a social and political movement, it has an extremely powerful force for action and appeal; but as a primary political and military organization, its internal structure is loose and

has not been finalized.

As an alliance formed by multiple organizations, the TTP has not established a strict organizational system, which is shown in the relationship between the leaders and common members. In December 2007, under the anti-US banner and the implementation of Sharia rule, Waliur Rehman controlled the overall situation in general, but the Swat Taliban leader Fazlullah has been reluctant to hand over his leadership; when the Pakistani military launched a large-scale military operations in the Swat region in May 2009, Fazlullah sought assistance to Waliur Rehman, Fazlullah asked Waliur Rehman for help, but was declined.

The internal relationship of the TTP between the senior members is also complicated. After Waliur Rehman was killed by the UAV on August 5, 2009, there were more intense disputes for a "successor" between internal branches: in the middle of August, 2009, Hakimullah Mehsud, Wali-ur Rehman, Fakir and other leaders all publicly announced that they succeeded as the Amir of the TTP. It is also reported that Hakimullah and Waliur had sanguinary conflicts over that. In September 2009, the armed organizations of Mehsud and the Lazy Azeri tribes expressed that "they can never accept Hakimullah as the leader" (*Rupee News*, 2009: September 2). However, after Hakimullah took office as the Amir of the TTP, he "cleared traitor" [not clear?] in the name of revenge; the Azmatullah Shaheen group and the Awal Khan Bhitani group in South Waziristan announced their withdrawal from the TTP.

After the death of Waliur Rehman, many analysts concluded that the TTP would fall apart soon and the Pakistanian interior minister also predicted that the TTP was difficult to re-organize in a short term (Dawn, 2009: August 10). In early 2010, rumors of the death of Hakimullah triggered similar comments again. However, the vitality of the TTP is beyond expectations and aspirations. As a symbol, the TTP was integrating domestic extremist forces who previously

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focused on the Pakistani Kashmir cause and sectarian goals and even fought against each other: besides the TNSM and HUJI, there are members from Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan, Jaish-e-Mohammed and other armed militant groups participating in the TTP or in the operation holding TTP as the banner. Accordingly, the members of TTP are no longer limited to the Pashtun people. The joining of the armed group from Punjab and Balochistan did not only strengthen its operational capacity and expand its coverage, but also weakened the Pashtun features of Taliban movement.

However, the TTP did not cover the entire Pakistani Taliban movement. Even in the era of Waliur Rehman, there were always TTP opponents and other Taliban forces in one of the TTP core base Waziristan regions: Mohammad Nazir and Bahadur are the typical representatives. The disputes and conflicts between Waliur Rehman and Nazir date back the grudge between old tribes. Bahadur was elected as the First Vice Emir on December 2007, but soon he withdrew because it was difficult to reconcile the differences of the strategy with Waliur Rehman. Their differences with the TTP mainly are that Nazir and Bahadur are against violent attacks in the Pakistanian territory and think that the Taliban movement should be committed to the liberation of Afghanistan and fight against the US and NATO forces instead of the Pakistani government and people (Latif, A.). In the summer of 2008, Nazir, and Bahadur set up "Muqami Therik-e-Taliban" to fight against Waliur Rehman's TTP. But with the US drone bombing in Pakistan's tribal area causing a growing number of civilian casualties, Waliur Rehman had secret meeting with Nazir and Bahadur on February 22, 2009 and announced the formation of Shura Ittihad-ul-Mujahideen and took Mullah Omar from Afghanistan Taliban as the Emir. The three took the actual leadership in turn and established a 13 member Shura to be responsible for routine management of the new alliance.

We can see that the TTP is at a certain building stage of the

Pakistani Taliban movement and an effort to seek an alliance in the process of confrontation with the government. It is not the only Pakistani-Taliban alliance, nor the highest stage of its evolution. Due to different situations and incidents, there are various possibilities within the framework of the TTP.

**Second**, TTP shows more localized characters in the target agenda and activities. The relationship with Afghanistan Taliban was more complicated.

The Pakistani Taliban and Afghan Taliban have a close relationship. In terms of organization, all major leaders of the TTP have publicly sworn allegiance to Mullah Omar and respected him as "Emir of believers." Taliban officials Mullah Dadullah and Sirajuddin Haqqani often represented Omar to reconcile the relationship between the local Taliban and even promoted a peace agreement with the Government (Yusufzai, 2009: September 7).

However, since the end of 2004, the Pakistani Taliban movement has showed some localization features: frequent use of suicide bombs or death squads (fedayeen) as the attack mode caused casualties among many innocent people (especially women and children. These behavioral characteristics are considered inconsistent with the tradition of the Afghan Taliban movement and are against Pashtun values. Some analysts pointed out that the behavior of the Taliban in Pakistan was from Iraq, which is widely used by the Arab extremists and al Qaeda militants in Iraq (Johnson & Mason, 2008: Spring 41-77). In addition, TTP leaders were frequently in the media and gave high-profile releases of various information and audio-visual materials as well as they used radio and satellite communications and other promotional means to improve their reputation which was different from the Taliban in Afghanistan. According to Rashid, the Afghanistan Taliban "did not release the news, policy statements, or regular press conferences. They prohibited photography and television, so no one knows the appearance of their leaders"(Rashid,



2000: 5).

In 2009, TTP-made terrorist attacks caused severe civilian casualties which were widely condemned by international public opinion. Some senior members of the Taliban in Afghanistan made a clear break with the TTP and required the media to address them as the "Afghanistan Islamic State of Emir" rather than "the Afghan Taliban." At the same time, they stressed that they themselves were in the jihad against the infidels, "we can not say there is some other activities outside Afghanistan shares the same nature with us." (Yusufzai, 2009: September 10). Facing the terrorist attacks practiced by the TTP, a senior Afghan Taliban commander criticized that "bombing of innocent people is wrong and non-Islamic" and said he did not understand the purpose and intent of these acts (*The News*, 2009: November 11). In September and October 2009, the TTP requested the Afghan Taliban to send troops to support them but the Taliban in Afghanistan denied it, because "the principle of the Taliban is non-interference in Pakistan affairs" (Yusufzai, 2009: September 7).

Of course, the relationship between the two large and "illegal" movements cannot be uniform from top to bottom. The Taliban led by Nazir and Bahadur have close relationships with the Afghan Taliban, while the TTP used to have conflicts with the Haqqani; some commanders of the Afghan Taliban were involved in the armed conflicts between the Pakistani army and the local Taliban. At the end of 2009, after the TTP attacked NATO forces in Afghanistan, the relationship between the two sides appeared to show signs of improvement. The TTP members who lost South Waziristan were sheltered by the Afghan Taliban in Afghanistan. There are still possibilities of cooperation between the two Taliban and achievements for their respective goals.

**Third**, the TTP placed Pakistan in trouble, but also created political variables and new opportunities for the South Asian regional politics and increased the complexity of the regional political situation.

Under the influence of the global fight against terrorism, in a special political and cultural environment in Pakistan, a variety of radical extremist religious political forces and the jihadists were attracted to join the TTP because of its fierce anti-American attitude, public duels with Pakistani government and unbridled terrorist attacks (Abbas, 2009: April), which make Pakistan anti-terrorism task more difficult and complex. On the one hand, the succession of terrorist attacks turned Pakistan into a dark abyss of terrorism and thousands of civilians lost their lives and security of shelter. Whether to provide the public life and property security directly determines the authority and legitimacy of the government. On the other hand, long-term political instability and armed conflict have been too overwhelmed for the political economy in Pakistan. In the early 2010, the Pakistani army admitted that they were unable to mount large-scale military operations. And more importantly: (1) the fighting against terrorism is not a purely military affair and it cannot be finished in a short time. The situation in the Swat valley and South Waziristan area during 2009-2010 showed that the process of turning the military victory into political success is not so easy: after clearing the Taliban forces, the people did not return home, so a temporary retreat or hidden Taliban forces are likely to make a comeback. (2) Anti-terrorism is not a simple Pakistani affair. Although the Zardari and Gilani government has repeatedly stressed that anti-terrorism agrees with and from Pakistani national interests and also called the TTP the "enemy of the state," some Pakistani people comprehended the government's decision as "a bow to the United States will" or "serving the US interest," the Pakistani government met a dilemma. The dispute on whether the North Waziristan regions should have large-scale military strike in October 2010 is one of many examples.

When the Taliban challenged the ability of the Pakistani government, they also created an environment for public opinion of government legitimacy. The Taliban were kidnapping, imposing high

taxes and doing other blackmail and extortion acts; they prohibited music and dance which play an important role in Pashtuns' original life; they closed schools for girls and exerted other bad measures in controlled areas, which led to discontent. From 2004 to February 2009, the Pakistani government has reached more than one peace agreement with the Taliban and has allowed the implementation of Sharia rule in the relevant areas; in particular by the agreement with the Swat Taliban on February 2009, the Pakistan government has made tremendous concessions, but the Taliban have not given up their terrorist attacks. There is a growing recognition that the TTP may not want to establish a true Islamic order, at least they may have any other purposes. Thus, the attitude towards the TTP has changed dramatically in 2009: the public support rate for the Taliban was declining, while the Pakistani government's military operations in tribal areas have been more supported. According to the results published by Pew and IRI in August and October 2009, 90% of the Pakistan people thought that "religious extremism is a serious problem in Pakistan"; 87% of Muslims believed that "suicide bombing is absolutely improper"; 86% thought that "the Taliban and al-Qaeda operations in Pakistan are serious problems"; 73% said that "the Taliban poses a threat to Pakistan"; 69% supported the Swat army military action<sup>①</sup> (Zaidi, 2009: October 24). With the support of government and military, some people in the tribal areas formed their own militias and defended the security of the region and prevented the Taliban from re-entering.

This is important, because the foundational vitality and future prospects of the Taliban are all dependent on public sympathy or support; similarly, the success of the government's fight against terrorism will also depend on the public support. Of course, the eroding public support for the TTP does not mean that the demise of the Taliban is imminent. It takes more time to see the end of the

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<sup>①</sup> There are still 9% supporting Taliban.

Taliban phenomenon which has been formed by the South Asian political situation over the past 30 years. Now, due to the rise of the Afghan Taliban and the US commitment to withdraw troops beginning from July 2011 and the questioning people have on the legality of the government's capacity and other factors, the future situation in Afghanistan is still unknown. In addition, the US government has repeatedly urged the Pakistani government and military to "do more" in the fight against terrorism. And the terrorism is still a serious obstacle for the economic and social development. So the Taliban movement is far from losing its roots.

It is worth mentioning that the expansion of the Pakistani Taliban movement troubled the local government, as well as created a new opportunity for the South Asian region, which may nurture major political changes in this region. As the confrontation between the TTP and the Pakistani government and army has gone public and become a challenge to the Pakistani local government and the political order, its geo-political values are increasingly prominent; they have provided a good platform for opportunists. Since 2009, the Pakistan government has repeatedly stressed that the "Indian Taliban" has supported terrorists in Pakistan (*The Nation*, 2009: December 9). This added a new variable to the original complex relationship between India and Pakistan. In fact, since 2010 the attitudes and actions of the US not only show that the political influence of the Pakistani Taliban has gone beyond Pakistan itself, but also has enhanced its position in South Asia Game. For sure, the Taliban movement has not entered India yet, the "India Taliban" were in the TTP and did activities in Pakistan. However, since India has around 1 billion Muslims, the group conflicts caused by Hindu nationalism in the past three decades and Jammu-Kashmir disputes, can we imagine that "India Taliban" will come into Indian territory and start wars in the future like TTP today?

When we observe the establishment and evolution of the TTP in the Islamic Revival Movement and the global counter-terrorism

situation, the TTP may have a far-reaching effect on Islam itself, the political Islamic movement and the pattern of world politics, which needs more in depth research and closer attention.

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