

THE GROWING SCHISM BETWEEN THE TTP AND JuA

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INTRODUCTION

In early 2024, the proscribed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) unveiled its new administrative framework for the year, by and large, mirroring the structure of the Afghan Taliban. Notably, following a meeting convened by the TTP *shura* (leadership council) on January 16, two Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JuA) leaders were demoted from their positions ascribed to them in the first week of January, as per the report of *The Khorasan Diary*. JuA is recognised as one of the most formidable factions within the TTP and has been in the news due to its sporadic skirmishes with the umbrella group. For instance, in January 2023, one of the demoted JuA commanders, Sarbakaf Mohmand, claimed responsibility for the Peshawar mosque attack on behalf of the TTP, which had resulted in the death of over 100 individuals, making it one of the bloodiest incidents in the annals of Pakistan's extremism. The TTP-central spokesperson, Muhammad Khurasani, distanced the group from the attack, stating that it wasn't their policy to attack mosques or other religious places, while adding that those engaging in such attacks could face punitive action under

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the TTP's policy.¹ Sarbakaf, taking credit on X, had said that the act of terror was to avenge the death of JuA chief, Omar Khalid Khorasani, who was killed in Afghanistan's Paktika province in August 2022. The contrasting statements indicated a growing faction-fighting within the group. During the attack, Mukarram Khorasani (the other demoted commander) held a key position in the leadership council, while Sarbakaf served as the shadow governor for the Zhob division in the Balochistan province.

In the first week of January 2024, Mukarram Khorasani was appointed as an assistant to the head of the Military Commission (Northern Zone), and Sarbakaf was the shadow minister of welfare, from which they were demoted in the second half of the month.² Following their relegation, Asad Mansoor, a member of the JuA faction, issued a statement alleging that the TTP chief, Mufti Noor Wali Mehsud, had demoted them in an attempt to silence their demands for an inquiry into Omar Khalid Khorasani's death.³ However, in March 2024, *The Khorasan Diary* reported that both were reinstated to key positions. Additionally, several other JuA leaders were integrated into the TTP's structure, including Asad Afridi as the deputy head of the Kohat shadow province, Qasim Khorasani as a member of the Quetta shadow province's council, and Salman Mohmand as head of the Peshawar shadow province's economy section.⁴ This marks another phase in the TTP's and JuA's advancement towards reconciling their differences and mitigating the intra-group conflict, with the overarching goal of presenting a unified front against the Pakistani state.

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1. Riaz Khan, "Death Toll from Pakistan Mosque Suicide Bombing Rises to 74", *The Associated Press*, January 31, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/pakistan-peshawar-mosque-bombing-e632e0afc948bc0502f5dfbd19359c1>. Accessed on February 2, 2024.
 2. *The Khorasan Diary*, Twitter post, January 17, 2024, 5:47 pm, <https://twitter.com/khorasandiary/status/1747593907502727665>.
 3. "JuA Blames TTP Chief for the Killing of its Chief Omar Khalid Khorasani", *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, January 18, 2024, <https://www.satp.org/terrorism-update/jua-blames-ttp-chief-for-the-killing-of-its-chief-omar-khalid-khorasani>. Accessed on March 10, 2024.
 4. "TTP Announces Resolution of Past 'Differences' with its Key Faction JUA", *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, March 11, 2024, <https://www.satp.org/terrorism-update/ttp-announces-resolution-of-past-%E2%80%9Cdifferences%E2%80%9D-with-its-key-faction-jua>. Accessed on March 12, 2024.

In the light of these developments, this article seeks to explore the infighting between the two factions by tracing the JuA's origins, its evolving alliances and tactics, its ability to navigate the chequered history of militancy in Pakistan and retain influence within the TTP fold, despite past defections and ambitious objectives. The objective of the article is to refocus attention on the schism between the TTP and JuA, to assess the latter's potential future trajectory, and its ramifications for both the TTP and Pakistan's security landscape.

JUA'S GENESIS AND ITS PATH TO INFAMY

Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, which translates as "Assembly of the Free" was established by Abdul Wali, better known by his *nom de guerre*, Omar Khalid Khurasani, when he split from the TTP in 2014 over disagreements with its then-leader, Mullah Fazlullah. Fazlullah was the first non-Mehsud to get anointed as the TTP's *emir*, representing a marked departure from the group's traditional leadership base, which had historically been held by the influential Mehsud tribe. This, along with his policies of causing intense ructions and perceived inability to hold sway over the coalition of Taliban factions, had been a cause of consternation among the group members. Although Fazlullah's leadership indubitably contributed to the split, a series of defections at that time may have provided Khurasani the impetus to assert more autonomy in his own right.

According to *Dawn*, Khurasani was ousted by Fazlullah due to the former's alleged conspiracies against the Afghan Taliban, and his connections with shadow militant organisations.⁵ Ehsanullah Ehsan, formerly the TTP's central spokesperson, assumed the role of the JuA's spokesperson, with TTP commanders from Bajaur, Orakzai, Mohmand, Charsadda, Khyber, Peshawar, and Swat joining hands with the JuA. Maulana Qasim Khorasani, the splinter group's then-*emir*, said that the TTP's leadership is "a victim of narrow, personal objectives".⁶ Notably, even after the split, the JuA retained the TTP name by incorporating

5. Zahir Shah Sherazi, "TTP Chief Mullah Fazlullah Ousts Commander Umar Khorasani", *Dawn*, September 7, 2014, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1130446>. Accessed on February 2, 2024.

6. Bill Roggio, "Taliban Splinter Group Jamaat-ul-Ahrar Forms in Northwestern Pakistan", *FDD's Long War Journal*, August 26, 2014, https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/08/taliban_splinter_gro.php. Accessed on February 2, 2024.

it as a prefix to its own organisation's title, resulting in the formation of the TTP-JuA.⁷ Previously, Khurasani served as the TTP chief for Mohmand Agency and was reportedly close to the Al-Qaeda chief, Ayman al-Zawahiri, as evident from the JuA's release of a graphic titled #Happy9/11, which celebrated the 13th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks.⁸ Khurasani, driven by lofty ambitions, sought to overthrow the Pakistan Army, enforce the *Sharia*, acquire Pakistan's nuclear weapons to defend Islam and establish a global Islamic Caliphate.

JuA at one point had also expressed its support for the Islamic State (IS), given that Daesh (Arabic acronym of the IS) was expanding its propaganda to South Asia during its inception, and many leaders from the TTP's rank-and-file vying for greater power had begun defecting to the Islamic State of Khorasan (ISK) in the hope of waging a greater war of attrition against the Pakistani state. As a matter of fact, the JuA and ISK were jointly linked in eight attacks between 2014 and 2018, with both developing a mutually beneficial relationship.⁹ The ISK leveraged the JuA's capacity to execute lethal attacks in Pakistan, while the latter benefitted from the former's geographical expansion by conducting operations in regions where the ISK had established a presence.¹⁰

After having broken away from the TTP, the JuA claimed its first suicide attack in November 2014, near the Wagah border crossing, which killed over 60 individuals, while also issuing threats to India. Ehsanullah told *Reuters*: " I have already conveyed it to Modi... that if our suicide bombers can carry out attacks on this side of the border, they can easily do it on other side of the border in India".¹¹

7. Animesh Roul, "Pakistan's Jamaat-ul-Ahrar: A Violent Domestic Threat", *Terrorism Monitor*, vol. 14, issue 18, 2016, <https://jamestown.org/program/pakistans-jamaat-ul-ahrar-a-violent-domestic-threat/>. Accessed on March 10, 2024.

8. Bill Roggio, "Jamaat-ul-Ahrar Celebrates 9/11 Attack", *FDD's Long War Journal*, September 11, 2014, https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/09/jamaat-ul-ahrar_celebrates_9-1.php. Accessed on February 3, 2024.

9. Amira Jadoon, "Allied and Lethal: Islamic State's Khorasan Network and Organizational Capacity in Afghanistan and Pakistan," *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*, December 03, 2018, p. 58, <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/allied-lethal-islamic-state-khorasans-network-organizational-capacity-afghanistan-pakistan>. Accessed on March 10, 2024.

10. *Ibid.*

11. Jibril Ahmad, "Taliban Group Threatens to Attack India Following Border Blast", *Reuters*, November 5, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN0IP0IL/>. Accessed on March 10, 2024.

Though another TTP-affiliated outfit, Jundullah, simultaneously laid claims on it, the JuA substantiated its involvement by revealing the suicide bomber's identity and asserting that the attack was to exact revenge on the Pakistan Army for "killing innocent people in North Waziristan".¹² In March 2015, the JuA re-aligned itself with the broader Taliban movement by merging with the Fazlullah-led TTP and Mangal Bagh's Lashkar-e-Islam to resuscitate the Movement of the Taliban and pose a united challenge against the Pakistan Army in the wake of Operation Zarb-e-Azb (2014).¹³ In August 2015, the JuA claimed responsibility for an attack, with the assistance of the TTP and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), to avenge the death of LeJ chief, Malik Ishaq; this notorious attack was targeted against the Punjab Home Minister, Shuja Khanzada.¹⁴

In early March 2016, the JuA also laid claims on a suicide bombing which killed two Pakistani employees of the US Consulate in Peshawar.¹⁵ In the same month, which would go down as the JuA's deadliest month, the splinter group claimed responsibility for the suicide bombing at Lahore's Gulshan-e-Iqbal Park, which killed over 70 and wounded more than 300, mostly women and children. Although the attack was targeted against Christians celebrating Easter, as evidenced by Ehsanullah's statement: "We have carried out this attack to target the Christians who were celebrating Easter. Also this is a message to the Pakistani prime minister that we have arrived in Punjab [the ruling party's home province]". However, the bombing also took the lives of many Muslims present in the park.¹⁶ This attack

12. Umar Farooq, et. al., "Taliban Splinter Groups Claim Wagah Attack; 60 Dead", *Dawn*, November 2, 2014, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1142006>. Accessed on March 10, 2024.

13. Bill Roggio, "Pakistani Jihadist Groups, Lashkar-i-Islam Merge into the Movement of the Taliban in Pakistan", *FDD's Long War Journal*, March 12, 2015, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/03/pakistani-jihadist-groups-lashkar-i-islam-merge-into-the-movement-of-the-taliban-in-pakistan.php>. Accessed on March 10, 2024.

14. Amir Mir, "Khanzada Assassination an Open and Shut Case", *The News International*, August 26, 2015, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/58605-khanzada-assassination-an-open-and-shut-case>. Accessed on March 11, 2024.

15. Asad Hashim, "Taliban Claim Blast that Killed Two Pakistani Staff of U.S. Consulate", *Reuters*, March 2, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKCN0W4185/>. Accessed on March 10, 2024.

16. Taha Siddiqui, "Pakistan Hunts Those Behind Attack That Killed More than 70 in Lahore", *The Guardian*, March 28, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/27/dozens-killed-in-blast-outside-lahore-pakistan>. Accessed on March 11, 2024.

likely prompted the US Department of State to categorise the JuA as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) organisation in August 2016. In February 2017, the virulent faction launched “Operation Ghazi”, named in honour of Maulana Abdul Rashid Ghazi (who was shot during the Lal Masjid’s siege in 2007), under which the JuA vowed to attack various entities, including legislative bodies, the military, intelligence services, secular political parties, Western-backed institutions and liberal figures.¹⁷ In November 2017, a JuA commander named Mukarram Khan parted ways with the group to establish his own faction, known as Hizb-ul-Ahrar (HuA). This decision, reportedly, stemmed from his differences with the JuA chief’s *modus operandi*, which involved targeting religious minorities, killing civilians, and kidnapping for ransom, among others.¹⁸

SHIFTING STRATEGIES AND ENDURING TIES

In February 2017, Ehsanullah surrendered himself to the state of Pakistan and made some startling revelations in the ensuing months. Firstly, he said that the self-serving leaders of the TTP and JuA employed a convoluted form of Islam, which they themselves did not follow, to deceive the youth into serving their interests.¹⁹ Secondly, he revealed that as counter-terror operations commenced in Waziristan, the greed for power and leadership resulted in the leaders fighting among themselves.²⁰ Thirdly, he alleged the involvement of Afghanistan’s National Directorate of Security (NDS) and India’s Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) in providing aid to these groups.²¹ In early February 2020, he fled from the military’s custody, alleging that the Pakistani authorities had violated the terms of his surrender, imprisoning him and his family. A few months later,

17. Mapping Militant Organisations, “Jamaat-ul-Ahrar”, Stanford University, Last modified July 2018, <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/jamaat-ul-ahrar-ja>. Accessed on March 11, 2024.

18. “Pakistani Taliban Splinter Group Splits Further Over Tactics”, The Associated Press, November 12, 2017, <https://apnews.com/general-news-339c89be9c49455f8436c68cb2292a5>. Accessed on March 11, 2024.

19. “Former TTP, JuA Spokesman Claims Terrorist Organisations Being ‘Used’ by India, Afghanistan”, *Dawn*, April 26, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1329364>. Accessed on February 3, 2024.

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*

in April 2020, Ehsan spoke exclusively to *Al Jazeera*, noting, “We cannot say that the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, Jamaat-ur-Ahrar or other anti-Pakistan groups are completely finished. They definitely have a set-up and perhaps they have gone silent as part of a plan. They are present in Pakistani cities and they have the ability to carry out attacks.”²²

During the U.S.-facilitated peace talks between the Afghan Taliban and the Kabul government, the TTP was gradually regaining momentum. Against this backdrop, the JuA and HuA merged with it in August 2020, thus, evincing Ehsanullah’s earlier assertions. Despite the merger, the factions reportedly diverged on some accounts, primarily over the allocation of income from specific nephrite and marble mines in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa’s Mohmand.²³ A few months after the merger, Pakistan proclaimed it had irrefutable evidence of India providing financial and material succour to UN-designated terrorist organisations such as the Baloch Liberation Army, JuA, and TTP.²⁴ At the same press conference, then-Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Shah Mehmood Qureshi (who is presently convicted for 10 years under the cipher case with former Prime Minister Imran Khan) went as far as alleging that India had facilitated the reunification of the JuA and HuA with the TTP.²⁵

It is pertinent to note that the JuA and HuA had split from the TTP because they wanted to emulate the Afghan Taliban’s organisational structure, i.e., to have a centralised organisation, with major decisions taken by an independent *shura*, exerting control over the group’s activities. Noor Wali’s reforms have prioritised ushering in similar changes, indicating an active reconciliatory policy, which seeks to redress the grievances of the other factions in a bid to

22. Asad Hashim, “Exclusive: Pakistani Taliban Down But Not Out, Says Ex-Spokesman”, Reuters, April 3, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/4/3/exclusive-pakistani-taliban-down-but-not-out-says-ex-spokesman>. Accessed on February 2, 2024.

23. Zeeshan Ahmed, “TTP Regroups with JuA, HuA in Afghanistan”, *The Express Tribune*, August 19, 2020, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2260213/ttp-regroups-with-jua-hua-in-afghanistan>. Accessed on February 2, 2024.

24. Baqir Sajjad Syed, “Specific Proof of Indian Terrorism in Pakistan Unveiled”, *Dawn*, November 15, 2020, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1590441>. Accessed on February 2, 2024.

25. *Ibid.*

reassimilate breakaway groups and retain them within the TTP fold. This was done to ensure the TTP possessed a superior structural and operational prowess, capable of taking on the Pakistan Army, akin to the period preceding Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad – the last counter-terror operation initiated by the state, which had the effect of severely paralysing the group.

In August 2022, Omar Khalid Khurasani, who had a \$3 million bounty placed on his head under the US' Reward for Justice programme and was earlier reported to be dead in 2017, was ultimately killed, dealing a crushing blow to the TTP. Khurasani and his two associates, Hafiz Dalwat and Mufti Hassan, who were killed alongside him, were viewed suspiciously within the TTP group due to their past allegiance to the IS and staunch opposition to any negotiation with the state.²⁶ Thus, to many, their deaths signalled possible internal rifts within the group over peace talks with the government, which were underway at that time. In the following year, a series of reports detailing the demise of JuA commanders and diverging claims by both groups came to the fore.

In January 2023, the TTP-Central distanced itself from the Peshawar mosque attack perpetrated by the JuA. In April 2023, four JuA commanders, reportedly, resigned from the TTP.²⁷ In June 2023, *The Express Tribune* reported that Sarbakaf Mohmand had died under "mysterious circumstances", possibly due to poisoning on the instructions of Noor Wali, as the former had positioned himself as an alternative to the TTP's incumbent *emir*.²⁸ Although Sarbakaf remains alive (as evidenced by the TTP reinstatements), he could very well have been poisoned by elements within the group whose interests remained inimical to his tactics. To add fuel to these speculations,

26. Daud Khattak, "Killing of Senior TTP Commanders In Afghanistan Strikes Blow to Militants, Possible Peace With Pakistan", *RFE/RL*, August 9, 2022, <https://www.rferl.org/a/pakistan-taliban-comanders-killings-talks/31980664.html>. Accessed on March 10, 2024.

27. Brian Carter, Kathryn Tyson, and Peter Mills, "Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update", September 7, 2023, Institute for the Study of War, September 8, 2023, <https://understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/salafi-jihadi-movement-weekly-update-september-7-2023>. Accessed on March 9, 2024.

28. "Terrorist Sarbakaf Mohmand Dies Under Mysterious Circumstances", *The Express Tribune*, June 20, 2023, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2422711/terrorist-sarbakaf-mohmand-dies-under-mysterious-circumstances>. Accessed on March 9, 2024.

Asad Afridi, serving as both a JuA commander and the TTP's shadow governor in Dera Ismail Khan, was dismissed from his position by the TTP in July 2023, for falsely attributing an attack to the TTP. The attack in question was an attack on a garrison post in Balochistan's Zhob district, which was orchestrated by the Tehreek-e-Jihad Pakistan (TJP), whom Afridi called a "paper organisation" and an "online phenomenon with no physical presence", suggesting it was merely a front for the TTP.²⁹ In the same month, the Karachi 'emir' of the JuA, Qari Mohammad Dawezi, was killed in Afghanistan's Paktika province (known to be a stronghold of the TTP).³⁰ In August 2023, Afridi was falsely reported to be dead.³¹ Interestingly, the timing coincided closely with his deposition from the position he held within the TTP and his vocal criticism of the TTP's central *shura* for the decision. Despite many of these deaths being proven false, they certainly imply that TTP militants killed or attempted to target JuA commanders due to the increasing rifts between them.

The latest development, prior to the reinstatements, which telegraphed a divergence of opinions between the two factions, revolved around the 2024 general elections. While the TTP vowed not to attack election rallies and restrict its attacks to the military and security forces,³² the JuA released a statement soon after, denouncing democracy and issuing threats to attack any individual, group, or institution associated with it.³³ Incidentally, the JuA's statement coincided with the release of a video by the Islamic State of Pakistan

29. Iftikhar Firdous and Riccardo Valle, "The Perplexing Credit Taking Dynamics Within Militant Organizations", *The Khorasan Diary*, July 13, 2023, <https://thekhorasandiary.com/en/2023/07/13/the-perplexing-credit-taking-dynamics-within-militant-organizations>. Accessed on March 10, 2024.

30. Giuliano Bifulchi, "Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, TTP, and Afghanistan's Turbulent Landscape", *Special Eurasia*, vol. 32, Issue. 7, July 17, 2023, <https://www.specialeurasia.com/2023/07/17/jamaat-ul-ahrar-afpak-terrorism/>. Accessed on March 10, 2024.

31. Shahabullah Yousafzai, "Key TTP Splinter Group Commander Killed in Afghanistan", *The Express Tribune*, August 17, 2023, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2431150/key-ttp-splinter-group-commander-killed-in-afghanistan>. Accessed on March 11, 2024.

32. Munir Ahmed, "Pakistani Taliban Pledge not to Attack Election Rallies Ahead of Feb. 8 Vote", *The Associated Press*, January 25, 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/pakistan-taliban-deny-threats-elections-db8ca74319bf5639c32c4ae7372e6a09>. Accessed on March 1, 2024.

33. "South Asia: Timeline (Terrorist Activities) - 2024", *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, January 29, 2024, <https://www.satp.org/terrorist-activity/southasia>. Accessed on March 10, 2024.

Province (ISPP), which criticised Pakistan's religious parties and cautioned the locals to steer clear of election rallies, largely echoing the JuA's sentiments.³⁴

MAPPING JUA'S FUTURE TRAJECTORY

The inception of the JuA had come at a critical juncture in Pakistan's militant landscape, when the army's first counter-offensive against the Pakistani Taliban, Operation Zarb-e-Azb (commenced in June 2014), was underway. This factor and dissatisfaction with Fazlullah's leadership may have provided Khurasani the latitude he required to defect for two key reasons. First, he may have done so to ensure his faction's survival in the face of a counter-terror operation; and second, to pursue his distinct objectives without being subject to the kind of challenges the TTP was plagued by. This suggests that during future counter-terror operations, the JuA might seize the opportunity, especially if there is a strong undercurrent of disagreements, to either defect to a perceived stronger organisation or distance itself from the TTP-Central, thereby shrinking the TTP's wherewithal.

In the case of the former, defection to the ISK is more probable, given their past collaborations, and an alignment of their objectives, particularly with regard to establishing an Islamic Caliphate and targeting of religious minorities. To add credence to this likelihood, the 33rd report of the UN Security Council's Analytical and Sanctions Monitoring Team highlights the linkage between the JuA and ISK by revealing that Sanaullah Ghafari -- the incumbent ISK leader -- who was reported to be dead in 2023, is alive and was "likely targeted while exiting a Jamaat-ul-Ahrar training centre in Kunar."³⁵ The Taliban's takeover in 2021 provided a free rein to militants of all hues to operate in Afghanistan, and the fluid nature of the militant web currently at play due to the overlapping of training centres and strongholds further complicates the security dynamics of the region. As Afghanistan's *de facto* head of the government (since no country has granted *de jure* recognition), the Taliban, under pressure from

34. Ibid.

35. Thirty-third report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2610 (2021) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities, S/2024/92, January 29, 2024, p. 17.

regional actors, may outwardly direct the TTP leadership to reduce its campaign of violence in Pakistan; however, such a move would result in potential disgruntled members getting lured by the ISK. It is pertinent to note that the rapid expansion of the ISK across the Af-Pak region, fuelled by its profuse dissemination of propaganda and its provision of higher salaries, has rendered it a tantalising outfit for militants on the lookout. Despite the Taliban's claims of weakening the ISK through their counter-terror operations, the latter has grown from strength to strength, as demonstrated by the ISK's implication in the Crocus City Hall attack in Moscow, in March 2024. On the other hand, breaking away from the TTP-Central would mean the JuA establishing its autonomy to stage high-value attacks to showcase its competence, as evidenced by its past attacks succeeding its split from the TTP. Infighting of this sort could weaken the TTP, impeding Noor Wali's ability to maintain a strong grip over the outfit and could even potentially spur other factions to defect.

Should accommodating the JuA fail to provide the desired dividends or if the JuA's demands outgrow the TTP's appetite to meet them, the TTP might resort to surreptitiously targeting JuA commanders. The repercussions of this will exacerbate the precarious security situation, especially because the JuA has repeatedly claimed responsibility for attacks on the pretext that they were to exact revenge for the killing of its members. If the TTP and JuA manage to uphold cohesion within the group, it will likely enhance the umbrella group's effectiveness, a development that would be antithetical to the Pakistan Army. Either way, both options run counter to the Pakistani state and signal a pressing need for the government to closely monitor these intra-group developments. Needless to say, such vigilance would prove advantageous for the law-enforcement agencies as they can exploit future cleavages within the TTP to weaken it.

CONCLUSION

Over the years, the JuA has deftly and distinctly managed to create a space for itself within the TTP conglomerate and in the larger militant landscape. Its assertive demands, coupled with its desire to function independently while also collaborating with a host of groups when

needed, are characteristic of its opportunistic and survivalist nature. The recent reinstatements underscore the TTP's recognition of the JuA's usefulness, suggesting that strategically yielding to the JuA has become imperative to maintain unity within the group and prevent any potential discord that could instigate the JuA from turning its back on the TTP. Therefore, it remains to be seen how both groups sustain the ongoing process of reconciliation to pursue shared objectives, such as overthrowing the Pakistan Army and implementing the *Sharia*. As the TTP becomes a growing regional threat, its interactions with the JuA are poised to play a crucial role in shaping the tenuous state of Pakistan's security. It thus becomes essential for India, as Pakistan's eastern neighbour, to keep a watchful eye on developments related to the TTP and JuA, given India's historical vulnerability to spillover effects of such entities.