

Militancy in Malakand: A Case Study of Molvi Fazlullah's Brigade and its Impact on the Area

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Abstract

It is generally believed that Malakand Division has witnessed unprecedented socio-economic and political losses because of militancy and terrorism. This article aims to analyze the impact of militancy with special emphasize on the Fazlullah led Shariah movement on the northerly Malakand Division of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The paper discusses about the background, emergence, tactics and the role of Fazlullah brigade in the rise of militancy and to document the social, economic and political costs of the Shariah movement led by Fazlullah. A descriptive method was used in which secondary sources in the form of journals, books and reports were consulted and reviewed while carrying out this research. The article highlights that Fazlullah, the militant leader of Tahrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) was intended to accomplish the mission of Sufi Muhammad to implement Shariah law through an unlawful and violent armed struggle in Malakand Division of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In this regard, the FM radio channel was brought into use to mobilize masses to challenge the writ of the state by establishing parallel court in the region. In the process, many civilians, government servants, and large numbers of notables were being killed and abducted for ransom. Besides, heavy losses were also reported in the form of severe damages to educational institutions, agriculture, livestock, poultry forms, small scale industries, and tourism. It is concluded from the study that militancy had a paramount negative impact on the lives of inhabitants of Malakand Division.

Keywords: Malakand, Militancy, Law, Taliban, Civilians

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Introduction and Background

Malakand Division is situated in the north of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province of Pakistan. It consists of eight Districts including Malakand, Dir lower, Dir upper, Chitral, Swat, Shangla, Buner and the newly merged Bajuar Agency. Malakand Division shares its boundaries with Kunar and Nuristan provinces of Afghanistan in the northwest while share boundary in the north with Gilgit Baltistan. Mohmand Agency is situated in the southwest while District Charsada, Mardan and Swabi are situated in its south.¹Malakand Division became the center of attention when a religious cleric naming Sufi Muhammad and his devoted followers initiated a movement in the name of Tehreek-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM) and pitched a protest camp in Timargara on May 9, 1991 for the implementation of Shariah law. In 1994, the TNSM head gave a call to his supporters to block the main highway of Malakand Division to cut its connection with the rest of the country to compel the provincial government for the implementation of Shariah law in the region. The movement was commonly known as Malakand insurgency of 1994 in which 11 activists of TNSM have been died and 25 other were injured in exchange of fire between police and the TNSM activists at Babajee Kandao in the District of Buner.²

In the year of 1998, when the United States of America (USA) launched its first air strikes on Afghanistan, Sufi Muhammad and his ideologues once again started protests against the US and pledged that they will target the US citizens, property and installation if they would not apologize for their attacks on Afghanistan. The 7th October 2001, the Americans air strikes on Afghanistan had further provoked the religious parties and other Islamist groups in Pakistan to start an anti-American campaign which has further sowed the seeds of hatred against US in Pakistan. In this regard the then TNSM leader Sufi Muhammad was succeeded to organize a volunteer force of ten thousand men to fight against the US in Afghanistan. Besides, TNSM has also provided a logistical support to the high profile Taliban commanders in Qandahar which was comprised of 60 trucks full of foods along with 1.7 million Pakistani rupees³.The untrained TNSM volunteer fighters fashioned with old guns unaware of the modern technological warfare were incapable enough to compete with US well trained army and majority of them were killed in air strikes and some were arrested by the Northern Alliance. On 16th November 2001, Sufi Muhammad along with Fazlullah and other TNSM volunteers had tried to come back to Pakistan while carrying illegal weapons were arrested in Kurram agency and jailed in Dera Ismail Khan.⁴After spending seventeen month in the prison, Fazlullah was released and took charge as *Amir* (leader) of TNSM for Tahsil Kabal, District Swat of Pakistan. He started motivating people towards the mission of Sufi Muhammad for the enforcement of Shariah law.⁵

The Rise of Fazlullah

Fazlullah the militant leader of Tahreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) was born in 1974 in the house of Biladar Khan in Tahsil Kabal, District Swat of Pakistan. He belongs to Babu Kar Khel, a sub-branch of the Yousufzai Pashtun tribe. His father was one of the closest comrades of Sufi Muhammad, then *Amir* of (TNSM) in Malakand Division of Pakistan. As inspired from his teachings, Biladar Khan sent his son Fazlullah to educate him in a *Madrassa* (center of religious knowledge) run by Sofi Muhammad naming *Mazahar-Ul-Ulum* situated in Kumbhar Maidan area of lower Dir. With the passage of time, their friendship converted into matrimonial relationship and Sufi Muhammad married his daughter to Fazlullah.⁶

In the end of 2004, Fazlullah established an illegal FM radio station in Imam Dherai Swat, and started to motivate people through his hair-raising sermons and speeches for the implementation of Shariah Law in Malakand Division. He successfully attracted public towards his mission through emotional speeches and some welfare activities. Gradually, while realizing his strength, he started a campaign against polio vaccination and female education with the statement that all these activities are repugnant to the basic principles of Islam. He also advised parents and guardian to abstain their daughters from getting worldly education because it leads towards vulgarity among woman folk. Besides, he motivated the people of Swat to burn their televisions and other instrument and sources of entertainment with the belief to please Almighty Allah. The people accepted his appeal and burnt their TVs, VCRs and CD cassettes in front of Fazlullah. Those who abandoned their CDs business were highly praised and congratulated by Fazlullah through his FM Radio.⁷ He also mobilized the people of Swat to put their contribution for building a seminary in the area of Imam Dehari Swat. It is because of his motivational speeches, the people generously assisted him and the local land lords donated four canal lands for the establishment of seminary and collected millions of rupees along with gold. Later on, when Fazlullah was convinced that he got a complete support of the public, he begun to challenge the writ of the government and turned his peaceful mission into a violent movement.⁸

Peuchar as Recruitment Training Centre for TNSM Activists

Peuchar is a mountainous area located in the middle of the forests situated in Tahsil Matta about 90 km from Mingora, the headquarter of Swat while bordering with District Dir and Chitral. According to the local residents and other intelligence sources, Peuchar training camp was established in 1988 or 1990. The training camp of Peuchar is reportedly established by the militants in the plane area on the top of the mountain with the purpose to recruit and train the militants. The camp was consisted of three or four caves which have close resemblance with Tora Bora of Afghanistan that was under the control of Al-Qaeda and Taliban commanders. According to some

locals, the Peuchar camp was established by a local resident Umar Rahman and his associates and he was the chief administrator of the camp.⁹ Later on, the camp was controlled by the militant activists including Ibn-e-Amin, and Shah Dawran. According to the locals, the camp was also joined by militants from other parts of the country and also by some foreign militants from Gulf States including Sudan, Bangladesh, Egypt, and Central Asians for military training. Some notables of the area has criticized the establishment of the camp and showed their concern about the growing activities of the camp in the area. Later on, the recruits and trained militants of the camp have started to challenge the writ of the government under the guidance and leadership of Fazlullah.¹⁰

Chupriyal Bank Rubbery in 2004

In 2004 at 2:00 PM, about 15 militants fully armed attacked the Chupriyal Bank in Tahsil Matta District Swat of Pakistan and looted more than 2.5 million Pakistani rupees. The armed militants also gunned down about five innocent people and successfully made an escape toward the nearest mountains. The police force succeeded in pursuing the militants staying in a Mosque and several people were died as a result of cross fire while nine militants including three Arabs were arrested by the police. The Arabs militants were shifted by the government in a helicopter to unknown place for investigation. The investigation revealed that the plan was made in Peuchar camp. The militants were in need of money to buy weapons to the newly recruiters and to provide them salaries because they were also paying salaries to the militants.¹¹

To strength his muscles and to implement Shariah law through force, Fazlullah send some of his core ideologues to Peuchar camp for military training. These people were trained by the Uzbeks militants whom were shifted from South Waziristan to Swat by Qari Hussain with the help of Ibn-e-Amin. The Uzbeks militants were skilled in detonating explosive materials and suicide attacks and transfer the skill of such activities to Fazlullah's brigade. When these recruits completed their training in Peuchar valley, they came back to Mingora and challenged the writ of the government and started their violent movement in Swat. They extended their activities to the rest of the whole Malakand Division.¹²

Besides, to meet the basic needs of their daily lives and to buy new weapons for the militants, the Fazlullah brigade started kidnapping the richest people and was also involved in car lifting cases in Malakand Division. The brigade also kidnapped the District Naib Nazim of Swat naming Malik Sadiq, Professor Altaf Hussain (BachaLala), Sultan-e-Room from Tashil Kabul Swat and two sons of Qari Mahmud, the ex-minister of livestock in MMA government. They were later released by paying millions of rupees to the kidnapers.¹³ They also committed some organized activities

including of taking vehicle from PTCL Divisional engineer at Charbagh Tahsil Khwazakhela. The brigade also looted the Hujra of Malik Azmat Khan (Member of National Assembly) in lifted his three Vigo vehicles. The ransom money was the main sources of income for the militants and the money was not only paid to the recruits as salary but also used as a mean of attracting new recruits to become part of the movement in the area.¹⁴ According to the provincial government and intelligence reports that the Al-Qaeda were paying salaries to 3600 militants in Swat from the last couple of months. These militant groups were divided into three categories and were being paid with some attractive salaries according to their training and militant capabilities. The first ranks of the militants were too much influential and were getting about twelve thousands to fifteen thousand rupees; the second category was getting about seven thousands to nine thousands rupees while the third category was getting about a fixed salary of three thousands rupees. According to Saif-ul-Haq; a Swat based local analyst, Fazlullah was established a close relations with anti-Pakistani state Agencies like, Raw, Mosad and Khad and was receiving financial aid from them.¹⁵

The Incident of Jammia Hafsa and Lal Masjid (Red Mosque)

After the *Lal Masjid* and *Jammia Hafsa* operation in 2007, which resulted in the death of hundreds of innocent teachers and dispels, abruptly changed the situation across the country and especially in tribal belts and Malakand Division. The extremists started war and challenged the writ of the government by establishing their own parallel judicial courts in their respective areas. Fazlullah pledged for taking revenge on the government for killing hundreds of innocent students and teachers in the operation. They started a series of sabotage activities against the government and pressurized the masses to accompany him in his mission of establishing Shariah law. Those who were not accompanying them were being assassinated or forcefully displaced and disappeared. During this period, killing of the security forces and law enforcing agencies including army, police and Frontier Constabulary (FC) personnel was legalized.¹⁶ The details of the sabotages activities and suicides attacks carried out by the Fazlullah's brigade on the security forces and police are presented in a summarized form.

Table 1: List of the sabotage activities by Fazlullah Brigades and his Supporters

S.No	Date	Nature and detail of the activities
1	May 3, 2007	Fazlullah's brigade committed their first sabotage activity by targeting the police station in Tahsil Matta of District Swat with rocket launcher in which one police constable was died and few others were seriously injured
2	July 4,	The brigade also attacked Mazhar-Ul-Haq, then DPO Swat

	2007	with the help of remote control bomb which caused the death of six innocent local persons while nine other got seriously injured including the DPO Swat
3	July 6, 2007	The brigade hits the police and frontier constabulary vehicles, in which four police including DSP Matta circle and SHO were seriously wounded
4	July 6, 2007	The brigade attacked a military convoy near Chakdara Lower Dir, in which four army personnel including a Major and a Lieutenant were died
5	July 9, 2007	The brigade gunned down a police man when he was on duty near the Char Bagh Police Station District Swat
6	July 15, 2007	A suicide bomber of the brigade attacked a military convoy in Sumbat village Tahsil Matta of District Swat. A total of sixteen army personnel and six civilians were killed while forty others were seriously injured
7	October 25, 2007	Another suicide bomber targeted the military convoy near Ayub bridge in Mingora Swat as a result thirty military men along with local people were killed while some other were seriously injured
8	February, 2008	A suicide bomber blown himself in the funeral prayer of martyr DSP Javed Iqbal in Kabul gulf ground, in which more than fifty civilians along with SHO, Habib Zaman and some other police constables were died and about hundred got seriously injured
9	June 2008	The brigade hostage a well-known politician Sher Muhammad Khan's brother namely Abdul Kabeer khan house in Tahsil Matta District Swat. Later Abdul Kabeer Khan and his son Tahsil Councilor Ali Muhammad Khan were killed including along with two other members of his family. The brigade also burnt the houses of Abdul Kabeer Khan and his brother
10	June 2008	The militants also attacked Muneer Khan another brother of Sher Muhammad Khan, senior vice president of Pakistan People's Party Swat and killed him in a blast of hand grenade
11	June 27, 2008.	The brigade raided on the houses of Mr. Sher Muhammad Khan (senior vice president of Pakistan People's Party Swat) and his son in the dark of night. Cross firing between the brigade and Sher Muhammad Khan continued in which the servants of Sher Muhammad Khan were

		seriously injured
12	August 26, 2008	The brigade besieged the house of Mr. Waqar Ahmad Khan (MPA) and later shoots his two sons and five security guards
13	August 27, 2008	The brigade also targeted Mr. Muzafar-Ul-Mulik (also known as Kaki Khan (Sub Divisional President, ANP) and his brothers. The brigade set fire on their houses as a result their houses and Hujras were destroyed with explosive materials.**

Source:* Fazal Rabi Rahi; “Aor Swat JaltaRaha” (Urdu), Mingora: Shoaib Sons Publishers, 2011, p, 46.

Source: **Saif-Ul-Haq; “Islam KaTasawar-i-Jihad aor Al-Qaida”, (Urdu) Mingora: ShoaibSons Publishers, 2011, Pp, 423-428.

The Fzalullah brigade killed such personnel on the plea that they are mercenaries of America and such forces are the enemies of Islam and they are proscribed.¹⁷

The Impacts of Fazlullah Brigade’s Insurgency on Malakand Division

After the revoke of the Swat peace accord by Sufi Muhammad, the government compelled and started operation *Rah-I-Rast* (The righteous path) against the militants on April 26, 2009 inMaidanDistrict Lower Dir. The operation was then extended to other Districts of Malakand Division.¹⁸The detail impacts of military operation and Fazlullah’s brigade can be discussed as following.

Internally Displaced People/Persons (IDPs)

To eradicate the safe havens of the militants and to reduce casualties, the army ordered the local people to vacate their houses in a short span of time. A large number of people from Malakand Division fled to other parts of the country to save their lives.¹⁹According to the report of Social Welfare Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, about 3.3 Million displaced people were accommodated in Mardan, Sawabi, Charsada, Nowshera, and Peshawar. The social welfare department assisted these IDPs in different areas of the province and also shared information and details of the displaced people with the provincial government.²⁰

The government set up 86 registration centers for the IDPs in order to register them for facilitation and security reasons. During the operation, the three worsened affected Districts in Malakand Division were Swat, Buner and lower Dir. The approximate numbers of the displaced people to different parts of the province is given as under.

Table 3: Registered IDPs with Social Welfare Department of KP in Different Districts

S. No	Districts	Families	Individuals
1	Mardan	252813	2074248
2	Charsada	25899	155394
3	Nowshera	25323	158643
4	Swabi	97036	586182
5	Peshawar	58283	373011
6	Kohat	3169	42758
7	Total	462523	3390236.

Source: Social welfare department, data management unit ERU-PR case of June 7, 2009.

Human Losses and Casualties

The wave of militancy has caused a large number of death casualties in the area including army personnel, police officers, social activists and civilians. In a press conference on January 8, 2010, in-charge of the operation *Raah-e-Raast* in Swat, Major general Sajjad Ghani stated that nearly 2000 militants have been killed while 800 have been captured.²¹ On February 28, 2010 the provincial information Minister Main Iftikhar stated that about 800 innocent people lost their lives during the militancy in Malaknd Division. A source revealed that during the operation in Malakand, more than 380 army personnel lost their lives while other 1200 got injured. Besides, 1900 civilians were died while 4000 people got injured during the terrorist wave in Malakand Division. The security forces also arrested about 3000 Taliban while 400 police personnel have also lost their lives. According to the official report of the government, the militants used 148 remote control bombs to target the security forces and civilians in Malaknd Division. The militants also targeted their opponents with the help of suicide bombers and more than 20 suicide attacks were carried out during the operation year.²²

Impact on Education Sector

After consolidating his position, Fazlullah and his brigade started a widespread campaign against female education especially in District Swat, Dir and Buner. In his speeches on FM radio station, he succeeded to convince the illiterate masses to raise voice against female education and also convinced the parents to abstain their daughters for getting worldly education with the argument that female education is the main cause of vulgarity and elopement among female. Later on, he extended this mission by forcefully shutdown girl's colleges and schools in the area. During the insurgency in Malakand Division, 231 schools were completely destroyed while other 192 were partially damaged. These schools were damaged as a result of cross fire

between the militants and Pak Army because they were stationed in these schools against each other and targeting their positions.²³The details of the affected schools are discussed in the following table.

Table 4: Completely destroyed School in Malakand Division

S .No	Districts	Boy's Schools	Girl's Schools	Total number
1	Swat	44	123	178
2	Buner	7	01	08
3	Upper Dir	11	17	28
4	Lower Dir	16	06	22
5	Shangla	06	0	06
6	Total	84	147	231*

Source: Social welfare department, data management unit ERU-PR case of June 7, 2009.

Table 5: partially damaged Schools during the insurgency in Malakand Division

S. No	Districts	Boy's Schools	Girl's Schools	Total School
1	Swat	71	43	114
2	Buner	15	09	24
3	Malakand	1	1	2
4	Upper Dir	6	0	6
5	Lower Dir	16	10	26
6	Shangla	18	02	20
7	Total	127	65	192*

Source: Social welfare department, data management unit ERU-PR case of June 7, 2009.

The given table shows the unprecedented damages to the educational infrastructure in Malakand region. During the insurgency, the militants had targeted approximately 423 schools in which 212 girl's schools were completely destroyed. The number of colleges at that time in the entire Malakand Division was 33 in which 6 colleges were completely destroyed while the remaining were partially damaged and other fewer remained safe. There were 9 polytechnic and vocational centers including 21 commerce colleges in which 9 were badly affected. The militancy has not only destroyed the educational infrastructure in the area but also affected the educational and learning process because the educational institutions had remained closed for a long period of time. The worst affected in this regards were the children of poor families while the wealthy families managed to take their children out of the conflict zone for better education. Even after the restoration of law and order, children from

poor families have to get education under the shadows of the trees or in graveyards instead inside the school buildings which were partially or completely damaged during the military operation.²⁴

Impacts on Tourism and Industries

Malakand is famous for its scenic and natural beauty especially the District of Swat is considered as the Switzerland of the Asian Sub-continent. District Swat, Chitral and Dir are considered as tourist spot not only for the tourists within the country but also an attractive tourist destination for foreign tourists. According to rough estimates, there were 1800 hotels, motels and restaurants in Malakand which were used by tourists and were considered as potential sources of income for the local people. Besides, there were large numbers of small factories including furniture, marbles, textiles, oil, rice, soft drinks, silks and cosmetics which were also playing a vital role in the economic prosperity of the Malakand Division. Before militancy in Malakand, these industries and hotels were considered as potential source of income generation because more than 30000 people were earning their income from these hotels and factories. According to the hotel association of the area, approximately a business worth of 9 billion rupees from 2007 to 2009 have been affected in Malakand Division. Besides, a total of 10 thousand rents a car were operating in the area and were also working as tourist guides but the whole of the business circle was disturbed by militancy in Malakand Division. As a result of militancy, more than two lac people have lost work opportunities in which more than 60 thousand were affected in District Swat.²⁵

Impacts on Agriculture

Malakand Division has a fertile green lands with organized and systematic irrigation system therefore agriculture is considered as a significant source of income for the inhabitants of the area. Specifically, District Swat is called the land of horticulture and large numbers of people are associated with horticulture. There are large number of orchards of peaches, plums, guavas, pears, apricots, apples, oranges and carrots. Besides, there are also farms of vegetables which produces, bitter-grounds, turnips, potatoes, okras, onions, oinks, radish, garlic and yams. These fruits and vegetables were not only used for their personal needs but also imported to the other parts of the country and abroad especially to the Gulf States.²⁶ All these productive and beautiful orchards were seriously affected during the militancy and military operation. During this time, people have left the area as a result maize, wheat, rice, and tobacco field were turned as barren land. The farmer board of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa estimated the costs of the fruit's orchards, vegetable farms and other crops in the six Districts of the Malakand Division and issued the details as given below.

Table 6: List of the Loss in the terms of Crops, Fruits and Fodder

S.No	Name of the crops spoiled	Damaged cost estimated
1	Maze crops	Rs=4229000000/
2	Rice Crops	Rs=1452600000/
3	Wheat Crops	Rs= 6317467000/
4	Vegetables	Rs=344500000/
5	Fruits	Rs=4679270000/
6	Fodder for Animals	Rs =12458820000/
Total Estimated damaged:		Rs. 5162726800000//=*

Source: Social welfare department, data management unit ERU-PR case of June 7, 2009.

Impacts on Livestock

Livestock is also one of the significant income generating sources for the inhabitants of Malakand Division. All the low income settlements and rural families are relying on their livestock for food and family budget. Besides, large numbers of people are directly or indirectly attached to the business of livestock especially the dairy and poultry farms in the area which are used for milks, eggs and meat to fulfill the needs of the people. Like other sectors, livestock was also badly affected by the insurgency. The farmer board of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa estimated that a business worth of 62 billion rupees was lost loss during the insurgency the detail of which is given as below.²⁷

Table 7: List of the Loss in the term of Live Stock

S. No	Districts	Cows	Sheep	Goats	Poultry
1	Malakand	28860	24050	48100	144300
2	Swat	74169	6180	123600	370800
3	Buner	32520	27100	54200	162600
4	Shangla	27660	23050	46100	138300
5	Upper Dir	40000	000	50000	105000
6	Lower Dir	42080	68400	86800	100200
	Total	245289	148780	408800	1021200.

Source: Social welfare department, data management unit ERU-PR case of June 7, 2009.

The above facts and figures suggest that Fazlullah and his brigade have caused unprecedented economic, social and cultural damages to Malaknd Division. His brigade not only displaced millions of people from Malakand Division but also

destroyed their houses, Hujras, schools, colleges and markets in the process of forced implementation of Sharaih Law in Malakand Division.

Conclusion

This study concludes that militancy led by Fazlullah with the support of his brigade in Malakand Division trace its roots to the incident of 9/11 that turned the peaceful environment of the area into chaotic situation. The US invasion of Afghanistan on Oct 7, 2001 not only provided a chance to Mullah Fazlullah to establish a seminary and FM radio station at Imam Dheri Swat but also played a key role in boosting the armed struggle for the implementation of Shariah law. In the initial phase of his mission, he imposed ban on musical shows, CDs cassettes and female education and later started ransom cases to also financially strengthen his group and remained involved in murders and timber smugglings. The security personnel including army, policemen and large number of civilians including notables and key stakeholders of the areas were brutally killed. Besides, whores and eunuch were also slaughtered and their dead bodies were hanged with the electricity poles in different squares of Malakand. The study also concluded that during the operation against the Fazlullah brigade in Malakand Division, about 3.3 million people were forcefully displaced to other parts of the country. During the insurgency the collateral damages includes the complete destruction of 231 and partial damages of 192 schools of both male and female in the area. Besides, tourism, small industries, agriculture, livestock and poultry sectors were badly affected by the insurgency which is yet to be recovered. The insurgency and its cost not only weakened the life standard of the people but also left a paramount psycho-social impact on the lives of the inhabitants of Malakand Divisions.

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