

## Return Of Taliban Terror In Pakistan

**By Nirupama Subramanian**

Author is National Editor (Strategic Affairs). She writes on India's foreign policy and national security issues.

*Fifteen years ago, the Pakistani security establishment sought to make a distinction between "good" and "bad" Taliban. The good Taliban were the Afghan Taliban and other groups that served Pakistan's interests in the region, including the Jaish-e-Muhammad and Lashkar-e-Taiba.*

The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan's (TTP's) return to acts of terror, extortion and hostage-taking has turned the clock back for Pakistan a decade — although the situation is still not as bad as it was then — and has severely undermined its relations with the Afghan Taliban that the Pakistan government and Army accuse of harbouring the group.

An angry exchange of words on January 2 was indicative of how the promise of having the Taliban in Kabul has gone wrong for those at the wheel in Pakistan. From a cocky ISI chief Lt Gen Faiz Hameed drinking tea with aides at Kabul's high security 5-star hotel Serena in September 2021, telling the Afghan media that everything was going to be fine, to Pakistan Home Minister Rana Sanaullah threatening to bomb TTP hideouts in Afghanistan, it has been a long 16 months in their ties.

To Sanaullah's statement, Ahmad Yasir, a member of the Doha-based Taliban, responded with a tweet saying Afghanistan was not Syria, nor Pakistan Turkey (referring to Turkey's bombing of Kurds in Syria). "This is Afghanistan, the graveyard of empires. Never think of a military attack on us, or else you may end up with the embarrassing repeat of the [post-Bangladesh War] agreement with India."

Soon after this exchange, Pakistan's National Security Council put out a strong but more measured statement at the end of a two-day meeting on this and other issues facing the country, including the tanking economy.

"No country will be allowed to provide sanctuaries and facilitation to terrorists and Pakistan reserves all rights in that respect to safeguard her people," it says. "Pakistan's security is uncompromisable and the full writ of the state will be maintained on every inch of Pakistan's territory".

But it is unclear what it can do to achieve this.

### **Taliban takeover in Afghanistan emboldened the TTP**

The TTP, which has old links with the Afghan Taliban, became active once again in the north-west tribal areas of Pakistan (earlier FATA, but now part of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province) after the Afghan Taliban captured Kabul.

While some in Pakistan, including former Prime Minister Imran Khan, hailed the victory of the Afghan Taliban as the victory of Islam over America, some far-right religious parties declared the day was not far when sharia would be implemented in Pakistan. A Gallup poll around that time found 55 per cent of over 2,000 respondents to be in favour of sharia law.

Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa, the former Pakistan Army chief who retired from office two months ago, had warned at the time that the Afghan Taliban and Pakistan's old enemy TTP were "two sides of the same coin". Moderate voices in Pakistan had warned of a blowback on their country that has proved prescient. A matter of concern at the time was the release of a large number of TTP prisoners from jails in Kabul by the new rulers of Afghanistan.

Emboldened by these events, the TTP, whose leaders declared that the Taliban victory in Afghanistan that was a model to replicate in Pakistan, broke a long lull in their attacks inside Pakistani territory. They also started asserting themselves in the tribal parts of KP province, asking men not to trim their beards, and extorting money from residents of the area as a kind of "tax".

Fears that the TTP would open Pakistan's doors to the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) — the two are linked — were also high in the minds of Pakistani officials.

It took a major massacre for the Pak Army to really go after the TTP

For long, the Pakistan security establishment's reflex policy has been to buy peace with the Pakistani Taliban instead of fighting them. Critics of the Pakistan Army and this policy said the force had got so used to outsourcing its battles to terror groups and being preoccupied with its own businesses, that it was no longer a fighting Army.

For its part, the Pakistan Army was concerned it should not be labelled as "fighting our own people". This was a lesson the army had drawn from the commando attack ordered by former President Gen Pervez Musharraf on the Lal Masjid in Islamabad in 2007, which was widely criticised in Pakistan, and which led to the creation of the TTP.

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## **The Tawang Effect: Forecasting China-India Relations In 2023**

**By Dr Jagannath Panda**

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*Following the clash along their disputed border in December, there's little reason for optimism in China-India ties for the new year.*

The trend in China-India ties is a predictable affair at present: Bilateral antagonism is taking the lead over any pretense of engagement and stability. Recent years increasingly suggest that.

On December 9, the Indian and Chinese military forces clashed along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Yangtse area of the Tawang sector in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. The conflict resulted in injuries (but not fatalities). This is one of the major incidents in the more than two years after the defining China-India clash at Galwan in the Ladakh region. In 2021, although there were reports of a minor face-off between Indian and Chinese patrol parties in the eastern sector, it did not result in injuries and the matter was resolved at the local military commanders' level. Before the clashes of 2021, the previous such incident in this sector had been in 2016.

It is highly likely that the high-altitude joint exercises ("Yudhabhyas," literally meaning war practice) conducted between U.S. and Indian troops in northern India's Uttarakhand state days

before was a catalyst for the December border incident. China's Ministry for Foreign Affairs criticized the exercises as a violation of bilateral agreements and not conducive to building trust.

Nonetheless, instances of Indian Army patrols clashing with the People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops are not out of the ordinary due to the differing perceptions of the LAC between the two countries: There is no delineation of the de facto border, nor any agreement on the sharing of maps (about 20 years ago, there was an initial exchange of maps on the Middle Sector, where the dispute is relatively minor). Moreover, China's projection of a flexible LAC plays to its expansionist tendencies, enabling it to continually engage in so-called "salami tactics."

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How far will the latest fracas impact India-China ties in 2023? Is tension in border areas becoming a "new normal"? Can a temporary political, if not a permanent, solution emerge in 2023?

### **Legitimizing Its Eastern Theater Assertions**

Recent trends highlight that Arunachal Pradesh – over which China lays historical claims, calling it "Zangnan" or South Tibet – has become the "new focal point of confrontation" in India-China border tensions. For a long time, China has routinely protested the visits of top Indian leaders or officials to the state and has not been issuing visas to Arunachal officials while providing stapled visas to its residents. In 2017 and then again in 2021, China "standardized" the names of six and 15 places, respectively, (including residential areas, mountains, passes, and rivers) in the Indian state as part of its strategy to lend legal credence to its territorial claims.

Months before the second round of "renaming," China had passed the Land Borders Law, which came into effect in early 2022, to strengthen its legitimization of unilateral land claims on disputed territories. This law, which upped pressure on India, must be viewed in the context of Xi Jinping's overall security-obsessed major power diplomacy and aggressive military manoeuvres throughout the Indo-Pacific. It is poised to be a major coercive tool in the near future against China's land neighbours, especially India.

Moreover, in 2021, China also enacted another contentious law, namely the Coast Guard Law, and revised its Maritime Traffic Safety Law. Such actions have put neighbours like Japan on red alert due to China's intent to unilaterally change the paradigms of international maritime law (e.g., through its navigation restrictions) so as to pursue unabated territorial expansion. For India, especially in the Indian Ocean, China's maritime legal structure spells trouble. Moreover, in 2021, China also enacted another contentious law, namely the Coast Guard Law, and revised its Maritime Traffic Safety Law. Such actions have put neighbours like Japan on red alert due to China's intent to unilaterally change the paradigms of international maritime law (e.g., through its navigation restrictions) so as to pursue unabated territorial expansion. For India, especially in the Indian Ocean, China's maritime legal structure spells trouble.

Arguably, following the Galwan conflict, it was only a matter of time before China extended its aggressive tactics to other areas of dispute along the LAC. On this note, it can be assessed that conflict in Tawang was inevitable, especially as it is the historical, cultural, and political "flashpoint" of the Tibet question. Furthermore, the region figures centrally in Xi's quest for Chinese "rejuvenation" and "revitalization." The new law and intermittent clashes at the border are only further evidence that India is being dragged into protracted turmoil.

India for its part has been quick to comment on preparing for "unsettling" changes due to China's hegemonic rise as a superpower. It has also been diplomatically assertive about not giving into China's calls for a fractured bonhomie (i.e., tensions at the border but a facade of normalcy elsewhere).

**[Read complete article on website \[thediplomate.com\]\(http://thediplomate.com\)](#)**

# Multilateral Institutions: Consensus-Building, Concerns And Challenges

**By Surbhi Dadhich**

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Strategic forums and multilateral dialogue partnerships have emerged as significant builders for the maintenance of international relations as well as also for self-aggrandizement and interest of the nations. The United Nations has come a long way since its inception and it no longer represents the monopoly or dominance of theatres of power. The United Nations has become a cluster of associations of various countries with different fronts and heads. The politics of 'balance of power', 'power theatrics' and the 'spheres of influence' continue to ring its bells and rallying together of nations to counter the rise of a single power has become more of a necessity than a norm in the contemporary times. The recognition of common past or future interests are bringing countries together not just to raise voices against the injustices or the inequities but also for the acting of the role of a stakeholder which cannot be potentially left out in a multipolar world. What is essentially remarkable is the joint political statement which comes out after high-level talks or meetings. This makes the international organisations not just theatrical adventures rather a convergence rooted in a particular context.

The globalized world demands that the socio-economic issues should be looked holistically and the emphasis and enhancement of the cultural relations, focussing on people-to-people ties has become a way to channelize relations where other areas might be a point of contestation. The organizations and forums are also tied to the geopolitics in various crucial ways. To that extent, geopolitics is determining the connections or cut in ties amongst the nations of the world in its extremes. The AUKUS alliance, the strategic defence partnership among US, UK and Australia for the development of nuclear-propelled submarines and countering China in the Indo-Pacific Region had upset France as it means Australia had to cancel the earlier contract with France of diesel, electric-powered submarines. The perceived threat of China and its increased assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific had led to the formation of QUAD as initially a formal alliance of four democratic countries but has broadened its areas of cooperation from security, energy to health and economic issues. With the presence of India in an array of these organizations from BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to G-20 and Quad, whether it be the relationship with China, Russia, US or Europe, they "stand on their own merit", as Junior Foreign Minister Meenakashi Lekhi told Parliament on March 2022.

Even though the concretisation of functional elements of these forums and platforms, for example the trade pact between India and UK or the non-materialization of free import-duty agreements amongst the SAARC member nations, continue to be sticking points in their workings, their role in conflict management has however been noticeable. International organizations have become the facilitators or arbitrators in resolving of the disputes which has moved away from the traditional notions of cooperation where countries played the role of mediators. For example, the League of Arab States comprising around 22 nations in and around the Horn of Africa, North Africa and Arabia has been engaged in the resolution of the Arab-Israel conflict over the years. The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) norm which recognizes the collective responsibility of the international community to intervene in the cases of genocide, war-crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity has also been taken up in the instance of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to enforce human rights. For however clearer the red lines and articulation of threat might become, the diplomatic tool always remains the option.

This process has taken twists and turns. South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) established in December 1985 has since then lost its fervor and zeal with which it was conceptualized. With Pakistan and India always at the loggerheads and presently with overbearing external and internal challenges to security with the member-countries, consensus-building has emerged as the major concern. The cooperation and coordination sought after in the regional organizations is however dimming while 'loose' partnerships are gaining prominence. While the basis of them as a norm of the bipolar world order during the Cold War era has certainly shifted, what still remains the key criteria is forming of counterforces to the powers which might threaten the balance of power. The Westminster notions of national sovereignty, of non-interference and protecting the territorial integrity of the nations have severely restricted the scope of the regional organizations in maintaining peace and security. The failure of Association of South-East Nations (ASEAN) in bringing about concrete action plan with respect to the crisis in Myanmar shows the fault lines.

This forces us to ask questions of the direction the international cooperation is taking. The presidency of G-20 and the greater synergy among G-77 nations are the cases in point.

There is no doubt that issues like cyber security and blockchain technology demand global attention but the building of consensus in the matters of environment or import duties have remained a sticking point and continue to vex the overall spirit of the forums, organizations and initiatives. While the inclusion of the civil society organizations, multinational corporations, informal banks and other non-members is a welcome move to represent the interests of the public, it is however to be recognised and understood that ultimately it should be the interests and well-being of the people which must be primarily taken into account. It would be the livelihoods and welfare of the Sri Lankans from a funded project that are of utmost importance more than the knowledge of it being funded by China, India or Japan.

It is good that multilateral institutions sought to establish equality, if only periodical, yet it is commendable in the sense that the concerns are heard and attended to. Whether it is the group of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) or Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), the raised issues are of vital consequence to other nations as well.

The disillusionment and ill-will towards these organizations might have justifiable grounds. The systems of bargaining, compliance and agreements would undoubtedly be traded. There is a need to navigate the tussle that arises from the foreign policy of liberal internationalism and also the domestic politics of populism. What is important to note is that the active utilization of the frameworks of multilateralism as well as transnational actors with simultaneous enhancement of the core capacities of the countries would be a great force in making this a success. Global Governance has undergone many changes since the inception of the first international organization. They should be able to accommodate and even encourage diversity and flexibility, Relying less on compulsory or binding agreements should also be given thought because sometimes the problems which require the collective action can be better solved without recourse to coercion. This is where the relevance of the informal arrangements come.

While it is certain that there is no ideal internationalism or utopian world order, the way forward for multilateralism is to build it with greater transparency and accountability which in turn will determine its authority and legitimacy. While a zero-sum approach to the resolution of the issues is with its own loopholes, what is to be understood is that the win-win situation is also unlikely. As Winston Churchill puts it, "Isn't it better to have one place where all... countries in the world can get together, bore each other sometimes with their words rather than bore holes into each other on the battlefield?"

# From a Conflict Transformation Perspective, How Should Reconstruction & Reconciliation Proceed In Afghanistan?

**By Ardra M**

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Transforming a dispute necessitates transcending competing parties' aims, defining new ones, disembedding the conflict from its current environment, and re-embedding it in a more promising location. The transcend technique is used to investigate conflict transformation and how to achieve it. Johan Galtung came up with the transcend approach. There must be a transformation in order to avert future violence. This is accomplished through empathy-based discussion, nonviolence, and collaborative innovation.

Intervention, stability, and normalization are the three nested and non-sequential phases of post-war reconstruction. Security (peacekeeping) and elite bargaining (peace-making) predominate in the immediate post-intervention phase in ensuring the negative job of preventing a return to war. At the same time, a transition from emergency assistance to phase 2 political stability requirements must be made from the start. Phase 2 is defined as the point at which the domestic political situation has stabilized enough to allow for a safe turnover of power to a host government and the start of the first stage of international departure. In general, it can be seen from a conflict resolution perspective that, while peacekeeping, elite, and structural peacebuilding predominate in phases 1 and 2, social and cultural peacebuilding becomes more important in order to secure the more far-reaching and deeply rooted declared sectoral goals of phase 3 normalization.

The ultimate goal of conflict resolution is reconciliation, which entails repairing damaged relationships and learning to live non-violently with radical differences. Reconciliation will take place on two levels in Afghanistan: one involving Al Qaeda militants and those who have backed them, and another involving intra-Afghan issues. While there has been a lot of focus on bringing terrorists and their sympathizers to justice, there has been little focus on reconciliation efforts within Afghanistan. Afghanistan will require substantial assistance to repair and establish systems for resolving intra-Afghan grievances. This will be a huge problem because the country has few functional official rules of law procedures. The scale of the problem needs a multi-pronged strategy to reform the justice system. In Afghanistan's rural areas, an informal, customary system of justice has long been in operation. Even after two decades of war and the Taliban administration, this blend of traditional tribal practices and Islamic law (Sharia), administered by respected members of the society, remained substantially intact. Attempts in the 1970s to establish a formal legal system, such as those used in cities, were unsuccessful. The international community should refrain from pushing for the formalization of rural judicial systems on grounds of necessity and pragmatism.

The largest impediment to good relations in Afghanistan is the international community's refusal to recognize the Taliban as Afghanistan's legitimate government, which requires a patient and long-term approach to address. Despite the Taliban's professed desire for international recognition, these initiatives are unlikely to yield quick results. The Taliban interim administration should cease pursuing recognition and instead concentrate on running Afghanistan and averting a humanitarian and economic disaster. Demonstrating the government's effectiveness through coordinated action is the most effective strategy for the movement to obtain international credibility and eventually recognition. The United Nations should assist in negotiating Western powers' conditionalities. While a step-by-step plan for cooperation is required, life-saving humanitarian assistance should never be made contingent on the Taliban performing specific steps. Given the stark contrasts between the Taliban and Western forces,



a variety of approaches are required to address both humanitarian and non-humanitarian challenges. While the needs of millions of innocents, vulnerable Afghans continue to be unaddressed, both sides have made competing demands that virtually negate one another.

Capturing the four stages of reconciliation concerning the stages of de-escalation, the first criterion is that there must be some degree of political closure, at least to the point where a return to violence is no longer a possibility. If the dividing political issues are still alive and threatening, it is far more difficult to move forward with deeper reconciliation processes. That is why, following a decisive setback and victory, reconciliation is generally simpler.

The second stage of resolving polarization is addressing what have frequently been contradictory accounts of the conflict held by opposing groups. While dehumanized pictures of the adversary are still prevalent and reciprocal convictions of victimization are widely held, deeper reconciliation procedures will be impossible to achieve. The key point is reached when the other is 'rehumanized'. Aside from humanitarian issues, both sides are concerned about terrorism threats. The international community and the Taliban are both concerned about the threat of terrorism and the growing menace of IS-K; as a result, conditionalities should not take precedence over regional security challenges and humanitarian concerns.

With the third stage, the reconciliation process enters the realm of transformation, as efforts are made to bridge ongoing deep differences through structural political and economic reorganization, as well as by strengthening the psychological possibilities of peaceful coexistence despite ongoing conflicts. True reconciliation, according to some, occurs only when the fourth and final stage is attained. We've arrived at the point of atonement and forgiveness. The intended withdrawal of the majority of international military forces from Afghanistan, along with the awareness that force alone will not bring stability to the destabilized region, necessitates serious consideration of a negotiated solution to the current conflict. To date, talks have been limited to closed-door "talks about talks" involving high-ranking Afghan government officials and armed opposition groups, as well as provincial governments, armed opposition groups, and members of the UN-mandated, NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). A lasting peace in Afghanistan can only be achieved via high-level political will, which is best demonstrated by expanding UNAMA's (United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan) mandate and providing appropriate resources. While any outside mediation UN role in Afghanistan will necessarily be limited in breadth and scale, if individual governments dominate and undermine the UN by blocking it from interacting with the Taliban, glaring flaws in the world body will eventually emerge.

Fourth, rather than using humanitarian-only response strategies in Afghanistan, it is critical to maintaining a focus on the interconnections of humanitarian, developmental, and peace concerns. In responding to the Afghan crisis, the humanitarian-development-peace nexus provides a powerful foundation for developing more integrated methods that break down the international aid system's traditional silos. To address the country's multi-dimensional challenges and the complex operating environment without exacerbating assistance dependency, bold and new forms of financing will be required to meet humanitarian and development requirements at scale.

The UN Development Programme announced in October the establishment of a People's Economy Fund, which will offer cash to needy Afghans and micro-businesses, bridging the gap between livelihood support and macroeconomic stabilization. While this is a positive step, more resources must be mobilized on a larger scale. The essential concepts of accountability, transparency, inclusion, and transitional justice, as well as trust-building, nation-building, and the rejection of impunity should govern a viable peace process. Positive peace necessitates societal transformation, and the peace process offers a window of opportunity to sow the seeds for this development. Linking grassroots and national processes through elected representatives, a structured consultation process, and/or effective mediation by civil society organizations; participation of men and women from all sectors of society in local and national dialogues,

and peace education and trust-building to prepare people for participation in the comprehensive peace process, as well as to transform a culture and mentality of war into a culture and mentality of peace. Multi-layered yet interrelated procedures at the grassroots and national levels, effective engagement of women and men, and peace education in schools are all essential building blocks for a sense of lasting peace. Furthermore, the transnational complexity of the Afghan conflict necessitates the participation of regional and worldwide communities in the search for a solution, at both the official and civil society levels.

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## **Nation is Indebted to: Dr Ramanand Singh**



Barbigha village in Sheikhpura district of Bihar is well known for the second largest idol of Lord Vishnu in the world. However, it also has a person who is a doctor and is truly serving needy and poor people of that area. He is Dr Ramanand Singh, MBBS.

Over the years, the reports of doctors cheating patients or charging exorbitant fees for medical care have increased. Many incidents also came to light during the start of the COVID-19 pandemic with patients paying exaggerated amounts to get a bed or essential medicines.

However, a Bihar-based doctor gives hope to poor to boost the image of the Doctor fraternity that is deteriorating in recent times.

An MBBS by qualification, the 68-year-old says, “My fees have been low since the day I started my medical practice. I used to charge Rs 5 while others charged 3-4 times more. But I became a doctor to serve humanity. He says, “My father is a farmer, and we have been practising this for generations. However, the facilities in our village during my childhood were poor. The infrastructure was in a dire state, and the residents suffered in terms of health facilities as well.”

Dr Ramanand says there were barely a couple of doctors in his village, and accessing medical services was a privilege. “The consultation fees charged by the doctors were high. Purchasing medicines only added to the expenses, as did the follow-up visits,” he says.

Dr Ramanand Singh a bright student in his academic years, decided to use his talent to help the poor early on. “When I had to choose higher studies, most of my fellow students were selecting a career in engineering or other fields.



I decided to take a different career path. I opted to study medical sciences as it would allow me to work on the ground and directly help the people in need within my hometown. My skills and knowledge would benefit the masses in a true sense,” says Dr Ramanand Singh.

The doctor graduated in 1986 and set up a small clinic offering treatment as a general physician for Rs 5.

In the early days, Dr Ramanand worked alone attending to patients. His medical practice settled a few years later when he hired staff to assist him. He also started conducting various medical camps across the district.

During his visits, Dr Ramanand often came across patients who could not afford medical treatment. “I visited remote areas where people struggled to make ends meet. I treated them for free. On some occasions, patients returned for follow-ups, and I learned that they were not following the prescriptions as advised. When inquired, they used to inform me of being unable to afford the medical costs,” he explains, adding that it was then that he started paying for their medicinal expenses as well.

“Occasionally, I even offered money to buy them food or groceries,” he says.

Slowly, the locals learned about his philanthropic ways, and the patient flow increased.

Dr Ramanand says that his method of offering medical treatment has remained unchanged over the past three decades. His day starts at 8 am and continues until 8 pm.

Today, Dr Ramanand treats about 300 patients a day, including people from neighbouring districts like Alava, Navada, Patna, Nalanda, Jamui, Lakhsaria and others.

Anand Kumar, one of his patients over the past 20 years, says, “There were only a couple of doctors when Dr Ramanand started his medical practice, and patients had exceptional faith in him. In 2003, I visited him to treat a skin-related ailment, and his treatment helped me recover.”

The 62-year-old adds that a few doctors in the town start the medical treatment without seeking detailed information about the health complaints from their patients. “But Dr Ramanand ensures listening carefully to all the health issues, understands the symptoms and guarantees the best line of treatment,” he adds.

His fee remains low compared to his competitors. His staff has increased to about 15 personnel. To meet overhead costs, now his fee is Rs 50 only.

However, Dr Ramanand does not believe that imposing low consultation charges or offering free medical treatment are the reasons for his patients visiting him. “If that were the case, the patients would not spend Rs 300 travelling far distances for a check-up. They surely have faith in me and benefit from my medical advice,” he adds.

The fees charged to the patients can cover the operational expenses of the clinic alone.

Dr Singh says “I try to deliver to the best of my abilities. Social work has earned me respect and a reputation in society. I am glad about such non-monetary rewards,” he adds.

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