

Chapter 1

Overview of Security in 2021: Critical Challenges and Recommendations

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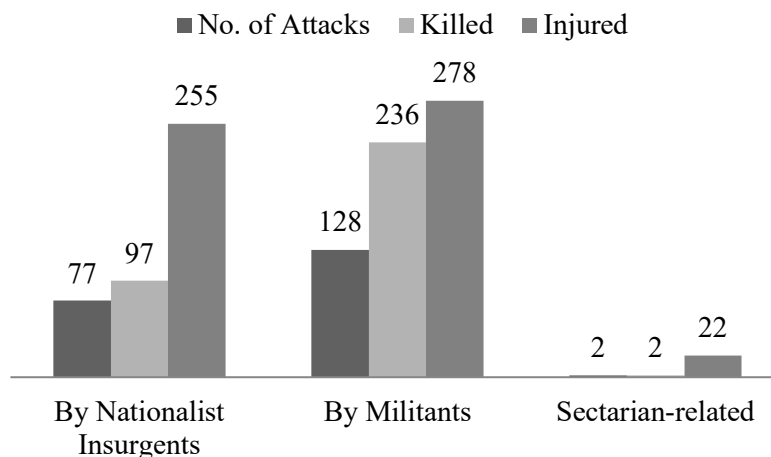
1.1 Overview of Security Situation in 2021

Up 42 percent from the year before, a total of 207 terrorist attacks took place in Pakistan in the year 2021, which also included five suicide blasts. Perpetrated by different nationalist insurgent, religiously inspired militant and violent sectarian groups, these attacks claimed in all 335 lives – an increase of 52 percent from those killed in such attacks in 2020 – and injured another 555 people.

The religiously inspired militant groups such as the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), local Taliban groups, and Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K), etc., perpetrated a combined total of 128 terrorist attacks – compared to 95 in previous year – which killed 236 people and injured 278 others. Different Balochi and Sindhi nationalist insurgent groups carried out 77 attacks – as compared to 44 such attacks in 2020 – which claimed 97 lives and wounded another 255 people. Meanwhile, compared to seven in 2020, two sectarian-related terrorist attacks were recorded in 2021 claiming as many lives and inflicting injuries on another 22 people.

Personnel of security forces and law enforcement agencies suffered significant casualties in terrorist attacks in 2021 including 177 dead and 218 injured; among those 177 dead were 65 army officials; 53 policemen; 48 FC men; 6 Levies; 4 unspecified paramilitary soldiers; and one Rangers official. Similarly, 126 civilians lost their lives and another 328 were wounded in these attacks. Meanwhile 32 militants were killed and another nine were injured, either in suicide blasts or security forces' retaliatory fire following some attacks.

Chart 1: Classification of Terrorist Attacks in Pakistan in 2021



Compared to 17 in the year before, the terrorists hit diverse targets of over 22 types in their attacks in 2021. However, they targeted security forces quite frequently. Out of the total 207 terrorist attacks recorded in 2021, as many as 137, or over 66 percent, targeted personnel, vehicles and posts of security and law enforcement agencies. Civilians were apparently hit in 16 attacks. Meanwhile, the terrorists targeted pro-government tribesmen and peace committees' members in nine attacks; political leaders/workers in seven attacks; government officials, institutions, and state symbols in another seven attacks; polio vaccination workers and their security escorts in six attacks; and non-Baloch workers and settlers in Balochistan in five attacks. CPEC/Chinese workers were also targeted in four attacks. A combined total of three attacks targeted Shia and Sunni community members. Other sporadic targets hit by the terrorists in 2021 are given at Table 1.

Table 1: Targets Hit in Terrorist Attacks in 2021

Targets	No. of Attacks	Killed	Injured
Security/law enforcement agencies (personnel, convoys, posts)	137	213	341
Education/institutions/teachers	2	0	0
Non-Bloch settlers/workers	5	12	11
Govt. officials/institutions/symbols	7	6	42
Power pylons/cell phone towers	1	0	0
Civilians	16	38	78
Shia religious scholars/community	2	13	21
Worship places/shrines/madrassas	1	0	1
Sunni religious leaders/community	1	0	1
Haqqani Network	1	1	0
Political leaders/workers	7	11	20
NGO / civil society members	1	4	1
Sikh community	1	1	0
Alleged spy	1	1	0
Health/polio workers, security escorts	6	5	2
Pro-govt tribesmen/peace committee members	9	10	3
Afghan Taliban/Others	1	1	0
CPEC/workers/Chinese	4	17	34
Former militants	1	1	0
Railway tracks / trains	1	0	0
Development, exploration projects, companies, workers	2	1	0
Total	207	335	555

The terrorists mainly used improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and direct infantry fire as primary attack tactics. Besides carrying out five suicide blasts, they employed IEDs of various types in 80 attacks and direct firing/shootout in 102 attacks.

Meanwhile as many as 15 terrorist attacks were incidents of hand grenade blasts. The terrorists also used other attack tactics, though less frequently, including three (3) rocket attacks, one coordinated gun-and-bomb attack, and one act of abduction.

As in the previous year, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa witnessed the highest number of terrorist attacks for any one region of Pakistan. A total of 111 such attacks happened in the province (including 53 in the twin Waziristan tribal districts alone) which in all claimed 169 lives and inflicted injuries on another 122 people. Indeed, North Waziristan has been a major flashpoint of insecurity and militant violence in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for the past few years. Compared to 31 in 2020, as many as 37 terrorist attacks took place in the district in 2021, or over 33 percent of the total reported attacks from KP, which killed 50 people and injured 27 others. Meanwhile 16 terrorist attacks happened in South Waziristan and another 12 in Bajaur tribal district claiming a combined total of 48 lives. Eight attacks took place in the provincial capital Peshawar killing nine people. Other KP districts where three or more attacks took place in the year included Bannu, DI Khan, Lakki Marwat, Lower Dir, Mardan, Orakzai, and Tank. Meanwhile a single attack targeting a bus carrying Chinese workers in Kohistan claimed 14 lives.

While over 71 percent of the reported attacks from KP targeted security forces and law enforcement personnel, another six attacks hit either polio vaccination teams or their police escorts. Pro-government tribal elders and political leaders were other prime targets, which were hit by the terrorists in a total of 12 attacks. The TTP and affiliated local Taliban groups perpetrated most of the attacks in KP, while Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K) province also claimed few attacks reported from South Waziristan, Peshawar, Kurram and Bajaur districts including a suicide blast.

Balochistan was the second most affected region by terrorism after KP where 136 people were killed and 345 others were injured in 81 terrorist attacks perpetrated by Baloch insurgents as well as religiously inspired militant groups. Different Baloch insurgent groups remained active in the province including the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF), BRAS – an alliance of Baloch insurgent groups mainly including BLA, BLF and Baloch Republican Guard (BRG) – Lashkar-e-Balochistan, Baloch Republican Army (BRA), and United Baloch Army (UBA) etc. These Baloch groups perpetrated 71 attacks in Balochistan killing 95 people and wounding 234 others. The attacks by Baloch insurgent groups concentrated in 17 districts of the province but most of them were recorded in Kech (19 attacks), Quetta (18), Sibi (7) and Panjgur (6 attacks). Similarly, most attacks by Baloch insurgents targeted security forces and law enforcement personnel (47 attacks, or 66 percent); these included at least six major attacks in each of which at least four or more security personnel, mainly FC officials, lost their lives. Other targets frequently hit by Baloch insurgents included civilians (7 attacks), government officials, institutions, and state symbols (6 attacks) and non-Baloch settlers and workers (5 attacks).

Meanwhile, religiously inspired militant groups such as the TTP and the Islamic State terrorist group (IS-K) and some other similar unknown militants were reportedly involved in as many as 10 attacks in Balochistan. These attacks caused death to 41 people and injuries to another 111 people. Most attacks by religiously inspired militants were high-impact ones including two suicide blasts in Quetta by the TTP which killed a combined total of 10 people and injured 50 others. A single attack by the Islamic State group killed 11 coal miners in Bolan district. Out of the total 10 attacks carried out by so-called religiously inspired militants in the province, six happened in Quetta, another three in Qilla Abdullah and one in Bolan. Four of these attacks hit security forces, another three civilians, while one attack each targeted Hazara Shias, a madrassa, and an event organized by a religious-political party.

In all, eight terrorist attacks took place in Sindh province including five in Karachi and 3 in interior Sindh (one attack each in Khairpur, Naushahro Firoze, and Qambar-Shahdadkot. These attacks killed a total of 13 people and injured 35 others. Six of the reported attacks from Sindh in 2021 were perpetrated by Bloch and Sindhi nationalist insurgents – mainly BLA, BLF and Sindhudesh Revolutionary Army (SRA) – which claimed two lives and wounded 21 people. In Karachi, the banned Baloch group BLF carried out two attacks against Chinese nationals while BLA perpetrated one attack targeting Rangers. The Sindhi insurgent group SRA carried out three attacks including one in each of three districts of interior Sindh cited earlier targeting security forces, a railways track, and political leaders. Apart from nationalist insurgents, some unknown militant group as well as a Shia sectarian group, Sipah-e-Muhammad Pakistan (SMP), also carried out one attack each in Karachi; while the attack by the former targeted a mini truck carrying family members of a Jamaat-e-Islami leader hailing from Swat, the SMP militants shot and injured a renowned Sunni scholar Mufti Saleemullah Khan, belonging to the Binnori Town seminary.

As many as five (5) terrorist attacks took place in Punjab which claimed 14 lives and injured 51 people. Two of these attacks were perpetrated by the TTP in Rawalpindi, which killed two and injured five policemen. Some unknown militants carried out an IED blast near the residence of Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) chief Hafiz Saeed in Lahore killing three people. Meanwhile, six people were murdered while five others sustained injuries by the firing of a religiously inspired extremist individual in DG Khan. In a sectarian-related terrorist attack reported from Bahawalnagar, two persons were killed, and 24 others injured in a grenade attack on an Ashura procession.

Two terrorist attacks were recorded in Islamabad in which the banned TTP killed three policemen and injured two others. (*See Table 2*)

Table 2: Terrorist Attacks in Pakistan in 2021

Region	No. of Attacks	Killed	Injured
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	111	169	122

Region	No. of Attacks	Killed	Injured
Balochistan	81	136	345
Punjab	5	14	51
Karachi	5	12	31
Sindh (excluding Karachi)	3	1	4
Islamabad	2	3	2
Total	207	335	555

1.1.1 Comparison

On the whole, 326 incidents of violence of different types – as listed in Table 3 – were recorded across Pakistan. Apart from 207 terrorist attacks cited earlier, these violent incidents also included 63 anti-militant operational strikes carried out by security forces and their six (6) armed clashes/encounters with militants; a combined total of 23 cross-border attacks from Afghanistan, India and Iran; seven (7) incidents of communal/faith-based violence; six (6) thwarted/failed terror plots; six (6) clashes between security forces and TLP protestors; five (5) incidents of ethno-political violence; one inter-tribal clash; one inter-militant clash/attack; and one targeted attack, whose motivation was not clear (*See Table 3*). These overall incidents of violence killed a total of 609 people and injured 1,045 others.

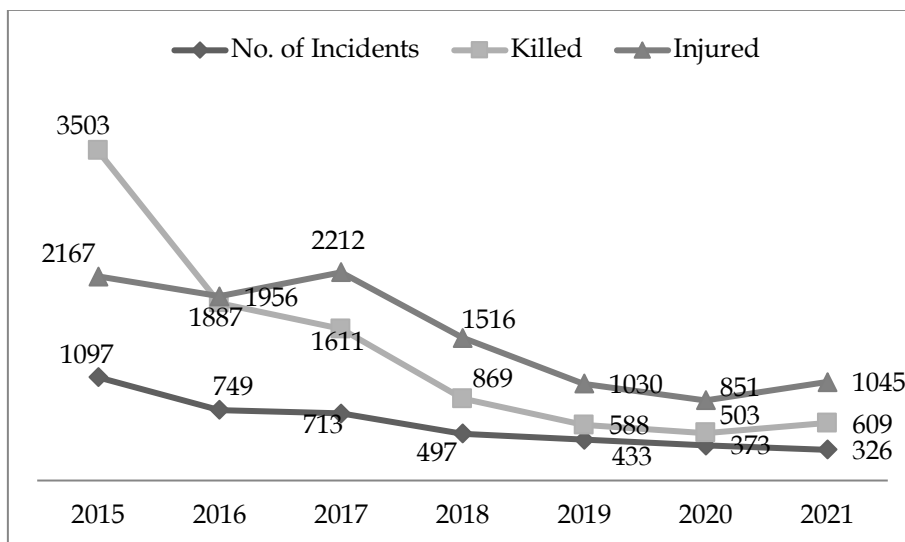
Table 3: Nature of Overall Incidents of Violence

Nature of Incident	No. of Incidents	Killed	Injured
Terrorist attacks	207	335	555
Political/ethnic violence	5	7	12
Clashes & encounters between security forces & militants	6	15	1
Cross-border clashes/attacks	23	16	26
Operational attacks by security forces	63	197	13
Inter-tribal clashes/attacks	1	11	15
Inter-militant clashes/attacks	1	1	0
Communal/faith-based violence	7	2	8
Plot/foiled terror attempts	6	0	0

Nature of Incident	No. of Incidents	Killed	Injured
Targeted attacks [not clear if by terrorists]	1	1	0
Protests/clashes with security forces	6	24	415
Total	326	609	1,045

Despite an increase in the number of terrorist attacks from the year before, the overall incidents of violence plummeted from 373 in 2020 to 326 in 2021. That decrease in overall violent incidents was largely contributed by a significant decrease in the number of cross-border attacks from the year before. However, the overall number of people killed in these violent incidents increased by over 21 percent; from 503 in 2020 to 609 in 2021. Similarly, the number of people injured in all such incidents of violence also increased from 851 in 2020 to 1,045 in 2021. (See Chart 2)

Chart 2: Comparison of Overall Incidents of Violence & Casualties (2015-21)



For the second time since the year 2009, the number of terrorist attacks posted an upsurge in the year 2021; the first such exception happened in 2013. Otherwise there has been a gradual decline in the incidence of terrorist violence and consequent casualties since 2009. (See Chart 3 and Table 4) The continuous operational and surveillance campaigns by security forces and police's counter terrorism departments (CTDs) and some counter-extremism actions taken under the National Action Plan (NAP) had apparently been contributing to the declining trend in the terrorist violence. But the reversal of this declining trend in 2021 suggests the militants have once again increased their presence and activities in Pakistan.

Chart 3: Comparison of Terrorist Attacks and Fatalities in Pakistan (2015-2021)

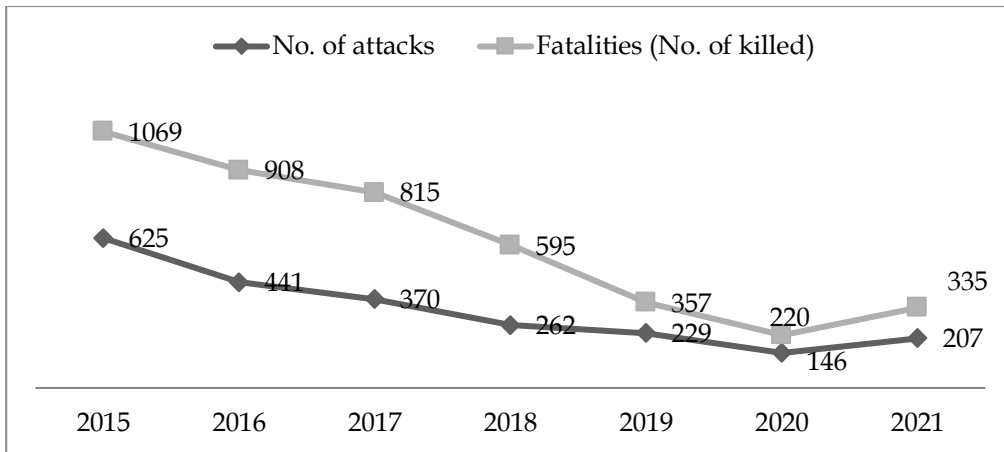


Table 4: Comparison of Terrorist Attacks and Fatalities in Pakistan (2009-21)¹

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%↑

While for the past many years, much of the militant violence in Pakistan has visibly remained concentrated in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces, the reported upsurge in terrorist violence in 2021 in Pakistan has also been greatly caused by an increased number of attacks in these two regions. A total of 192 terrorist attacks took place in KP and Balochistan (compared to 121 in 2020), which combined were also about 93 percent of the total terrorist attacks reported from across

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

Pakistan. The number of terrorist attacks in Sindh and Punjab in 2021 however posted a relative decline from the previous year.

On the whole, compared to 2020, the number of terrorist attacks upsurged in Balochistan by 93 percent and the number of people killed in these attacks in the province also increased by 43 percent. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the frequency of terrorist incidents increased by 40 percent and the number of those killed in these attacks also increased by 69 percent.

While in Punjab, the number of terrorist attacks posted a decline of 28 percent from the year before, the number of people killed in these attacks surged by phenomenal 180 percent. In Karachi, the incidence of terrorist violence fell by 67 percent and that of fatalities by 29 percent. In interior Sindh, the number of reported attacks remained unchanged from the previous year, but the number of people killed in these attacks posted a decline of 67 percent.

In Islamabad, two attacks happened in 2021 compared to none in 2020, which claimed three lives. (See Table 5)

Table 5: Comparison of Terrorist Attacks & Casualties (2020 vs. 2021)²

Province / Region	Number of Attacks (%Change)	Killed (% Change)	Injured (% Change)
KP	40%↑	69%↑	41%↓
Balochistan	93%↑	43%↑	60%↑
Punjab	28%↓	180%↑	14%↓
Karachi	67%↓	29%↓	52%↓
Sindh (excluding Karachi)	Unchanged	67%↓	300%↑
Islamabad	2 compared to 0 in 2020	3 compared to 0 in 2020	2 compared to 0 in 2020
Total	42%↑	52%↑	1%↑

² ↑and↓ represent increase and decrease, respectively, from 2020 to 2021.