

## *Introduction*

### THE PUBLIC LIVES OF SOVEREIGNTY

ON DECEMBER 16, 2014, SIX GUNMEN opened fire at the Army Public School (APS) in Peshawar. The gunmen were affiliated with the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (hereafter, TTP or Taliban), an umbrella organization that connects militant groups based primarily in the northwestern region of Pakistan. They killed 132 children, and nine teachers and staff. The attack is widely seen by the public as one of the deadliest in the country's recent history: "Pakistan's 9/11," as some have remarked.<sup>1</sup> Then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif called it a "national tragedy," noting that "a line has been drawn . . . on one side are coward terrorists and on the other side stands the entire nation."<sup>2</sup> Making his way to Peshawar, he exclaimed, "I will supervise the [counter-assault] operation myself. *These are my children and it is my loss.*"<sup>3</sup>

Sharif invoked the kinship attachment between a father and his children to harness permission for state action. He went on to remove a range of constitutional protections, including reviving the death penalty, advancing an amendment to establish military courts, and reforming laws in order to provide provincial intelligence agencies access to communication networks supposedly used by terrorists. His decisions had ample support from across the country's political spectrum. Most significantly, this moment allowed for an intensification of the army's assault operations against the Taliban in northwestern Pakistan.

The Taliban, for their part, insisted that they had attacked the school because the army was killing *their* kin. Muhammad Umar Khorasani, a Taliban spokesperson, explained, "We selected the army's school for the attack because the government is targeting *our families and females*. We want them to feel the pain."<sup>4</sup>

Both the state and the Taliban thus mobilized kinship feelings to legitimize their violence and cultivate consent for their actions. Since violence is

often taken to be a paradigmatic performance of sovereignty, in staking a claim on legitimate violence, both entities advanced themselves as sovereigns.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, while sovereignty is often considered an absolute and indivisible quality of the state, Khorasani's statements highlight that nonstate actors too evince a will to sovereignty.<sup>6</sup> Emotions play a crucial role in this process. As Sara Ahmed reminds us, "subjects must become 'invested' in and attached to the forms of power in order to consent to that power."<sup>7</sup> Both Sharif and Khorasani's practices of violence were accompanied, preceded, and followed by attempts to solicit symbolic permission from their respective audiences. Sovereignty thus appears to not be a "given"; instead it is a relationship that has to be cultivated, as claimants hope to convince an audience of unknown others about their legitimacy to "take life or let live."<sup>8</sup>

These negotiations often unfold in public culture. Robert Hariman describes public culture as the domain where collective public opinion about governance and social welfare is formed through the means of cultural productions such as musicals, magazines, social media, art, advertisements, and memoirs.<sup>9</sup> The APS attack, in fact, led to a proliferation of mediatized productions from the state and the Taliban alike. From music videos released by the Pakistani army marking the Taliban as "the coward enemy" to the Taliban mimicking the same genre to mock the army for being "corrupt," both sought to influence public opinion. Often, militant media productions are viewed solely as instruments for propaganda or recruitment, while the state's productions are considered strategic rhetorical interventions in the service of national security.<sup>10</sup> In contrast, I view these cultural texts as objects whose circulation engenders and produces relations of sovereignty. They form the discursive and affective repertoire through which claimants to sovereignty interpellate multiple publics, binding them to their respective political projects. Studying them can give us a glimpse into statist and militant conceptualizations of the political, the imagined political community, and practices of exclusion/inclusion. It can advance an understanding of the affective dimension of sovereignty as a *felt relationship* between claimants and their publics. These texts thus are not solely functionalist instruments of recruitment or propaganda, but undertake ideological and affective work that requires interpretation.<sup>11</sup> I, therefore, make them the object of my analysis, and build on recent scholarship that reexamines classic assumptions of sovereignty by moving it out of the exclusive domain of geopolitics and legality, and into cultural and affect studies.

Focusing on the postcolonial nation of Pakistan, I engage in a close reading and interpretation of the print and online cultural productions of two key

contenders for sovereignty: the Pakistani state and the Pakistani Taliban (which includes the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan and its splinter groups). I ask: What discourses do the state and the Taliban mobilize to perform sovereignty? How do they conceptualize the political and the political community? Who is included and who is excluded? How does affect mediate political attachments and estrangements? What kinds of publics are formed? What are the implications of these analyses for our understanding of sovereignty in postcolonial contexts? I dwell in particular on the aftermath of crises—post-9/11 and post-APS—as such events prod claimants to sovereignty to come out in full force to reassert their status. This includes engaging in spectacular forms of counterinsurgency attacks as well as powerful cultural campaigns. These moments are often accompanied by the re-citation of old othering figures, and creation of new ones: fictionalized enemies, objects/subjects in danger, and agents ideally placed to undertake rescue.<sup>12</sup> Crucially, the post-9/11 Pakistani state has witnessed a shattering of the fantasy of absolute sovereignty and territorial wholeness due to the unilateral drone strikes by the United States and the occupation of territory by the Taliban. We therefore observe enhanced efforts by the state to perform sovereignty.

By juxtaposing the state and the Taliban I do not intend to dissolve their differences; nor do I want to give the impression that I endorse the Taliban's brutal violence, or, for that matter, state violence. The book's aim is not to draw an equivalence between the state and the Taliban. Instead, it seeks to describe and interrogate the discourses and affectivities of each performance of sovereignty to argue that our examination of sovereignty must account for its cultural and affective dimensions. It was Raymond Williams who pointed to the usefulness of juxtaposing "hitherto separately considered activities" for cultural analysis, as it may lead to the discovery of patterns and correspondences, as well as discontinuities.<sup>13</sup>

My examination shows the entanglements and shared repertoire of these seemingly antagonistic entities. It unveils the complicated imbrication of sovereignty by highlighting how scripts of gender and Muslimness become the very means through which sovereignty is performatively iterated in Pakistan. Both the state and the Taliban recruit strangers into relationships of trust, protection, and fraternity by drawing on and reinforcing gendered hierarchies, kinship feelings, and normative understandings of Islam. Such relationships become the structure of feelings that permits the classic and everyday acts of sovereignty that we immediately recognize: violence and governance. Feminist scholars have long argued that constructions and

norms of gender and sexuality are crucial to the process of state formation and national belonging.<sup>14</sup> The gender and religious dimensions of political projects in Pakistan have therefore been well established.<sup>15</sup> What deserves scholarly attention is how these become the means through which the relationship of sovereignty is nurtured. Such an approach draws attention to affect and memory work, as well as the making of allied, counter- and ambivalent publics. It views political attachments as contingent and interacting with gender and religion, and also opens up the space for an exploration of political estrangements.

The Taliban and state texts are replete with gendered figurations, which I analyze to understand the constellations of ideas, affects, and histories through which relationships of sovereignty are established. These figurations include the paternal father, innocent child, mourning mother, brave soldier, resolute believer, perverse terrorist, and the dutiful or undutiful daughter. I have organized the book around them in order to study their political work. These figurations, of course, appear in multiple other contexts as well.<sup>16</sup> However, it is much more meaningful to untangle them in their local specificities of occurrence rather than to dwell on their aggregate versions.<sup>17</sup> Deconstructing these figurations exposes how the state and the Taliban foster attachment to their specific visions of the political by relying on and reworking prevailing attachments to particular scripts of gender and sexuality, normative Islam, the family, and imaginations of the past and future. The fantasy of absolute sovereignty is thus recreated through recourse to attachment to religion and family life. In a sense this study responds to Judith Butler's call to discern the role that attachment plays in binding subjects to disciplinary institutions, in this case the state and the Taliban.<sup>18</sup>

Whereas the Pakistani state identifies the territorialized nation as the primary site of belonging and control, the Taliban transform the Muslim community (*ummah*) into sovereign space, and control it by defining the correct practice of Islam.<sup>19</sup> Both target the body as the ultimate site for materializing their power, each drawing on discourses of gender, sexuality, and Islam to delineate who is permitted inside the political community and who threatens its integrity. Specifically, this book shows that relationships of sovereignty in the context of Pakistan are nurtured through performances of masculinity *and* Muslimness, a melding that I name as Islamo-masculinity, which gains affective intensity through kinship metaphors and memory work. The state, for instance, relies on discourses of heteronormative sexuality, Islamic warrior masculinity, and modernity to mark the "coward mili-

tants” for exclusion. It nurtures attachment to its project through the figure of the *jawan* (soldier) who invites trust, and even love. The Taliban, for their part, dispel the Pakistani state and army from the space of *ummah* by invoking memories of past national violence, particularly against other Muslims. This makes it possible for them to declare jihad on state institutions, a form of political violence that is traditionally not permissible against fellow Muslims.<sup>20</sup> To solidify their claim on the space of *ummah* and foster attachment to their project, the Taliban perform Muslimness through sartorial choices and adherence to religious rituals. Both the state and the Taliban mobilize women’s figuration as kin to hail paternal and fraternal publics which acquiesce to state/Taliban violence in the service of protecting their fictive kin. The figure of the “violated Muslim sister” in the Taliban archives, for example, binds male readers as “brothers” who experience humiliation for allowing the violation of their sisters. To avenge past injury and forestall future ones, this fraternal public is called on to join the Taliban’s political project. Women are also invoked to clarify the ideal styles of political attachment and gendered labor required for the reproduction of the state and Taliban. Accordingly, my examination of these figurations—the discourses that produce them, the affective publics that cohere through them, as well as their circulation and reiteration—allows for a theorization of sovereignty as an attachment that is nurtured through performances of Islamomascularity and is intensified through recourse to kinship metaphors, affect, and memory.

However, we also encounter moments when attachments are formed in ways that are not in the service of power. Indeed, Lee Edelman and Lauren Berlant invite scholars to uncover the politics that proceeds from the breakdown of attachments.<sup>21</sup> The book, therefore, dwells on instances of political estrangement by examining figures (such as melancholic mothers) that express ambivalent attachments to the state. In some respect, the Taliban too exhibit ambivalent attachment, as Pakistan emerges as an object of both promise and betrayal in their texts. Such reworkings of attachment signal sovereignty to be a relationship across multiple entities that is tentatively and contingently forged. It is performative, as its work must be undertaken repeatedly for it to sustain force.

Although this study focuses on the TTP, they are not the only group that has challenged the sovereignty of the Pakistani state in recent years. Prominent among other such groups are the *ulama*, who ground their authority in longstanding religious and scholarly tradition; the Islamists, who seek to compel

the state to institute their version of Islam; and imperial actors, such as the United States.<sup>22</sup> These groups are sometimes co-opted and at other times distanced by the state. However, the Taliban-state relationship warrants particular focus for a number of reasons. First, the ideological contestation put forth by the Taliban has, over time, gained widespread legitimacy. Pakistani cultural analyst Rafay Mahmood goes as far as to say that the Taliban's narratives "have supplanted those championed by Pakistan's traditional religious right-wing parties."<sup>23</sup> It is therefore important to analyze the Taliban's cultural productions, both to see them from a historical perspective—as an archive of a particular moment in the history of Pakistan—and to fathom how they condition present-day imaginations of nation, Islam, gender, and sovereignty. Second, groups such as the Taliban are often dismissed as "aberrations" or "irrational actors" due to their violent tactics. Cynthia Mahmood, however, notes that such terminology about perpetrators of violence perpetuates myths about them, rather than provides a grasp of the underlying conflict.<sup>24</sup> A close study of Taliban writings, however, shows that they draw on ideas that have been circulating in the South Asian context since at least the turn of the nineteenth century. They imbue new energy into them to advance their claims for political sovereignty. Their claims, then, are nostalgic and modern.

Finally, given that the Taliban aspire to control territory and have engaged in violence to that end, they are one of the most prominent nonstate performers of sovereignty in the context of Pakistan. Stathis Kalyvas argues that "insurgency can best be understood as a process of competitive state building rather than simply an instance of collective action or social contention."<sup>25</sup> Indeed, when the Taliban controlled the Swat and Malakand regions between 2007 and 2009, they engaged in state-like activities including collecting taxes, organizing policing, dispensing justice, conscripting fighters, and gathering intelligence. They mimicked the state in many other ways as well: they had their own flag, a *nasheed* (anthem), and judicial bodies. Crucially, the Taliban do not simply seek to terrorize; they also offer an alternate vision of everyday life and politics.<sup>26</sup> In this respect, I follow Faisal Devji and Talal Asad, who have called for resisting the pull to exceptionalize militants, and instead posit nonpathologizing rationales for militant violence.<sup>27</sup> In doing so, they read militant actions alongside other forms of political action. In particular, Asad observes that "The destruction of human beings and their ways of life . . . has been integral to the formation of modern society. Because every political founding and every commitment to political

immortality is rooted in violence, it can be suggested that in an important sense modern terrorists belong to the same universe as democratic states waging wars.”<sup>28</sup> Through this book, thus, I open up a hitherto understudied space that reveals correspondences in state and militant performances of sovereignty (their differences are patently discernable and well documented).

Such an approach to sovereignty focuses attention on public culture and the affective work of cultural texts. It calls for a consideration of practices in addition to violence through which sovereignty is performed and iterated. From a feminist perspective, sovereignty thus becomes a more useful analytic as it affords insights into how gender and sexuality constitute and are constituted through sovereign attachments. Yet its fluidity leaves room for the emergence of new assemblages in the future. Ultimately, *Sovereign Attachments* endeavors to excavate the imbrications of sovereignty with gender and religion. In this book, sovereignty acquires texture: it gains a history, is replete with figural nodes, emerges as performative, and has a cultural and affective dimension. The book thus offers directions for how we might study sovereignty by paying attention to gender, affect, and memory.

#### COMPETING SOVEREIGNTIES IN PAKISTAN

Studying Pakistan in the shadows of the War on Terror compels us to resist the default assumption that the state is the sole proprietor of sovereignty. Thomas Hansen and Finn Stepputat distinguish legal sovereignty from de facto sovereignty.<sup>29</sup> They note that while the former is grounded in formal ideologies of rule and legality, the latter materializes in the ability to kill, punish, and discipline with impunity, which can be performed by nonstate actors as well. The Pakistani state has had to contend with assertions of de facto sovereignty by militants and tribal groups, as well as the United States and China. The country not only has been at the forefront of the War on Terror as an American ally and proxy enforcer, but simultaneously has been termed a “terrorist safe haven” by the US Department of State.<sup>30</sup> Pakistan thus furnishes us with a distinctive site to study the enmeshment of multiple sovereignties in a postcolonial context.

While the book narrows in on the Pakistani state and the Taliban’s knotted performances of sovereignty, the United States’ imperial sovereign performances maintain an unstated presence.<sup>31</sup> To understand the entanglements of the United States with Pakistan, and the alliance of militants in the



form of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, we have to go back at least to the 1970s. It was during this time that the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, and American interest in the region grew as it sought to halt Soviet expansion. The Pakistani state was similarly geared toward curbing Soviet influence. US President Jimmy Carter signed a directive to covertly aid anti-Soviet operations in Afghanistan, staged via Pakistan. The US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) trained instructors and members of the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence agency (ISI), who in turn trained Afghan and foreign fighters, known as the *mujahidin* (literally, those who engage in struggle) to fight the Soviets. By 1986, under the Reagan administration, the operation was considered the largest in American history since the Second World War.<sup>32</sup> America and Saudi Arabia funneled billions of dollars to the *mujahidin* in Afghanistan. Most of the funds and weapons, however, went to groups that espoused extremist interpretations of Islam.<sup>33</sup> Such rigid interpretations were, in fact, viewed as the ideal bulwark against the communist ideology. In particular, the ideology of jihad, described as holy war, was instrumentalized and used to recruit Muslims across the world. Osama bin Laden was involved in this effort too, funneling the *mujahidin* money, weapons, and fighters. More than three million Afghans were displaced and crossed the border into Pakistan. They found a hospitable home in the tribal border regions of the country, as they shared ethnic ties with the locals. New madrasas were opened to educate the young Afghan refugees.

After the withdrawal of the Soviet Union in 1989, civil war ensued among the Afghan factions. Afghanistan was divided into fiefdoms, with warlords fighting against each other and switching alliances.<sup>34</sup> Refugees kept crossing into Pakistan. In 1994, a movement of students from the eastern and southern parts of Afghanistan rose to challenge these warlords and end the conflict. They called themselves Taliban (literally, students). While the movement was composed of ethnic Afghan Pashtuns, they had strong ties with Pakistan. Many of the members, including the Afghan Taliban leader Mullah (Muhammad) Omar (d. 2013), had taken refuge in Pakistan during the Soviet occupation and had even studied in Pakistani Deobandi madrasas.<sup>35</sup> At the time, both Pakistan and the United States sided with the Afghan Taliban. Pakistan's support was also linked to a potential pipeline project through Afghanistan that was of interest to an American petroleum conglomerate, Unocal.<sup>36</sup> By 1996, under the leadership of Mullah Omar, the Taliban took the capital, Kabul, and over time gained control of three-quarters of the country. They called their state the Islamic Emirate of



Afghanistan and enforced a rigid interpretation of *sharia* (translated often as Islamic law).<sup>37</sup>

During this time, bin Laden also established his base in Afghanistan and started launching attacks on Western targets. In 2001, the United States held bin Laden and al-Qaeda responsible for the 9/11 attacks and began military operations in Afghanistan with NATO forces. As a result, the Taliban government was overthrown in 2001. In this effort, the United States again sought Pakistan's support and its president, Pervez Musharraf, agreed, in exchange for military aid, training, and compensation. After the invasion of Afghanistan, the United States placed its preferred leaders in government and has continued to fight the Taliban. At the time of this writing, in 2020, the United States had recently completed negotiating the terms of its withdrawal from the country.

### *The Making of the Pakistani Taliban*

In the aftermath of the American and NATO invasion, several al-Qaeda and Afghan Taliban militants fled from Afghanistan to take refuge in Pakistan's tribal areas and launch counterattacks from there. They were initially welcomed by the locals, given that their shared ethnic code of *pashtunwali* called for hospitality and asylum. We learn from the biography of Baitullah Mehsud (d. 2009), one of the founding leaders of the TTP, that after the invasion he busied himself with transporting the *mujahidin* from Afghanistan to safe havens in Pakistan so that they could regroup and retaliate.<sup>38</sup> Mehsud's group at the time was called Tanzeem-e-Taliban.<sup>39</sup> Since the border regions of Pakistan were semiautonomous, in that the Pakistani government had let the local tribal chiefs manage the population with relative independence, the Pakistani army resisted engaging in military operations in the region at first. However, that changed with rising militancy and American pressure. In 2002, in an effort to eliminate al-Qaeda terrorists, the army deployed troops in Waziristan for the first time since Pakistan's creation.<sup>40</sup> In 2004, the United States also began its semicovert and legally questionable campaign of drone strikes.<sup>41</sup> In retaliation for military interventions in their own backyard and in support of their tribal affiliates across the border, in December 2007 several Pakistani militant groups formed an alliance, the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), under Mehsud's leadership. Anti-US and anti-state sentiments congealed in the form of the TTP. The Pakistani state banned the TTP in 2008 and has fought them ever since.

Although the Pakistani Taliban appear as a singular entity in Pakistani public culture, they are a heterogeneous group, composed of different sub-groups, and shifting alliances. Leaders change often, members leave and rejoin, and groups dissipate due to ideological and strategic differences.<sup>42</sup> One of the earliest splits happened in June 2008 when two former TTP commanders, Maulana Hafiz Gul Bahadur and Mullah Nazir, separated from the TTP to form Muqami Tehrik-e-Taliban; they wanted to focus primarily on supporting the Afghan Taliban as opposed to attacking the Pakistani state. The group has periodically cooperated with the TTP, such as when it came together in 2009 to form the Shura Ittehad-ul Mujahidin, and has entered into deals with the Pakistani government to establish autonomy in its areas of operation.<sup>43</sup> In May 2014, the Mehsud faction decided to part ways from the TTP and declared Khalid Mehsud its leader, forming the TTP-South Waziristan.<sup>44</sup> Their spokesperson, Azam Tariq Mehsud, explained that the split was due to a disagreement regarding the TTP's practices, which they deemed contrary to Islam: "We consider the bombing of public places, extortion and kidnappings un-Islamic, and since the TTP leaders continued with these practices, we decided we should not share the responsibility."<sup>45</sup> The group, however, rejoined the TTP in 2017.<sup>46</sup> Another faction led by Omar Khorasani left in 2014, calling itself the Jamaat-ul-Ahrar; a few years later it splintered further into TTP-Hizbul-Ahrar.<sup>47</sup> It is rumored that as of August 2020 both have rejoined the TTP. Increasingly the TTP has become a magnet for other militant groups in Pakistan as well. Some groups outside the FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas, which were semi-autonomous until 2018) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa regions, focused on sectarianism inside Pakistan and the Kashmir/India jihad, have expressed allegiance to TTP. Meanwhile, there are other niche, ad hoc groups, such as the Ghazi Force, that interlink with TTP but have their own targeted agendas.<sup>48</sup>

The Taliban factions also have varying levels of cooperation with other networks, such as al-Qaeda and now, Daesh.<sup>49</sup> In 2014, five commanders pledged allegiance to the Islamic State Khorasan (a Daesh affiliate in Afghanistan and Pakistan) and were dismissed by the TTP.<sup>50</sup> In July 2020, the TTP core group issued a statement in which it explicitly rejected the United Nation's claim that TTP might join the Islamic State Khorasan.<sup>51</sup> Some factions permit non-Pashtun and foreign fighters, others do not. While there is a sharing of knowledge and tactics between the TTP and their Afghan counterparts, there are also significant differences. The Afghan Taliban, for example, are opposed to targeting the Pakistani state. In con-

trast, most Taliban factions in Pakistan view the Pakistani state's support of coalition forces (United States and NATO) with suspicion and have taken it upon themselves to contest the state's authority through violence and cultural discourse. This remains a central point of contention and has led to fragmentation.

Given this fluidity, it is difficult to view the Taliban as a cohesive movement. However, it is possible to analyze the main constituent organizations' cultural products in order to understand their claims-making process. Indeed, the group continues to evince a will toward singular central authority even as it struggles with fragmentation. This is revealed by efforts such as the declaration of an amir to centralize command, establishment of consultative committees (*shura*), publication of a code of conduct, and institution of punishment for detractors. In this book, then, "Taliban" operates both as a signifier for the TTP, as well as a set of anti-state and anti-US ideologies espoused by multiple groups that sometimes operate under the TTP banner and at other times splinter off from it.

The Taliban, as will become clear over the course of this book, contest the political authority of the Pakistani state, and argue that since God is sovereign, He alone exercises authority over the social and political lives of Muslims. Any state or entity that does not acknowledge this is considered apostate. They thus view the Pakistani state as illegitimate and believe that the Muslim community requires a different political formation, *khilafat*, to materialize God's will on earth. They posit themselves as agents who will inaugurate this sociopolitical order. The Pakistani state, for its part, does not reject God's sovereignty; the Objectives Resolution of Pakistan, passed in 1949, for instance, declares the sovereignty of God as its first principle. However, the state operates within the Westphalian state model, limiting the role of religion and religiously-derived authority.<sup>52</sup> The state and the Taliban therefore interpret divine sovereignty in different ways that have implications for how they envision the ideal political community and its institutions.

Things came to a head in 2007 when a group of Taliban-affiliated militants led by Mullah Fazlullah tried to institute *sharia* in the Swat Valley and the Malakand Division. They established training camps for fighters and took control of media apparatuses such as radio stations.<sup>53</sup> Crucially, they also controlled the means of violence, meting out punishments and policing the public and private lives of those who fell within their purview. They set up their own courts, prisons, and police, known as the Shaheen Commandos. They even erected a parallel civilian bureaucratic system to provide social

services.<sup>54</sup> Said differently, the Taliban engaged in all the classic practices of sovereignty and, in doing so, emerged as a sovereign competitor on the national scene. To reassert control, the government launched military operations, followed by a peace agreement in February 2009. The terms of the agreement show how salient the control over means of violence was for the state, as it stipulated the following:

The Taliban will recognize the writ of the government and they will cooperate with the local police; The Taliban will turn in heavy weapons like rocket launchers and mortars to the government; The Taliban will not display weapons in public; The Taliban will not operate any training camps; The Taliban will denounce suicide attacks; A ban would be placed on raising private militias.<sup>55</sup>

In exchange, the state agreed to institute *sharia* in certain areas and promised to gradually withdraw the army. The peace accords were soon compromised, and clashes resumed in a few months. However, the accords show that the state relinquished aspects of its sovereign right to rule in order to take back control over the right to violence. During that particular historical juncture, the Taliban were a formidable claimant of sovereignty in Pakistan.

Over the years, the Pakistani army, with American help, intensified its efforts to contain the Taliban and has had decent success. Some analysts today argue that the Taliban are no longer a threat; others, such as Ayesha Siddiqa, Amira Jadoon and Sara Mahmood, note that such groups often dissipate only to reunite or align with other networks later, and that a TTP comeback cannot be ruled out.<sup>56</sup> Recent TTP activity suggests the same. In September 2018, the new TTP amir, Noor Wali Mehsud (aka Abu Mansoor Asim), published a “code of conduct” document to promote cohesion and central control.<sup>57</sup> The document provides guidance on permissible and impermissible targets, and outlines punishments for detractors. During 2019, the TTP circulated leaflets in Wana warning the police to leave the South Waziristan region in three days.<sup>58</sup> They issued another one to caution residents of Miramshah to avoid playing loud music and getting polio vaccines.<sup>59</sup> It also demanded that women not leave their homes without being accompanied by a man, and included a threat of violence: “We remind you [residents] that similar statements issued by Taliban several times in the past had fallen on deaf ears, but this time we are going to take to task those who violate the Taliban order . . . There will be no use of DJs, neither inside the house nor in open fields and those ignoring the warning will be responsible for conse-