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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AJK	Azad Jammu and Kashmir	ISPR	Inter-Services Public Relations
ASI	Assistant Sub Inspector	JUI-F	Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam Fazl
ASWJ	Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat	KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
BLA	Balochistan Liberation Army	NADR	National Database and Registration Authority
BLF	Balochistan Liberation Front	A	National Action Plan
BNA	Baloch Nationalist Army	NAP	National Counter Terrorism Department
BRA	Baloch Republican Army	NCTD	National Security Committee
BRAS	Baloch Raji Ajoi Sangar	NSC	Pakistan Air Force
BRG	Baloch Republican Guards	PAF	Peace Be Upon Him
BSF	Border Security Force	PBUH	Punjab Highway Patrol
CPEC	China Pakistan Economic Corridor	PHP	Pak Institute for Peace Studies
CT	Counter Terrorism	PIPS	Pakistan Mineral Development Corporation
CTD	Counter Terrorism Department	PMDC	Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz)
CTFC	Counter-Terrorism Financing Commission	PML-N	Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf
CTFU	Counter Terrorist Financing Unit	PTI	Station House Officer
DI	Dera Ismail Khan	SHO	Superintendent of Police
Khan		SP	Sindhudesh Revolutionary Army
DPO	District Police Officer	SRA	Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan
DSP	Deputy Superintendent of Police	SSP	Special Weapons And Tactics
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas	SWAT	Transports Internationaux Routier
FC	Frontier Corps	TIR	Tehreek-e-Jihad Pakistan
GB	Gilgit Baltistan	TJP	Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan
HGB	Hafiz Gul Bahadur	TLP	Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan
HITS	Hunt, Impede, Thwart and Serve,	TTP	United Baloch Army
IED	Improvised Explosive Device	UBA	United Nations
IG	Inspector General	UN	United States
IS-K	Islamic State-Khorasan	US	
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence		
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria		
ISPP	Islamic State Province of Pakistan		

METHODOLOGY AND VARIABLES

The PIPS conflict/security database and archives are the basic sources relied upon for this report. The archives and the database are the outcome of a meticulous monitoring process on every relevant incident in the country on a daily basis. A regular follow up is conducted in liaison with PIPS correspondents in the regions in order to keep track of daily developments on such incidents. PIPS compiles data from sources including newspapers, magazines, journals, field sources and screening of official record. More than 30 English and Urdu dailies, magazines, and journals, and various television news channels are monitored to update the database and archives. Regional daily newspapers and weeklies from Peshawar, Quetta, Gilgit and Karachi are also monitored for details of incidents reported in the local media. Correspondents in provincial capitals are the primary source for PIPS to verify the media reports. In case of a major incident, PIPS teams consult the local administration and journalists for further details. In cases where PIPS finds it difficult to verify facts of a particular incident, it gives preference to the official statements in that regard.

PIPS security reports utilize eight major variables with their respective set of sub-variables for analysis of the security situation in Pakistan. The security landscape is mapped through a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative methods are used, based on PIPS Conflict and Security Database, to measure the scale and level of violence. Meanwhile, the qualitative approach dilates upon changes and developments on the militants' front, state responses to these developments and projections of future scenarios. The following eight major variables with their sub-sets of variable are used in the PIPS Security Reports:

1. Attacks: This major variable has a sub-set of five sub-variables i.e. (i) terrorist attacks including militant attacks, nationalist insurgent attacks and sectarian-related attacks; (ii) incidents of ethno-political violence; (iii) cross-border attacks; (iv) drone attacks; and (v) operational attacks by security forces against militants. Since Pakistan's security landscape is very complicated with a diverse array of insecurity indicators in different parts of the country, the type of violence in one geographical unit is often different in its nature and dynamics from security landscape in other parts of the country. For this purpose the mentioned sub-set of variables is carefully monitored and analyzed in the security report with a view to suggest specific counter-strategy for each type of attack in these areas.

2. Clash: Another variable used is of clashes which include four sub-variables, i.e., (i) inter-tribal; (ii) sectarian; (iii) clashes between security forces and militants; and (iv) militants' infightings. The number of such clashes and their geographic location is taken as an indicator of parallel trends unfolding simultaneously with major trends and patterns of security in different areas of the country.

3. State Responses: It has two sub-variables: (i) security measures, and (ii) political and administrative responses. The first takes into account the security forces' operational attacks and clashes with militants, search and hunt operations and terrorists' arrests, etc. The second

variable entails the government's political and administrative measures to maintain law and order and reduce insecurity and violence.

4. Casualties: Casualties include both the number of people killed and injured. Casualties among civilians, militants and security forces are treated as another indicator to measure the levels and trends of security in the country.

5. Attack Tactics: This head takes a comprehensive account of various tactics used by different actors including suicide attacks, missile attacks, hand grenade attacks, kidnappings, rocket attacks, beheadings, landmine blasts, firing, sabotage, target killings, and bomb and improvised explosive devices blasts.

6. Development on Militants' Front: This variable analyzes statements, activities, internal divisions and other activities of militants to determine their strength and the dynamics of their strategies.

7. Opportunities and Challenges: include political measures and military responses to different security issues along with highlighting constraints and challenges encountered by the state.

8. Claim of Responsibility: It provides insight into militants' targets, tactics, areas of operation, and agendas.

GLOSSARY

Military Operation: Large-scale operations launched by military and paramilitary forces against Islamist militants and separatist insurgents in KP, FATA and Balochistan to preserve law and order and the writ of the state.

Operational Attack: Pre-emptive attacks launched by military and paramilitary troops to purge an area of militants.

Clashes between Security Forces and Militants: Armed clashes between security forces and militants, triggered by militants' attack on security check posts/ convoys and confrontation during search operations.

Terrorist Attacks: Include militant, nationalist, insurgent and sectarian attacks. Indiscriminate use of violence by militant outfits such as Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Lashkar-e-Islam (LI) and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) etc., manifested through suicide attacks, beheadings and destruction of educational institutions, CD/video shops, etc.

Nationalist Insurgent Attacks: Attacks by separatists/nationalist insurgents mainly in Balochistan and interior parts of Sindh.

Sectarian Attacks: Indiscriminate use of violence rooted in differences among various Islamic schools of thought over interpretation of religious commands. Incidents involving indiscriminate use of violence perpetrated by banned sectarian outfits such as LeJ, Tehreek-e-Jafria, Imamia Student Organization (ISO), Sipah-e-Muhammad, etc., against rival schools of religious thought.

Ethno-political Violence: The threat or use of violence, often against the civilian population, to achieve political or social ends, to intimidate opponents, or to publicize grievances.

Inter-tribal Clash: Clashes or feuds reported between tribes, mainly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, rural areas of Punjab and parts of interior Sindh.

Search and Hunt Operation: Launched by law enforcement agencies on intelligence to capture militants or to purge a particular locality of suspected militants and their hideouts.

Sectarian Clashes: Violent clashes between armed factions of banned sectarian outfits or between followers of rival sects such as Sunni-Shia, Deobandi-Barelvi strife. Sectarian clashes also include tribal feuds between followers of Sunni and Shia schools of thought as in Kurram, where the Sunni Turi tribesmen frequently clash with members of the Shia Bangash tribe.

Overall Number of Attacks: The sum of militant and counter-militant attacks by the security forces, besides drone attacks, incidents of ethno-political violence, and attacks with sectarian motives or by nationalist insurgents.

Plot/Unsuccessful Attempts: These include attempts at terrorist attacks that were either foiled by security forces and bomb disposal squads, or explosives went off by accident before militants or suicide bombers reached their intended target.

FOREWORD

The militants' intensifying attacks, such as the one that martyred 23 army soldiers in DI Khan in December 2023, indicate three significant things. First, they are certain that Pakistan is not stepping back from its kinetic counterterrorism approach thus almost closing the chapter of talks or negotiations with the groups like the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). That implies that the TTP and affiliates will continue to resort to an intensified terrorism onslaught with a view to 'force' the Pakistani government to reinstate the process of dialogue. Secondly, for whatever reasons, the Afghan Taliban appear either unable or unwilling to control the TTP and its cross-border operations inside Pakistan. The Taliban's ideological, political and operational 'constraints' notwithstanding, many also hint at an element of complicity in their lack of action against the TTP. Thirdly, due to the TTP and a host of other issues such as Pakistan's deportation of illegal Afghan refugees, the bilateral relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan are set to soar farther, at least for now, which will in turn add to the former's counter-militancy challenge. In this backdrop, Pakistan needs a comprehensive and sustainable counterterrorism approach to deal with the growing challenge. Waiting for the Afghan Taliban to rein in the groups like the TTP for us was never going to help.

Pakistan has witnessed a phenomenal 65 percent increase in terrorism-related fatalities in 2023. While more than 20 militant groups remained active in Pakistan in the year, the major actors of terrorist violence were the TTP, Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K), and Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA). These three groups carried out over 78 percent of the total terrorist attacks recorded in the country in the year 2023; over 82 percent of terrorism-related deaths were caused by the attacks perpetrated by them. While the attacks by the BLA largely concentrated in Balochistan, the attacks by the TTP and affiliates such as Tehrik-e-Jihad Pakistan (TJP) were recorded across four provinces of Pakistan but a bulk of them concentrated in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The IS-K was almost equally active in parts of KP and Balochistan. Meanwhile, sectarian violence has apparently also picked up in Pakistan as in the year under review a total of 43 people lost their lives and another 61 were injured in 16 incidents of such violence.

The outlawed TTP has adopted the Afghan Taliban's operational and political tactics, which they used against the US-led NATO forces in Afghanistan. Employing this approach, the group has intensified not only terrorist attacks but also efforts of propagating its ideology and portraying its 'nationalistic credentials'. The group tends to exploit every opportunity to discredit the country's security establishment. The TTP's stated support for ex-MNA Jamshed Dasti is the most recent example; Dasti accused security institutions of torturing his family for political victimisation. Similarly, the TTP's Umar Media has released multiple videos in recent years against what the group called continuing state oppression against the Baloch people. By highlighting such cases, the TTP attempts to establish that its fight against the security establishment is based on a just cause. However, despite its persistent efforts, the TTP has failed to secure even a fraction of the public support that it once enjoyed in Pakistan before

2013-14. Still, there is a probability that it will increase its influence within marginalised areas and religious institutions.

In a bid to position itself as a genuine anti-establishment armed resistance force, the TTP is deliberately trying to distance itself from the sectarian divide and is avoid sectarian attacks. The IS-K has already filled this space and has been hitting hard the communal and sectarian targets in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

At a time when a major shift is happening in the militant landscape of the country, it is imperative to see how the state security institutions are assessing and responding to the situation. The security forces and law enforcement agencies are busy in conducting intelligence-based operations against the terrorist networks in the country. In 2023, they killed 410 militants in kinetic actions and clashes with militants, besides arresting 377 suspected terrorists and members of militant groups in as many as 87 search and combing operations they conducted. However, experts argue that while successful in the short-term, such kinetic or hard approaches of countering terrorism fail to address the wider issues or causes factoring in violent extremism. For instance, even as hard approaches eliminate terrorists already on the ground, as long as the ideology driving them survives, more will continue to take their place. Therefore, "soft" approaches must be an indispensable component in any counterterrorism framework; more so in the case of Pakistan, where not just terrorism but also religious extremism is rampant.

Luckily, law enforcers' threat perception is becoming more precise, and unlike in the past, counterterrorism departments' (CTD) officials have fewer doubts about the religious and ideological motives of the groups. The terrorist attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar in 2014 radically changed their perception of terrorists. While many in the CTDs still believe that the militants are proxies of external actors, mainly India and the US, they view the Taliban differently. They believe the Taliban were opportunists who used Pakistani soil and resources against the US but have now turned against Pakistan and are supporting the TTP. However, the CTDs still lack clarity on the group dynamics, connections, and operational strategies, and also lack the skills to process the data effectively.

Pakistan also needs to work on the deteriorating relations with Afghanistan and develop some practical initiative of bilateral state-to-state engagement. While the Afghan Taliban's de facto government has largely remained in a state of denial or inaction with respect to the banned TTP, Pakistan also could not take its engagement with the new Afghan government beyond the security matrix. Bilateral mistrust continued to grow on account of a host of issues including border fencing, cross-border violence by groups based in Afghanistan, Afghan refugees in Pakistan and their recent repatriation, cross-border movement and visa issues, and inadequate bilateral engagement, among others. Pakistan needs to hold talks with Afghanistan on all these issues and it should not be limited to sending some delegation for a single time. One hopes

that Pakistan shall also make its border management policy people-friendly to facilitate and win hearts and minds of the Afghan people.

PIPS hopes that this 18th edition of its annual security report would help the policymakers, academics, media, and civil society understand the gravity of the security situation in Pakistan with a view to moving towards sustainable solutions. This year too, the report includes the comprehensive data on violent incidents, comparative analysis of various security variables, the changing targets and tactics of militants and nature of state responses. PIPS is thankful to the contributors of the chapters, as well as to Hazrat Bilal who designed maps describing geographical distribution of terrorist attacks and also designed the report title.

Safdar Sial
January 4, 2024

Chapter 1

OVERVIEW OF SECURITY IN 2023: CRITICAL CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Muhammad Amir Rana and Safdar Sial*

- 1.1 Overview of Security Situation in 2023
- 1.2 Critical Challenges and Recommendations

-
- Muhammad Amir Rana is Director of Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS). He has authored several books, most recently of "The Militant: Development of a Jihadi character in Pakistan", which won the German Peace Prize in 2014.
 - Safdar Hussain, nom de plume Safdar Sial, is Joint Director at PIPS and Associate Editor of *Conflict and Peace Studies* journal. He has also co-authored "Dynamics of Taliban Insurgency in FATA" and "Radicalization in Pakistan".

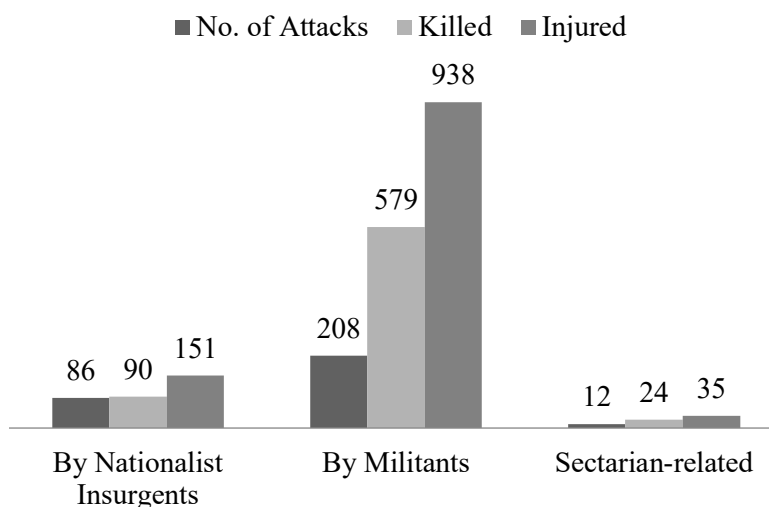
1.1 Overview of Security Situation in 2023

For the third year in a row, the number of terrorist attacks and consequent casualties posted an upsurge in 2023. A total of 306 terrorist attacks took place in Pakistan in the year – including 23 suicide bombings – which killed 693 people and injured 1,124 others. These attacks marked an increase of 17 percent from the year before, and the number of people killed in these attacks also represented an increase of 65 percent from those killed in similar attacks during the previous year.

As many as 330 personnel of security forces and law enforcement agencies were martyred in the reported terrorist attacks in 2023 including 26 FC men, 176 policemen, 110 army officials, 11 Levies, five unspecified paramilitary soldiers, and two Rangers; another 518 personnel of security and law enforcement agencies were also injured. Similarly, 260 civilians lost their lives and another 559 were wounded in these attacks. Meanwhile 103 militants were killed and another 47 were injured, either in suicide blasts they perpetrated, or in security forces' retaliatory fire following some attacks.

Religiously inspired militant groups such as the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), and other local Taliban groups including Tehrik-e-Jihad Pakistan (TJP) and Hafiz Gul Bahadur group, as well as Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K), etc., perpetrated a combined total of 208 terrorist attacks – compared to 179 in previous year – which killed 579 people and injured 938 others. Different Baloch and Sindhi nationalist insurgent groups carried out 86 attacks – as compared to 79 such attacks in 2022 – which claimed 90 lives and wounded another 151 people. Meanwhile, compared to four in 2022, 12 sectarian-related terrorist attacks were recorded in 2023 that claimed 24 lives and inflicted injuries on another 35 people.

Chart 1: Classification of Terrorist Attacks in Pakistan in 2023



As in previous years, security and law enforcement personnel were the prime target of terrorist attacks in 2023. As many as 205 attacks in 2023, or about 67 percent of the total recorded attacks in the year, targeted personnel, vehicles, convoys, and posts or facilities of security and law enforcement agencies. Civilians were apparently hit in 19 attacks, while another 10 attacks targeted polio vaccination teams and their security escorts, mainly police. Meanwhile terrorists perpetrated nine attacks each against alleged spies/collaborators, and government officials/institutions/state symbols. Another nine attacks hit Sunni religious leaders and community, and five terrorist attacks targeted members of Shia community. Baloch insurgents also targeted non-Baloch workers and settlers in Balochistan in a total of five attacks. Other sporadic targets hit by the terrorists in 2023 are given at Table 1.

Table 1: Targets Hit in Terrorist Attacks in 2023

Targets	No. of attacks	Killed	Injured
Security/law enforcement agencies (personnel, convoys, posts)	205	434	699
Education/institutions/teachers	2	0	0
Non-Bloch settlers/workers	5	16	12
Gas pipelines	2	0	0
Govt. officials/institutions/symbols	9	2	11
Power pylons/cell phone towers	2	0	0
Tribal elders	4	5	2
Civilians	19	32	61
Shia religious scholars/community	5	18	32
Worship places/shrines/madrassas	2	71	96
Sunni religious leaders/community	8	9	3
Political leaders/workers	7	72	149
Christian community/Church	1	1	0
Sikh community	3	3	1
Alleged spy or collaborator	9	12	1
Health/polio workers, security escorts	10	5	11
CPEC/workers/Chinese	1	2	0
Railway tracks / trains	4	1	22
Development, exploration projects, companies, workers	3	6	17
Non-Sindhi settler/worker	1	1	0
Census team/security escort	3	3	7
Total	306	693	1,124

Besides perpetrating 23 suicide and fedayee attacks, the terrorists mainly used direct infantry fire in 160 attacks, improvised explosive devices or IEDs of multiple types in 65 attacks, and hand grenades in 38 attacks. The terrorists also used other attack tactics, though less frequently, including 12 coordinated gun-and-bomb attacks, three rocket attacks, three terrorist acts of sabotage and lynching, and one incident each of mortar attack and beheading.

About 93 percent of the total recorded terrorist attacks in Pakistan in 2023 concentrated in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces.

As in the year before, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa faced the highest number of attacks for any one region of the country. PIPS recorded a total of 174 terrorist attacks in the province (or about 57 percent of the total attacks in Pakistan in 2023), which claimed 422 lives and injured 782 others. While the number of terrorist attacks posted only a slight increase of three percent from previous year, the number of people killed in these attacks in KP rose significantly by about 43 percent, and that of those injured by 99 percent. That suggests militants resorted to more intensified or high-impact attacks in the province during the year under review. Secondly, most of the terrorist activity in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was concentrated in two regions: one, southern KP districts; and second, the provincial capital and its neighboring Khyber district. Indeed, over 82 percent of the total 174 attacks recorded in KP in 2023 concentrated in the six southern districts of the province (including North and South Waziristan, Bannu, Tank, Lakki Marwat and DI Khan) as well as the provincial capital Peshawar and neighboring Khyber district. Apart from these two regions, where mostly the TTP and other local Taliban groups remained active in the year 2023, a third KP region, i.e., Bajaur, also remained a flashpoint of terrorist violence that was mainly perpetrated by the Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K) terrorist group. As many 10 attacks happened in Bajaur and most of these were claimed by the IS-K. On the whole, terrorist attacks were recorded from 22 districts of the KP province in 2023. Moreover, about 75 percent of the total reported attacks from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa targeted personnel of security and law enforcement agencies, mainly army and police.

Balochistan was the second most terrorism-affected province in 2023, after Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Baloch insurgent groups as well as religiously inspired militant groups perpetrated a total of 110 attacks in the province, compared to 79 in previous year. These attacks claimed 229 lives, compared to 106 in the year before, and wounded 282 others. Different Baloch insurgent groups, mainly the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) and Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF), perpetrated 78 attacks in Balochistan killing 86 people and wounding 137 others. The attacks by Baloch insurgent groups spread over 19 districts, mainly in central, southern and southwestern parts of the province, and largely targeted security forces. Meanwhile, religiously inspired militant groups such as the TTP, Tehrik-e-Jihad Pakistan, and the Islamic State terrorist group (IS-K), etc., perpetrated 29 attacks in Balochistan, up from seven in previous year, which caused death to 139 people and injuries to another 144 people. While the TTP and affiliates perpetrated most of the attacks in northern, or largely Pashtun-populated districts of the province including those bordering on Afghanistan and KP, the IS-K

was found more active in Mastung, Bolan and Kalat districts. Meanwhile, three sectarian-related attacks killed four and wounded one person in Balochistan in 2023.

Compared to eight in the previous year, 15 terrorist attacks took place in Sindh province including 14 attacks in Karachi alone, and one attack in Jamshoro in interior Sindh. These attacks killed a total of 16 people and injured 26 others. Seven of the reported attacks from Sindh in 2023 were perpetrated by sub-nationalist insurgent groups including four attacks by Sindhudesh Revolutionary Army (SRA) in Karachi and Jamshoro, and three by Baloch insurgent groups BLA and BLF in Karachi. Meanwhile, indicating a relative rise in sectarian violence, as many as seven sectarian-related terrorist attacks also took place in Karachi that claimed six lives and injured two others. The banned TTP also perpetrated a gun-and-bomb coordinated attack on the Karachi Police Office martyring four people (3 attackers were also killed) and injuring 17 others.

Six terrorist attacks took place in Punjab in 2023, compared to five in the year before, which claimed 16 lives and injured eight others. Four of these attacks were perpetrated by the TTP and Tehrik-e-Jihad Pakistan, including three in Mianwali and one in Khanewal, which targeted law enforcement and intelligence officials. For one, security forces repulsed a major gun and bomb assault on the Mianwali Training Air Base of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) in November by killing all nine attackers of TJP. Meanwhile, a Baloch insurgent group Baloch Nationalist Army (BNA) claimed one IED blast that targeted Jaffar Express near Chichawatni in Sahiwal district, killing a woman and injuring seven others. Separately, a member of Sikh community, Paramjit Singh Panjwar, was shot dead by unknown attackers in Lahore.

One, apparently, sectarian-related terrorist attack was recorded in Diamir (Gilgit-Baltistan), which claimed 10 lives and wounded 26 others. (*See Table 2*)

Table 2: Terrorist Attacks in Pakistan in 2023

Region	No. of Attacks	Killed	Injured
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	174	422	782
Balochistan	110	229	282
Punjab	6	16	8
Karachi	14	16	26
Sindh (excluding Karachi)	1	0	0
Gilgit-Baltistan	1	10	26
Total	306	693	1,124

1.1.1 Comparison

Overall, 498 incidents of conflict-related violence of different types – as listed at Table 3 – were recorded in Pakistan in 2023. Apart from 306 terrorist attacks cited earlier, these violent

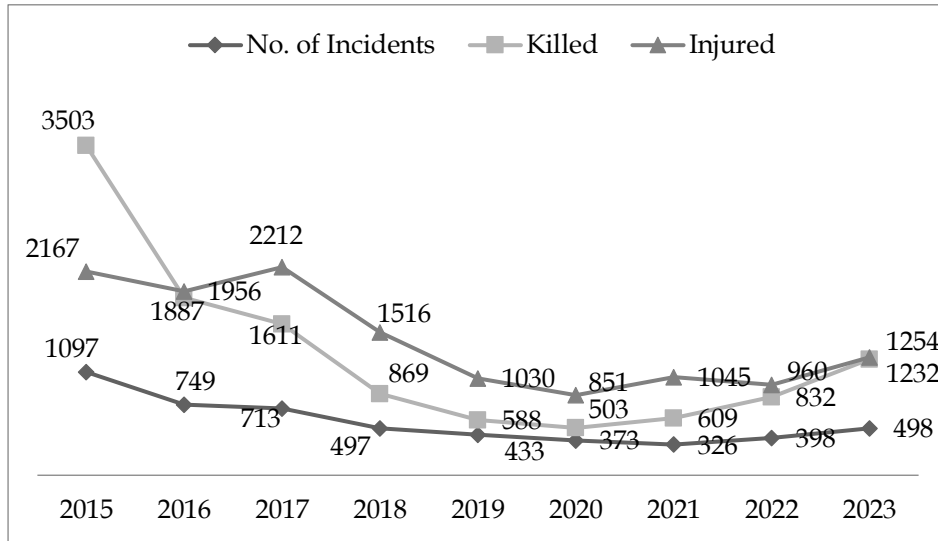
incidents also included: security forces' 129 anti-militant operational or kinetic strikes and their 24 armed clashes/encounters with militants; a combined total of 12 cross-border attacks from Afghanistan, India and Iran; 10 incidents of communal/faith-based violence including mob attacks; seven (7) terror plots or bids; four (4) incidents of sectarian clashes; two incidents each of political/ethnic violence and inter-tribal clashes/attacks; one inter-militant clash/attack; and one act of abduction. These overall incidents of violence killed a total of 1,232 people and injured 1,254 others.

Table 3: Nature of Overall Incidents of Violence

Nature of Incident	No. of Incidents	Killed	Injured
Terrorist attacks	306	693	1,124
Political/ethnic violence	2	0	11
Clashes & encounters between security forces & militants	24	55	3
Inter-tribal clashes/attacks	2	8	0
Cross-border clashes/attacks	12	26	21
Operational attacks by security forces	129	425	51
Sectarian clashes	4	19	26
Inter-militant clashes/attacks	1	1	0
Communal/faith-based violence	10	3	16
Abductions by militants	1	0	0
Plot/foiled terror attempts	7	2	2
Total	498	1,232	1,254

The number of overall incidents of conflict-related violence posted an increase of over 25 percent, from 398 in 2022 to 498 in 2023. As in the year before, the increase in overall violent incidents was mainly contributed by an upturn recorded in the number of terrorist attacks as well as counterterrorism operations. The overall number of people killed in these violent incidents also increased, by over 48 percent; from 832 in 2022 to 1,232 in 2023. (See Chart 2)

Chart 2: Comparison of Overall Incidents of Violence & Casualties (2015-23)



As cited earlier, for the third year in a row the number of terrorist attacks in Pakistan posted an upsurge in the year 2023. This upsurge in terrorist violence in Pakistan also coincided with the Taliban's rise to power in the neighboring Afghanistan. Indeed, the year 2020 was the last year that had witnessed a relative decline in terrorist violence in Pakistan; that decline had been ongoing since 2014-15 following the military operations in ex-FATA, Karachi and an extensive counter-militancy campaign across the country including as part of National Action Plan. But from 2021-onward this declining trend did not sustain, and the incidence of terrorist attacks took an upturn. (See Chart 3 and Table 4)

Chart 3: Comparison of Terrorist Attacks and Fatalities in Pakistan (2015-2023)

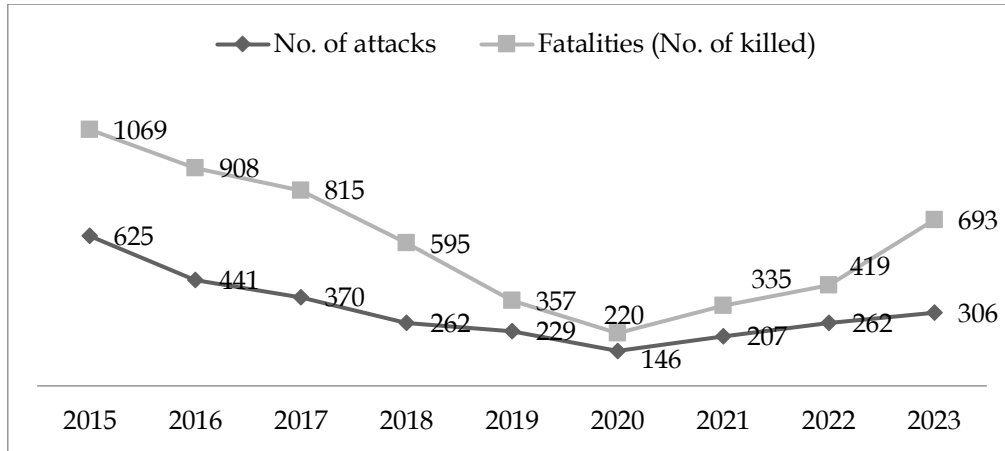


Table 4: Comparison of Terrorist Attacks and Fatalities in Pakistan (2009-23)¹

Year	No. of Terrorist Attacks (%Change)	No. of Killed (% Change)
2009	Baseline year (2,586 attacks)	Baseline year (3,021 Fatalities)
2010	18%↓	4% ↓
2011	7%↓	18%↓
2012	20%↓	14%↓
2013	9%↑	19%↑
2014	30%↓	30%↓
2015	48%↓	38%↓
2016	28%↓	12%↓
2017	16%↓	10%↓
2018	29%↓	27%↓
2019	13%↓	40%↓
2020	36%↓	38%↓
2021	42%↑	52%↑

¹ ↑ and ↓ represent increase and decrease, respectively, from previous year.

Year	No. of Terrorist Attacks (%Change)	No. of Killed (% Change)
2022	27%↑	25%↑
2023	17%↑	65%↑

As described in the Table 4, in the year 2023 the number of terrorist attacks in Pakistan marked an increase of 17 percent from the previous year. That comparative upsurge in terrorist violence was contributed by an increase in the number of attacks reported from all four provinces. The frequency of terrorist incidents in the Balochistan province increased by 39 percent, compared to 2022, and the number of those killed in these attacks also increased, by 116 percent. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, although the number of attacks rose marginally (by 3 percent) from previous year, but the number of people killed in these attacks increased by 43 percent and those of injured by 99 percent.

Similarly, the incidence of terrorist violence in Punjab and Sindh also increased in 2023, by 100 percent and 87 percent, respectively.

Table 5: Comparison of Terrorist Attacks & Casualties (2023 vs. 2022)²

Province / Region	Number of Attacks (%Change)	Killed (% Change)	Injured (% Change)
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	3%↑	43%↑	99%↑
Balochistan	39%↑	116%↑	4%↑
Punjab	100%↑	167%↑	73%↓
Sindh	87%↑	100%↑	26 compared to 0 in 2022
Islamabad	-	-	-
Gilgit- Baltistan	Unchanged (1 as in 2022)	10 compared to 0 in 2022	26 compared to 0 in 2022
Total	17%↑	65%↑	53%↑

Compared to 14 in the year before, as many as 23 suicide and fedayee attacks happened in 2023 including 18 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and five in Balochistan. These attacks claimed 315 lives – compared to 108 in 2022 – and injured 560 others. As many as 22 of these suicide

² ↑ and ↓ represent increase and decrease, respectively, compared with previous year, i.e., 2022.

attacks were carried out by different religiously inspired militant groups, while one attack was perpetrated by a Baloch insurgent group BLA in Turbat (Kech) in Balochistan. Among religiously inspired militants, the TTP was reportedly involved in 11 recorded suicide attacks, including four attacks each in Khyber and North Waziristan, and one attack each in Bannu, Peshawar (in KP) and Quetta (in Balochistan). All suicide blasts by the TTP targeted security forces and law enforcement agencies. The worst of suicide blasts by the TTP was the one that hit policemen in Police Lines mosque, Peshawar on January 30 martyring over 84 people including 81 policemen. Tehrik-e-Jihad Pakistan (TJP), which is considered a TTP's subsidiary or coverup group, claimed four suicide attacks in Peshawar, Bajaur, DI Khan and Lakki Marwat targeting security forces. One of the TJP-coordinated suicide attacks martyred 23 army soldiers in DI Khan on December 12. Hafiz Gul Bahadur group perpetrated two suicide blasts in Bannu targeting security forces that martyred nine soldiers and two civilians. Meanwhile, Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K) perpetrated three major suicide bombings in 2023 including one each in Bolan (martyring 9 Balochistan Constabulary officials and one civilian), Bajaur (martyring 64 civilians in a JUI-F political gathering), and Mastung (martyring over 63 people in a 12th Rabiul Awwal (the birthday of the holy prophet (PBUH) procession). Meanwhile, two suicide bombings (in Zhob in Balochistan and Hangu in KP) remained unclaimed.

A total of 12 violent incidents (attacks and clashes) took place at Pakistan's borders with Afghanistan, India and Iran, compared to 15 such incidents in the year before. These incidents claimed 26 lives (10 civilians, seven army soldiers, and nine militants) and injured 21 others. Seven of these incidents happened at or from across the country's border with Afghanistan including six in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and one in Balochistan, killing 14 people and injuring 17 others. These seven incidents only entail the border happenings and don't include the incursions by the TTP or other militants wherein they crossed the border and carried out attacks inside Pakistan. Meanwhile four attacks happened from across the Line of Control (in Kotli, Neelum and Poonch districts of AJK), and Working Boundary with India (in Sialkot, Punjab) that caused in all eight deaths and injuries to another four people. Apparently the situation at Pak-India border is not as calm as it had been following February 2021, when Pakistan and India recommitted themselves to the 2003 ceasefire arrangement at the Line of Control. Similarly, another attack was reported from across the Iranian border in Kech (Balochistan), which claimed the life of four army soldiers.

Compared to 87 in the year before, security forces and law enforcement agencies conducted 129 anti-militant operational strikes in Pakistan in 2023. These actions caused a total of 425 fatalities (373 militants, 43 army soldiers, five policemen, two Levies, and two civilians), as compared to 327 in 2022, besides injuring 51 others. Out of the total 129 operational strikes recorded in 2023, as many as 97 happened in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 28 in Balochistan, three in Punjab, and one in Sindh's provincial capital, i.e., Karachi. While the anti-militant operations were reported from 31 districts and regions across Pakistan, however there were only nine districts where five or more such operations happened in the year. These were Kech and

Quetta in Balochistan, and Bannu, DI Khan, Khyber, North and South Waziristan, Peshawar, and Tank districts in KP. The highest number of kinetic operations for any one district was reported from North Waziristan (21 operations), followed by DI Khan (17), South Waziristan (12), Khyber (9), Peshawar and Tank (8 operations each), and Kech (7 operations).

Security and law enforcement agencies also entered into in a total of 24 armed clashes and encounters with militants – compared to 11 such incidents in previous year – in 13 districts or regions of the country. These armed clashes and encounters claimed 55 lives (37 militants, 16 army soldiers, and 2 policemen) and injured two militants and one policeman. As many as 21 of these clashes and encounters (or over 87 percent) took place in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (mainly between the security forces and the TTP militants). Meanwhile, two such clashes happened in Punjab and one in Karachi.

Compared to eight in 2022, as many as 10 incidents of communal or faith-based violence including four incidents of mob violence were also recorded in Pakistan in 2023. These incidents claimed the lives of three [Muslim] persons accused of blasphemy in Sheikhpura (Punjab), Mardan (KP) and Kech (Balochistan), and injured 16 others including 15 Hindu students in Lahore and one member of Christian community in Faisalabad. Few highlights of communal violence in 2023 included attacks on and sabotage/ransacking of at least four worship places of Ahmadi community in Karachi, as well as torching and ransacking of at least 19 churches, and 86 residences of members of the Christian community in Faisalabad. Overall, these incidents of communal and mob violence targeted worship places and members of Ahmadi community in four attacks, blasphemy-accused individuals in three attacks, Christian community and churches in two incidences, and members of Hindu community in one such incident.

Sectarian violence has apparently also picked up in Pakistan as in the year under review a total of 43 people lost their lives and another 61 were injured in 12 sectarian-related terrorist attacks and four sectarian clashes. Incidents of sectarian violence were reported mainly from Karachi in Sindh (7 incidents), Kurram in KP (5), Mastung and Quetta in Balochistan (3), and Diamir in Gilgit-Baltistan (one incident).

The number of people killed in overall violent incidents in 2023 (1,232) represented an increase of about 48 percent from those killed in such incidents in the year before (832). The reported increase in fatalities was marked by the martyrdom of 405 personnel of security forces and law enforcement agencies in overall violent incidents, compared to 264 in previous year. Fatalities among civilians in 2023 (302) were nonetheless over 64 percent more from the previous year's fatalities among them (184). There was also an increased number of militants killed (525), in these violent incidents, compared to 2022 when 384 militants were reportedly killed. (See Table 6)

Table 6: Casualties in Overall Violent Incidents in 2023

Category	Killed	Injured
FC	26	55
Militants	525	105
Civilian	302	620
Police	183	330
Paramilitaries [unspecified]	5	5
Army	176	115
Levies	13	17
Rangers	2	7
Total	1,232	1,254

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