

INSURGENCY IN FATA: CAUSES AND A WAY FORWARD

Dr. Manzoor Ahmad *

Abstract

Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) has become a bleeding wound of Pakistan as the insurgency originated in the area a decade ago has now engulfed the entire country. The insurgency casts heavily to Pakistan in terms of losses of lives and property. The militants trained in FATA unleash violence against the security forces as well as civilians in Pakistan taking scores of lives every month in the country.¹ FATA is also "the most dangerous place of the world," as the militants having their sanctuaries in FATA not only operate in Afghanistan and Pakistan but some of them also threaten the security of Western countries including the United States (US).² The militants also invite wrath of security actions by Pakistani and NATO forces and CIA, in the area. Apparently, FATA is an area, hit by violence the worst in the country. On one hand, insurgency in FATA is a cause of sufferings of the people of Pakistan, as militancy badly hits their lives, property, business and commercial activities besides inflicting substantial losses to infrastructure such as schools, bridges, gas and electricity transmission lines etc. On the other hand, it increases sufferings of the people living in FATA caused by heightened search and security operations and air raids by Pakistani forces and drone strikes and other attacks from across the border.

The prevailing situation in FATA warrants an in-depth analysis of the problem. This researcher intends to explore the root causes of the problem and to suggest remedial measures. The study has been divided into four parts: the first contains a brief introduction of FATA; the second part gives a survey of the underlying and proximate causes of militancy in FATA; third part covers policy recommendations and; fourth part is the concluding one.

Key works

Militancy, militants, causes of militancy, FATA, Pakistan, Afghanistan, USA.

* The author is Research Associate at the Department of Politics & International Relations, Faculty of Social Sciences, International Islamic University, Islamabad.

1. FATA: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) lies on Pakistan's western border and covers an area of 27220 square kilometers and inhabited by a population of 3.17 million people (according to 1998 census). Its terrain is one of the most difficult in the world. Harsh environment and historical and cultural factors have made its populace one of the most rigid and toughest in the world. Love for independence and bravery are the identity of the area. FATA is traditional and tribal society where literacy rate is low, development is at infancy, and employment opportunities are rare. The society in FATA is governed by customs and traditions. Arms and weapons are considered as part of the dress of males and in some parts of the area every house works like an ordinance factory.³ Revenge dominates all customs and traditions as it lasts for decades taking lives of people generation after generation. Tribal fighting, feuds and animosities are the normal business of the day of the people living in FATA. Despite these facts, FATA was considered as one of the most peaceful area in the country just as Pakistan's western border was thought to be safe for about 55 years since independence of Pakistan. The authorities never felt a need to deploy armed forces either in FATA or Pakistan's western border with Afghanistan since 1947. However, the situation changed at the dawn of the 21st century.⁴

The incident of 9/11 changed the situation in FATA as it did in other parts of the world. On American pressure, Pakistani government deployed its troops on its border with Afghanistan and also launched military operations against suspected militants settled in FATA. The successive attempts – both military and political – to clear the area from foreign militants did not succeed and various imprudent policies pursued by Pakistani government sowed the seeds of hatred in the area towards the state functionaries and institutions including the armed forces.⁵ The reactionary elements took arms against Pakistani state, formed various militia groups and militant organizations under different banners, Tahrir-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) being the most prominent among them. These militant groups operate either in Afghanistan or Pakistan or in both countries. Reportedly, FATA provides sanctuaries to Afghan Taliban fighting against the US-led coalition forces in Afghanistan. American government wanted a full fledged military operation either by coalition forces or Pakistani troops in FATA to root out resistance movement in Afghanistan.⁶ However, Pakistani government did not cede to this demand. Alternatively, the US government launched, apparently with the help of Pakistani authorities, a campaign of drone strikes run by its premier spy agency Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), which has so far taken lives of over 2500 people and left hundreds others wounded since 2005. In reaction, as claimed by them, the militant groups particularly TTP started a war

against the state of Pakistan claiming around 50,000 thousand lives and leaving many more injured in the country.⁷

Peace and conflict resolution in FATA is in wider interest of the people living in the area as well as those in the entire country. Peace and stability is essential for socio-economic development and prosperity of the people. Peace and conflict resolution in FATA would not only pave the way for socio-economic development of the area but would also contribute to the prosperity of the entire Pakistan. However, bringing peace in FATA is a challenging task. Peace and stability in FATA is desirable. It is difficult but not impossible. It warrants a careful and objective analysis of the situation – a judicious diagnosis of the problem and an appropriate prescription to address it. The familiarity with the causes of the problem can help in finding an appropriate solution to it. The conflict in FATA has several underlying as well as proximate causes which are discussed in the following sections.

2. INSURGENCY IN FATA: UNDERLYING CAUSES

There are several underlying causes of ongoing insurgency in FATA. They provided a fertile ground for the rise of militancy which several internal and external factors accelerated in the course of time. The underlying causes of militancy in FATA include: political, administrative and legal vacuum; illiteracy, unemployment and underdevelopment, and; legacy of the past policies.

2.1 Political, Administrative and Legal Vacuum

Due to unique historical attributes of FATA, it was given an autonomous status in the federation of Pakistan at the time of creation of country and FATA's accession to it. Founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah had promised the people of the area that the state of Pakistan would never interfere with their liberties and they would be allowed to continue to enjoy their freedom as they did in the past. Thus, people of FATA were able to preserve and maintain their traditional and tribal liberties without any substantial government interference in their affairs. Their lives are being regulated under their own customs and traditions, instead of the ordinary law of Pakistan.⁸ Till very recently, political activities were not allowed in FATA and there was no effective political system at any level. Even the principle of direct election and universal adult franchise was introduced about a decade ago. Lack of political activities and related process has created a political vacuum in the area.⁹

As the name indicates, FATA is administered by the federal government through Governor (KPK) who also heads the FATA secretariat located at Peshawar. The Governor looks after its affairs through Political Agents (PAs)

who are the virtual rulers of the seven agencies of FATA. Each PA is assisted by Assistant Political Agents (APAs) and other staff. The Tribal *Maliks* and staff of *Khasadar* Force help run the affairs at the local level.¹⁰ The prevailing administrative set up was, however, not adequate to meet any challenge from insurgents once they challenged state authority in the area.

The Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) provides some remedy for legal vacuum in the area. It is decades old system and does not conform to the basic tenets of justice. Generally, it is termed as a draconian legal system which does not discriminate between the guilty and the innocent as it, under collective responsibility system, prescribes punishments to the families and tribes instead of individual culprits. It is too strong for the weak and too weak for the strong. In sum, it cannot provide justice in its modern sense to the people of FATA.¹¹

FATA is generally known as *illaqa ghair* (alien land) in other parts of the country. It means that generally Pakistani citizens believe that there is no law, no authority and no government in FATA. Any miscreant and culprit from any part of the country can feel secure once he enters and finds shelter in FATA. The ordinary law, police and other state authorities cannot capture any criminal fleeing into FATA – a land of lawlessness.¹²

The existing political, administrative and legal vacuum provided a fertile ground for nourishment of insurgents on different pretexts. Once they rose up, there was no effective political, administrative and legal system to challenge and curb their activities. There was no political system which could evolve an adequate strategy to pre-empt or prevent such threats at the local level. The administrative system was heavily relied on the role of Tribal *Maliks* who were mostly unpopular among the common people. Once the insurgents started killing them, the whole administrative set-up shattered in the area.¹³ Poorly trained and inadequately equipped personnel of *Khasadar* Force were incapable of facing the challenge from better trained and well equipped insurgents. The lack of proper legal system in FATA also helped rise talibanization. Once, different militant groups started establishing their own courts, which as they claimed, provided the people free and speedy justice according to the principle and teaching of Islam or *Shariah* Law, the people widely welcomed it.¹⁴

The common people were fed up with the cruelties and oppression they suffered at the hands of Tribal *Maliks* and lack of any legal, judicial and remedial system to help address their grievances. They wanted free and speedy justice which the notorious FCR did not provide with. Once insurgents claimed to have got people free from the clutches of Tribal *Maliks* and provided them justice according to the *Shariah* Law, they were able to get sympathies of common people which provided strong support-base to insurgents challenging the authority of state of Pakistan in FATA.

2.2 Illiteracy, Unemployment and Underdevelopment

Illiteracy, unemployment and underdevelopment are the hallmark of the area. FATA is considered to be one of the most backward and underdeveloped area of the county. The remoteness from the developed centers of the country, difficult topography, harsh local traditions, and imprudent government policies provided unfriendly conditions for investment in commerce and industry. Lack of appropriate public sector attention and investment in related infrastructure contributed to massive illiteracy, unemployment and underdevelopment which provided a suitable environment for the rise of extremism and militancy in the area.¹⁵ Once the insurgents started their activities, they were able to attract and misguide the illiterate people and use unemployed youth for their political ends.¹⁶ The underdevelopment also helped rise militancy in the region, as the insurgents were able to exploit the deprivations of the common people and promote their agenda without much interference or fear of state authorities.

2.3 Legacy of the Past Policies

The government's imprudent policies of the past also have a shadow on the present happenings in FATA. The successive governments used FATA as a sanctuary during Afghan war. The people of FATA are well known for their attachment to their religion – Islam – and its basic tenet *Jihad* as well as bravery and love to the motherland. Their innate qualities made them the soldiers of Islam. Pakistani authorities directed their passions and energies towards *Jihad* against Soviet Union since 1970s. The tribesmen were told that they were fighting for the glory of Islam and enforcement of *Shariah* Law in Afghanistan after its independence from Soviet occupation. Not only the religious sentiments of the local people were mobilized but foreign *Jihadists* were also brought in to the area. Later on, these elements were allowed to permanently settle in the area.¹⁷ The successive governments did not anticipate the probability that these elements could one day stand up against the very state which had nourished them and would put a demand for implementation of *Shariah* law in their motherland. The governments even did not formulate any policy to integrate the trained militants into the society and to bring them into mainstream. Their left-over strategy by the government meant that they could go anywhere and were available to be used by anyone on any noble pretext.

3. INSURGENCY IN FATA: PROXIMATE CAUSES

In the presence of underlying causes elaborated in the preceding paragraphs, the following proximate causes gave rise to the militancy in FATA which ultimately expanded into the entire country.

3.1 Reaction to Pakistan's External and Internal Policies

Soon after 9/11, on US pressure Pakistani government took a U-turn on its Afghan policy by withdrawing recognition of and abandoning its support to Taliban regime and decided to join US-led international coalition to combat Islamic militancy. It provided logistic support and other facilities to allied forces during its military operations against Afghan Taliban and also took action against several militant organizations within the country.¹⁸ In order to change Pakistan's image abroad, President Musharraf tried to impose his liberal agenda on comparatively religious-oriented moderate society of the country.¹⁹ His policies pursued under the name of "enlightened moderation" created strong resentment among the common people particularly the religious community. These actions compounded with Pakistan's new Afghan policy and anti-militancy campaign in the country particularly military action against foreign militants in FATA set the ground for anti-state insurgency in the country.²⁰

3.2 External Links of Militancy in Pakistan: the US Connection

There are a few external links of militancy in Pakistan. Among them, American connection is most important. In order to understand American connection to ongoing insurgencies in Pakistan, one has to have some understanding with regards to convergence or divergence of interests between the US and Pakistan in the region. Though both countries never had complete convergence of interests in the past, still both have been able to maintain partnership in military alliances such as Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) besides a bilateral security arrangement signed in 1959. Pakistan was motivated by its concerns towards India while the US primary interest had been to contain communism. In 1980s, both countries came closer when they supported resistance movement against Soviet occupation in Afghanistan. However, after Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, both countries fell apart due to divergent interests in the region. The US also imposed sanctions against Pakistan due to its nuclear program. With the end of the cold war and demise of Soviet Union, the gulf between the two countries got further widened.²¹

In the post-cold-war era, the interests of Pakistan and the US diverged in the following four important areas: 1) militancy / terrorism; 2) nuclear issue; 3) Policy towards India, and 4) relations with China.

Militancy / terrorism:

The US perceived Islamic militancy / terrorism a threat to international peace and stability and was determined to curb it.²² On the other hand, for several observers, Pakistan was hub of such activities because, as the Western media and

experts reported, Islamabad promoted militancy as part of its national policy in the region.²³ Even some of the militant activities taking place in other regions of the world, such as Far East, Middle East, and Europe etc. reportedly had links with Pakistan. Allegedly, several militants affiliated with *Al-Qaeda* also had some Pakistani connection.²⁴ Thus, both countries had completely divergent interests on the issue of militancy before 9/11.

Nuclear Issue:

The US had set nuclear non-proliferation as one of the main objectives even during the cold war and was determined to do its utmost to prevent expansion in the nuclear club. Contrary to the US policy, Pakistan was pursuing nuclear program to gain deterrence against Indian threat. Moreover, some elements within the government of Pakistan were also involved in providing necessary information and other assistance to help develop nuclear program by other countries including Iran, North Korea and Libya etc.²⁵

Policy towards India:

Washington perceived India a key strategic partner in the changed international environment particularly with rising Chinese power in Asia.²⁶ Islamabad, as ever before, continued to perceive New Delhi as its enemy No One believing that India posed main threat to its security.²⁷

Relations with China:

Pakistan's close relations with China had always been a cause of concern for the US. Particularly, this issue got further importance in the post cold-war era when the US perceived China a potential rival and an imminent threat to its dominant position in the world. Washington strived to build a series of alliances to encircle China in order to contain its growing power and influence in the region and the world at large.²⁸ The US wanted Pakistan to be part of this scheme. However, Islamabad had different strategic thinking believing China the most trustful friend and major supplier of its armed forces. In its bid to transform this relationship into a strong economic partnership, Pakistan worked on developing Gwadar Port with Chinese cooperation and also to provide Beijing an economic, trade and energy corridor through its territory by connecting Western China with Arabian Sea and giving it a shorter route to transport its goods to the world.²⁹ The Pakistani policy of providing China an outlet and shorter route to connect with West Asia, Africa and Europe etc. conflicted with American approach to contain Chinese influence and power.

Pakistan's potential to emerge as a great power and any remote chance of posing any sort of challenge to the US hegemony is yet another important factor determining the US policy towards Islamabad. Several Western particularly American scholars who advised Washington to "seize the moment" and prolong its dominant position in the world, have also listed several countries, including Pakistan, which could potentially pose any kind of challenge / threat to the US power.³⁰

Pakistan's large population, vast natural resources, one of the strongest armed forces, well developed nuclear capabilities and strong desire among its elites and masses for Islamic revivalism and universalism as well as to play leading role in the Muslim world make it a strong candidate of future's great power of the world.³¹ Any such power would naturally incline to resist and challenge any external power including the US which infringe freedom of the Muslim nations and plunder their resources. It would be quite natural for any hegemonic nation to curb such threats and so is the case with the US administration which seems determined not to let any such challenge flourish in the world. For these obvious reasons, Pakistan could obviously become a victim of American power provided the latter could find some pretext for any action against Islamabad.³²

In spite of its conflict of interests with Pakistan, the US could not take any aggressive action against Islamabad which still professed its friendship with Washington. The latter got this opportunity soon after 9/11, when it declared that *Al-Qaeda* was responsible for the catastrophic attacks on the US. The *Al-Qaeda*'s leader was residing in Afghanistan being ruled by Taliban recognized and backed only by Pakistan in the world. Washington was ready to wage a war against Taliban led Afghanistan and siding either with the US or Taliban was not an easy task to decide for Pakistani government.

Due to its strategic importance and historical links with the Taliban, apparently delinking itself from Kabul was believed to be quite difficult for Pakistan. According to some sources, Washington was thus ready to target both Pakistan and Taliban when it conveyed the famous "either with us or against us" notion, warning Islamabad after 9/11. Finding itself between the devil and deep blue sea, Islamabad opted for a strategic retreat to minimize the damage and decided to abandon Taliban and support the US-led coalition forces against Afghanistan.³³ Thus, Pakistan was able to protect itself from the wrath of the world's sole superpower. On American pressure/demand, Pakistan also provided the US the required logistic support and other facilities including concessions to collect intelligence and conduct secret operations in the country.³⁴

When an open war and flagrant action was not possible against Pakistan, the secret war remained the only viable option for Washington. Pakistan was pursuing several policies conflicting with the US interests which demanded some sort of action against it. Simultaneously, it professed friendship with the US and was a partner in international war against terrorism which protected Islamabad from any direct, open and aggressive action by Washington. This situation containing two conflicting realities warranted a secret war waged through Intelligence Agencies and Private Security Operators.³⁵ The concessions provided by the government of Pakistan helped the US to build a large apparatus of intelligence and private security operators (IPSO) in the country. This machinery was capable of performing various activities and tasks assigned to it according to the exigencies of time and places.

3.2.1 Supply / Demand and Import / Export Dynamics of Militancy

The US played a dual role in Pakistan with regard to ongoing militancy in the country. On one hand, it strived to create a local demand for insurgency in the country. On the other hand, it also served as one of the sources of supply of militants ready to fight in Pakistan. The task of creation of and supporting the militant groups was assigned to IPSO network while its diplomatic and political channels kept on creating demand for militancy within Pakistan.

There were several merits of creating demand of insurgency and militant groups in Pakistan. First; it was believed that militant organizations operating from Pakistan were in close alliance with *Taliban* and *Al-Qaeda*. They had fought against Soviet Union, and then Northern Alliance in the past and possibly would swell ranks of resistance elements fighting against US-led international coalition. Similarly, several militant organizations were also fighting in Indian-held Jammu and Kashmir (IJK).³⁶ In simple words, Pakistan was a source of supply of militants to the neighbouring Afghanistan and IJK. This export of militancy to both these countries could only be decreased by creating local demand for militancy in Pakistan. It would help ease pressure on occupying forces in IJK and would also deprive *Taliban* of reinforcements from Pakistan.³⁷ Second; once the demand for insurgency within the country were created, the movement of militants could be reversed. It means that Pakistan which had previously been a source of supply of militants to other areas, could now be exported / supplied militants from other areas particularly Afghanistan where pressure on American forces would further decrease. Third; the rise of militancy and attacks on security forces as well as civilians at public places could create discontent among people against all sorts of militancy and militant organizations which would help decrease public support for such activities in the future.³⁸ Fourth; the attacks on security forces, defense installations and other important places would show a weakness of Pakistani armed forces which would provide Western media and leaders a pretext for propagandizing against Pakistan's nuclear program. It could pave the way for taking any action against Pakistan's nuclear installation on the pretext that the nuclear weapons were unsafe in the hands of Pakistani forces and that the militants could easily capture and use them against humanity. The international media has published several reports either on the concern shown by the Western countries on the safety of these weapons in Pakistan or the US plans to capture / take control of these weapons in case of any exigency.³⁹ The activities of private US security contractors and intelligence officials in areas near to sensitive installations have also been reported in the press.⁴⁰ Fifth; insurgencies and instability in Pakistan could also help contain Chinese influence in the area. The militant activities in areas on pivotal route linking Western China with Gwadar port could easily disrupt any plan of giving Beijing trade and energy corridor through Pakistani territories. The ongoing disturbance in several areas of

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Balochistan and now Gilgit-Baltistan clearly suggests that this strategy is in operation by the foreign countries.⁴¹ Sixth; the creation and support of militant groups could give the US a bargaining position visa vise Pakistan. The US could ask Islamabad to stop supporting militant groups operating against the US or its allies either in Afghanistan or IJK in lieu of withdrawing its own support to such groups fights against the Pakistani state.⁴²

3.2.2 Ideological and Religious Rationale

Despite its all merits, creation of militant organizations against the state of Pakistan was not any easy task. After all, Pakistan was an Islamic Republic which was created in the name of Islam. It is one of the most important Muslim countries and is known as citadel of Islam. Not only the ordinary Muslims but also the Islamic revivalist organizations all over the world had strong sentimental attachment with Pakistan which, as they believe, could play pivotal role in Islamic renaissance.⁴³ Moreover, several *Jihadist* organizations / militant groups fighting at different places of the world found sanctuaries and other facilities in Pakistan. In simple words, to convince anyone to wage “*Jihad*” against a country known as “home of *Jihadis*” was not an easy task. It needed a major shift in Pakistan’s policy that could provide an ideological rationale for waging “*Jihad*” against the country.

The US pressure forced Pakistan to take a major policy shift soon after 9/11, which provided an ideological rationale for creation of militant organizations to carry out activities against the state and people of Pakistan. When the US government asked Pakistan to choose any of the two options – “either with us or against us” – President Musharraf decided to extend unconditional support to the US-led coalition forces in the war against *Taliban*’s Afghanistan.⁴⁴ Pakistan provided logistic support and other facilities including intelligence information and operational assistance to capture key *Al-Qaeda* leaders and operators in Pakistan. On the US demand, Pakistan also deployed its troops on its Western border to stop entry of Afghan *Taliban* and *Al-Qaeda* leaders into its territory. Later on, the troops were also used to launch military operations against foreign militants who had settled in FATA after the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. Pakistan declared itself as the front-line state in the war against international terrorism and became America’s major non-NATO ally. In return, Pakistan under President Musharraf received significant diplomatic, political, economic and military aid from the US and its allies due to Islamabad’s important role in the war against terrorism. However, these benefits to Pakistan proved to be quite small as compared to the losses suffered afterwards.⁴⁵

Pakistan’s alliance with the US in its war against *Taliban* and *Al-Qaeda* provided the much needed ideological and religious rationale for militant

activities in the country. The *Takfiri* and *Kharajite* beliefs put fuel on the fire. Anti-Pakistan elements within and outside the country used Islamabad's support to the coalition forces as a sufficient reason to launch an armed struggle against it. They used the following two equations for the purpose: 1) Enemy of enemy is a friend and friend / ally of an enemy is an enemy. Their ideological mentors argued that since Pakistan was an ally of the US in its war against *Taliban* and *Al-Qaeda*, so it was an enemy country.⁴⁶ However, they confronted an objection that *Jihad* was not permissible against a Muslim state, i.e. Pakistan. They found its answer in another equation. 2) If Pakistan-backed *Jihad* was legitimate against a Soviet-installed / supported government in Kabul in 1980s, then the *Jihad* against an American supported / allied government in Islamabad in 2000s would also be valid. The extremist elements believed that since Pakistan and its armed forces were supporting non-Muslims (US and allies) in their war against the Muslims (*Taliban* and *Al-Qaeda*), therefore, it was fit to be in a state of war against the Muslims. They argued that Pakistan's government, its leaders and armed forces were enemies of Islam and must be fought against in the holy war.⁴⁷ Yet they confronted another objection, i.e. attacking the civilians – the non-combatant ordinary people – had no justification. The *Takfiri* and *Kharajite* beliefs were used to address this issue. They argued that since common people can play an important role in formulation of government and shaping its policies, therefore, they were also responsible for the acts of their leaders / government. If they were silent and did not do anything to stop their government / leaders from aiding the non-Muslims in their war against Muslims, they were equally culprits and should be punished with. For *Takfiris*, such people were not true Muslims and waging *Jihad* against them was quite legitimate. If some innocent people and true Muslims become victims of "the *Jihad*," *Takfiris* argued, they would be martyred and rewarded hereafter by Allah Almighty.⁴⁸ The extremist and reactionary elements were indoctrinated on these lines and brainwashed in a way so that they could be used to raise arms against Pakistan's security forces.

The system of government, laws and constitution of the country were also used by the anti-Pakistan elements for giving ideological rationale and religious pretext for waging war against Islamabad. The extremist elements and their foreign mentors argued that Pakistan was created in the name of Islam but *Shariah* is not the supreme law of the country. They argue that constitution of the country was not truly Islamic and they do not recognize it. They further stated that democracy was un-Islamic form of government and instead there should be Khilafat in the country. They claimed that *Shariah* cannot be enforced in a democratic system which rests on capitalism – an un-Islamic economic system. These elements claim that only through armed struggle they can establish *Khilafa* and enforce *Shariah* in the country.⁴⁹

3.2.3 Strategy: Tools and Techniques

Initially, the US forced Pakistan to use its armed forces against the foreign militants living in different areas of FATA. Moreover, on foreign pressure, Musharraf government also cracked down on several militant organizations based in Pakistan and operating in IJK and Afghanistan. Most important among them were the local and foreign militants based in FATA who had close connections with Afghan *Taliban* and *Al-Qaeda* leadership. They were already resentful over government's new Afghan policy and became further annoyed when Pakistani security forces took military action against them.⁵⁰ They declared that they were left with no option but to raise arms in self-defense against Pakistani forces. They also carried out attacks on some foreign targets and key government dignitaries in Pakistan. Military actions in FATA and one in Lal Masjid, Islamabad led in escalation and expansion of militant attacks from FATA to other parts of the country.⁵¹ This is how Pakistan was pushed into a war which was never its own. This is the most popular version of understanding the ongoing insurgency in Pakistan. Probably, this is the main reason that a lot of people in the country believe that Pakistan's detachment from the US-led coalition could bring an end to ongoing *Taliban* militancy in the country.⁵² For them, the matter is simple and easy and could be easily resolved – just by saying good-bye to the US and its allies.

In fact, the ongoing insurgency and security issues in the country are far more complex and require multi-pronged strategy. It also needs an understanding of the complete strategy of the powers harbouring militancy in Pakistan. As first part of the strategy, the US dragged Pakistan into its war against the *Taliban* and *Al-Qaeda* activists. This had created the needed demand for insurgency by the *Taliban* supporters against the state of Pakistan. The second part of the strategy was to supply or supplement the militants to meet this demand. This was made possible by creating militant organizations / groups willing to fight against the state and the people of Pakistan.

The officials of the premier US intelligence agency, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), played a major role in creating or supporting some of the militant groups fighting against Pakistani security forces and attacking civilian population in different parts of the country. CIA in collaboration with Indian secret agency Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) and Afghanistan's intelligence agency Research and Analysis Milli Afghan (RAMA) and through a network of private security contractors inflamed insurgency in Pakistan.⁵³ They also used, directly or indirectly, different disgruntled Pakistani elements to raise these militant groups. Among them also included the detainees in Afghanistan and the captives of notorious Guantanamo Bay. They had gone to Afghanistan to fight along-with *Taliban* against the Northern Alliance or the coalition forces and were arrested after 9/11. Some of them had to spend the most difficult life in the prisons where

they were subjected to several types of torture, humiliation and hatred. Due to Islamabad's alliance with the US in the war, they believed that Pakistan was responsible for their miseries. They were naturally annoyed with Pakistani government and its security forces. The CIA and RAMA were able to transform their annoyance into hatred towards Pakistan and psychologically and mentally prepare them to take revenge and fight against Islamabad. When these prisoners returned home, they joined hands with the existing militant groups or formed new ones.⁵⁴ They started attacking Pakistani security forces more violently, expanded their activities beyond FATA and included civilians in their targets. Meanwhile, these groups made an alliance under the umbrella organization named *Tehreek-e-Taliban* Pakistan (TTP) in 2007.⁵⁵ Pakistani officials strongly believe that CIA and RAW were funding TTP through Afghanistan's RAMA and National Directorate of Security (NDS).⁵⁶ The US authorities have given a tacit approval to TTP Swat faction, led by Fazlullah, to operate from north-eastern provinces of Afghanistan and launch cross-border attacks on Pakistani troops and citizens as well as carry out terrorist activities in different parts of the country.⁵⁷

The CIA also hired services of private security contractors, such as Blackwater, for its covert war in Pakistan. Its agents had "close ties" with the TTP and *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi* (LeJ) and were "instrumental in recruiting young people from Punjab for the *Taliban* to fuel the bloody insurgency." These agents were also on a mission to "give credence" to the American view that Pakistan's nuclear weapons were not "safe." They strived to raise the militant group which could perform this "bidding."⁵⁸ Amna Masud Janjua, an activist struggling for the rights of missing persons, has recently told Supreme Court of Pakistan that Blackwater and foreign intelligence agencies were picking up young boys for terrorist activities in the country.⁵⁹ Reportedly, some "failed" suicide bombers revealed after being arrested by security forces that they were kept in isolation before and during their way to the "mission." It is the responsibility of their "handler" to lead the bombers, sometimes after administering them "narco-drugs," to the target place. These "handlers" also misinform suicide bombers about the targets saying that they were going on their "mission" against infidels in Afghanistan.⁶⁰

Some Pakistani leaders believe that CIA was responsible for carrying out terrorist activities at public places and killing of Pakistani citizens including high ranked military officers. Former ISI chief, Hameed Gul stated that CIA was behind murder of Maj. General Sanaullah in an IED blast in Upper Dir and several IEDs explosions in Peshawar in this year (2013).⁶¹ Meanwhile, the CIA also recruited Uzbek militants through security contractors (Blackwater) from *Mazar-e-Sharif* in Afghanistan to use them for its covert operations in the region.⁶² Reportedly, several Afghan and Uzbek militants have been found involved in various terrorist attacks in Pakistan.⁶³

The American authorities played a double game with Pakistan. On the one hand, they kept on putting pressure on Pakistani government to “do more” in its efforts to combat militant groups. On the other hand, the US intelligence apparatus present in the region was able to use Pakistan’s this role as a pretext for militant attacks by TTP on Pakistani people and security forces. Every action of one side was used for a reaction from the other side, thus bloodbath of only Pakistani citizens for a foreign agenda. Washington was successful in retaining or bringing into power in Pakistan the people and parties willing to support American-led war against *Taliban*.⁶⁴ Meanwhile, it supported the TTP leaders willing to continue militant activities against Pakistan. American CIA also continued to carry out drone strikes in FATA which militants used as their pretext to take revenge from Pakistan and attacking security personnel and civilians at various places in the country.⁶⁵ Generally, CIA targeted those militants who were not willing to fight Pakistani forces and considered to be pro-Pakistan. The CIA also avoided targeting the militant groups thought to be responsible for insurgency in Pakistan.⁶⁶ Meanwhile, if and when Pakistani authorities tried to strike a peace-deal with TTP, the US authorities strongly opposed it and intervened immediately to subvert such moves.

On several occasions, CIA killed some TTP leaders who had signed or showed their willingness for a peace deal with Pakistan. For instance, CIA had killed Nek Muhammad, a key TTP leader in June 2004, a day after signing a peace deal with Pakistan. After this incident, the TTP had backed out of the peace deal with Pakistani authorities.⁶⁷ In May this year (2013), the CIA killed Wali-ur-Rehman, one of the top most TTP leaders in a drone attack in FATA. Reportedly, Wali-ur-Rehman wanted to sign a peace deal with the newly elected government due to which TTP had expressed its willingness for negotiations. After his murder in a drone attack, TTP withdrew the talks offer and consequently intensified attacks against Pakistani security forces and civilians alike.⁶⁸ More recently, the US killed TTP chief Hakimullah Mehsud when he was ready to initiate negotiations with the government. The mainstream political leadership of the country criticized the attack and termed it as an attempt to the peace process.⁶⁹ These incidents suggest that the US does not want any peace effort to succeed in Pakistan and will continue to subvert peace initiatives made from any side of the belligerent parties.

3.3 Role of Other Powers

It is widely believed among the scholars in Pakistan that the country in general and FATA in particular has become a battleground for proxy wars of different countries of the world. Reportedly, intelligence agencies of dozens of countries are working in the area to promote their respective national interests

and subvert peace and stability in the region. Understandably, all neighbouring as well as other important countries of the world including China, India, Iran, Afghanistan, Russia, Israel, Turkey and some Gulf countries are part of this so called New Great Game in the area.⁷⁰ Some of these countries are responsible for providing support of various kinds to insurgents in Pakistan. India's role is most important among them.

India's intelligence agency Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) is very active in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. It uses several Indian consulates functioning mostly on Afghanistan eastern cities near to the Pakistani border. These consulates not only get secret information, but are also responsible for spreading propaganda against Pakistan and providing different kinds of support to militants in Baluchistan, FATA and other parts of the country. Several Pakistani officials and leaders have stated publicly that India was involved in promoting and supporting terrorism in the country. Obviously, RAW uses Afghan territory with the approval of both Washington and Kabul to create disturbance in several parts of Pakistan.⁷¹

Role of Kabul government and Afghan *Taliban* is also crucial in the ongoing insurgency in Pakistan. President Hamid Karzai, in an interview, tried to justify Afghan involvement and its support for various insurgent groups in Pakistan on the pretext that Islamabad was supporting Afghan *Taliban* in Afghanistan. So it is obvious, that officially Afghanistan is pursuing "tit for tat" policy vis-a-vis Pakistan and supporting Baloch and TTP insurgents in Pakistan.⁷²

What is the policy of Afghan *Taliban* towards TTP activities in Pakistan? This is a million dollar question and there are several answers to this question. Generally, it is believed that Afghan *Taliban* have nothing to do with TTP and latter's activities are not approved by Mullah Umar. They also refer several statements of Afghan *Taliban* in which the latter had tried to delink themselves from the activities of TTP.⁷³ On the same pretext, the people who vehemently oppose TTP in Pakistan openly support Afghan *Taliban*.

The nature of relationship between Afghan *Taliban* and TTP is quite complex and difficult to understand. Afghan *Taliban* can neither openly approve activities of TTP nor can completely disapprove its agenda. Despite Islamabad's alliance with the US-led coalition forces and its role to help topple *Taliban* government in Kabul in 2001, Afghan *Taliban* and Pakistan's intelligence officials had to maintain some sort of links and cooperation among them in the post-9/11 period. Openly supporting TTP would not be possible for Afghan *Taliban* because it could badly damage their relations with Pakistani officials. Simultaneously, they cannot disapprove TTP agenda as both of them share some common points of action. For instance, Afghan *Taliban* want enforcement of

Shariah in their country and they cannot oppose any claimant of struggling for the same cause in Pakistan. Naturally they would support such cause in other Muslim countries including Pakistan. Moreover, Afghan *Taliban* would also like to take revenge from and to put some pressure on Pakistani government and security forces in order to desist them from supporting US-led coalition forces in Afghanistan. As such, they would prefer to implicitly approve rather support TTP activities in Pakistan. The following facts also indicate that Afghan *Taliban* and TTP have some kinds of understanding and close connections with each other: a) TTP leaders recognize Mullah Umar as their supreme leader – *Amir-ul-Momineen*.⁷⁴ b) Afghan *Taliban* enjoy high respect and influence among TTP leaders due to which they have been playing mediating role in disputes between various rival militants groups.⁷⁵ c). Afghan *Taliban* strived to push TTP for negotiations with government of Pakistan.⁷⁶ d) Recently, Afghan *Taliban* denounced killing of Hakimullah Mehsud in a drone attack. These facts suggest that Afghan *Taliban* also play double game and secretly support TTP.⁷⁷

3.4 Pakistan's Response to Militancy: An Analysis

Pakistan has no clear and well defined Counter-Insurgency (COIN) and Counter Terrorism (CT) Policy and therefore, its response to insurgencies has been mixed and ambiguous.⁷⁸ It is not clear whether Pakistani leadership and military establishment want a negotiated settlement or military solution of the problem. In fact, Pakistan has used both options on different times and both half-heartedly. It neither sincerely attempted peaceful means to address the problem nor used military means whole-heartedly for different reasons. The peace deals were violated or withdrawn on foreign pressure and military operations were halted before complete victory over militants.⁷⁹ Due to this unclear strategy, the militants have been successful in expanding their influence and activities to other parts of the country.

3.5 Lack of Public Support to Campaign against Militancy

Public support is vital to win a war against any enemy and it is more so to defeat insurgencies and militancy within a country. The ongoing counter-militancy campaign run by Pakistani security forces lack popular public support in the country. There are various reasons to it. For instance, the religious pretext and ideological rationale used by the militants also attract public sentiments in various parts of the country particularly in some areas of KPK and Balochistan. Due to Pakistan's unclear and ambiguous policy towards militancy and half-hearted actions to eliminate various insurgent groups create doubts in the minds of the people. The role of media, civil society and some political parties has also been not supportive to attract widespread public support in the war against

militancy. Despite heavy losses suffered by the nation at the hands of militants in the country, still majority of the people including leadership of some mainstream political and religious parties believe and claim that it is not our war. They argue that Pakistan should quit American war and soon there would be peace in the country.⁸⁰ Unfortunately, this perception also exists among the ranks of the armed forces due to which the extremist elements and militant groups succeed in finding their sympathizers and aides therein. The sympathizers and aides within forces have participated or helped militants in several attacks including those on some important military places and installations.⁸¹

4. CONFLICT RESOLUTION: LOOKING FOR A WAY FORWARD

The conflict resolution in FATA is imperative for peace, stability and prosperity of the entire country. The objective analysis of the situation and detailed survey of the underlying and proximate causes is incomplete without suggesting remedial measures. No doubt, the problem is complex and multidimensional and no simple and easy solution can help address it. There is need to address both underlying as well as proximate causes of the problem. Since different factors and forces are directly or indirectly involved in the issue, therefore, a multipronged and multidimensional strategy would be needed to address the problem. The government needs to take short-term, medium-term and long-term measures to completely root out militancy from FATA and other parts of the country. Some of these measures are listed in the following lines.

4.1 Ownership of the War against Militancy

It is dilemma that the ongoing militancy has cost Pakistan over 50,000 lives and inflicted financial losses of more than \$100 billion but still most of the people including mainstream political and religious parties are not willing to accept the ownership of the war against insurgencies.⁸² Still these elements claim that it is an American war and Pakistan should come out of it which will bring peace and stability in the country. This approach cannot help address the problem.

In order to bring peace, stability and prosperity to our nation we need to understand the following facts. First, irrespective of the fact that what are its causes and how Pakistan was dragged into this war, we must acknowledge this reality that now it has become our war. It is no more an American war. It is a war for our own national survival as well as independence, security and territorial integrity of our beloved country. Pakistani government, media, civil society organizations, political and religious parties and other important segments of society must play their role to create national awareness and make a general

consensus on this issue. Second, insurgency and militancy is our problem and we have to address it. We need to find its indigenous solution according to our local needs and environment and we should not accept foreign dictates in this respect. Third, insurgents are our own people who have revolted against the state due to some misunderstanding or mishandling by the government and security agencies of Pakistan. We must do our utmost to bring these people back into our national fold.

4.2 Religious and Ideological Counter-Offensive

There seem to be no efforts on the part of Pakistani government and security forces to counter the religious doctrines and ideological rationale being used by the militants as part of their propaganda campaign to get sympathies in their war against the state and people of Pakistan. This is the reason that the militants are able to have soft-corner in the hearts of the common people, religious circles and some mainstream political parties. Due to the same inability of the government and security agencies, the militants have been able to infiltrate in the ranks of the armed forces on some occasions. This situation is far more dangerous than the militant attacks and warrants immediate remedial measures.

The government should launch a comprehensive and well-organized campaign to foil the militants' propaganda and counter their religious and ideological rationale. The government should organize lectures, workshops and training sessions for personnel and officers of armed forces and other security agencies, religious and political leaders, representatives of civil society and media organizations, and other important segments of society. The role of print and electronic media can be crucial due to their widespread popularity and reach to the people. Well researched and adequately prepared audio and video programs on electronic media can help dispel the propaganda of the militant and their mentors.

4.3 Administrative, Legal and Political Measures

In order to fill the administrative, legal and political vacuum in FATA, the government must take immediate steps which could help curb militancy on permanent basis. The most important of these steps should be to change the decades old administrative structure of FATA. The best option is to give FATA a status of a separate province with related (provincial) autonomy. In such case, there will be complete provincial machinery including administrative set-up, particularly police and other security agencies as they exist in other provinces. It would help establish government writ and supremacy of the law in the area. Naturally, it will leave no or little room for militant activities in FATA.

The government should introduce legal reforms in FATA. Most of the people living in FATA are religious-minded, majority of its population is dissatisfied with present legal structure particularly FCR and thus, enforcement of *Shariah* is their popular demand (this is one important reason due to which the militants win people support or sympathies in FATA and beyond). Keeping in view these facts as well as the autonomous status of the area (which will continue in the shape of provincial autonomy if FATA becomes a separate province), the government should announce enforcement of *Shariah*, as it did in Swat. It will help a lot in isolating the militants and extremist elements in FATA and other areas of the country. In order to root out militancy and isolate extremist elements in the country, a process of Islamization of laws on the recommendations of Islamic Ideological Council, as provided in the constitution of Pakistan, can be initiated at the national level. Though, there will be opposition from the liberal circles in the country as well as the Western nations, but it can bring lasting peace and stability in the country. The enforcement of *Shariah* in FATA and process of Islamization in the country would deprive militants of their religious and ideological pretext to wage a war against the people and state of Pakistan.

The peace and stability in FATA also demands political reforms in the area. The government should open the area for all types of political activities so that political parties can function freely in FATA. The system of district and local government should be extended to the area so that people can help resolve their problems at the grassroots level. The strengthening of the political parties, institutions and the overall political process will leave little room for extremism and militancy in FATA.

4.4 Education, Development and Employment Opportunities

The widespread illiteracy, underdevelopment and backwardness and unemployment provide a breeding ground for extremism and militancy in FATA. The government should play immediate and special attention to address these issues. It should establish educational institutions keeping in view the pertinent local needs of the people of FATA. It means that these educational institutional must provide both religious and worldly education and also provide necessary vocational training and skills etc. which could help youth get better employment opportunities.

The government should especially focus on socio-economic development of FATA. Particularly, it should improve infrastructure in a way that it could help the government a speedy and deeper access into the far flung areas of FATA and also contribute to its economic development. It should establish special investment and industrial zones possibly with Chinese help to create better employment opportunities for the youth.

4.5 Dialogue and National Reconciliation

The government should give peace a chance and use dialogue as the first option. There are dozens of militant groups having different reasons, motives and agendas to raise arms against the state and people of Pakistan. The record of the past 10 years or so shows that military option alone has not been so effective and it has cost Pakistan over 50 thousand lives and above \$ 100 billion loss in financial terms. Several of the militants groups can be persuaded through negotiations to give up arms struggle and to come back into the national fold. The government should accommodate as many such groups as possible or as many as they are willing for national reconciliation through dialogue and peaceful means. On the one hand, it will save valuable human lives from both sides. On the other hand, it will save resources of the government and security forces which can be used more precisely and effectively against those who are determined to fight at every cost. This strategy will help isolate the most rigid and extremist elements from those comparatively moderate and hence will decrease their strength. The government can use both direct and indirect means to contact and negotiate with the willing militant groups.

4.6 Effective and Efficient Use of Military Power

The government should effectively and efficiently use military power as a last resort against those who only understand the language of force. Once all peaceful means are exhausted and the most extremist elements are isolated from the common people as well as comparatively moderate militant groups, the government should use all out military power against them to completely eliminate them. For this purpose, government should devote its full energies and resources on improving its combat capabilities against the militants. It should improve and integrate information gathering and sharing system, provide better training and equipment to specially constituted Counter-Terrorism Force (CTF) and improve coordination and cooperation between various law enforcement agencies and departments of central and provincial governments. The government must also take effective measures to deprive the militants of their financial support coming from domestic or foreign sources.

4.7 Use of Diplomatic Channels against Foreign Involvement

The government should use all means to desist the foreign powers from providing support to militants in Pakistan. It should collect and provide evidences of such involvement to the respective governments through diplomatic channels and also expose them into national and international media. It should also use the services of friendly governments for putting pressure on such countries. As a last resort, the government can use platform of different international organizations

including the UNO where Pakistan can provide evidence and demand for appropriate action against the governments and states involved in promoting insurgencies and militancy in the country.

4.8 Integration of the Militants into the Mainstream

The government should devise and launch a special program for integration of the militants into mainstream. The program should particularly focus on militants who have either fought against the state of Pakistan and now ready to give up arms, or who had got such training and could possibly be used for anti-state activities in future. The program should include a rehabilitation period consisting of an educational program and psychological treatment designed for and aimed at bringing the affected people out of influence of the extremist thoughts. It must be followed by a strategy to give such people employment according to their talent so that they may not revert back to militant / extremist activities.

5. CONCLUSION

Peace and conflict resolution in FATA is vital for the security and prosperity of both Afghanistan and Pakistan. There are several causes of rise of militancy in FATA which ultimately expanded into other parts of the country. There are some underlying causes, such as political, administrative and legal vacuum, widespread illiteracy, unemployment and power and legacy of the past policies which helped militancy get its roots in the area. However, there were certain proximate causes which accelerated the process. These proximate causes included reaction to Pakistan internal and external policies, use of this situation by the foreign powers for their own interest, Pakistan's poor, ambiguous and half-hearted response to the threat. The problem of militancy is complex and multidimensional. The government needs to devise a multipronged and comprehensive strategy to deal with the issue. It will have to take short-term, mid-term and long-term measures to completely root-out militancy from the country. It will have to take administrative, legal and political measures including giving FATA the status of a province with autonomic powers to legislate according to its local needs, enforcement of *Shariah* on the popular demand of the people in the area, introducing and strengthening local government and other political institutions in FATA, and beginning a process of Islamization of laws in the country, which is far more important for foiling the religious and ideological rationale being used by the militants. The government should take urgent steps for socio-economic development of FATA particularly for improving educational facilities, building basic infrastructure and creating employment opportunities. The government should use dialogue as the first option against the militancy in

order to save precious lives and to isolate the most extremist elements. As a last resort, the government should effectively and efficiently use military power against the real rebels of the country. The government should also take urgent steps to stop foreign intervention and deprive the militants of the flow of money from the domestic and external resources. At the end, the government should also devise a strategy to integrate into the mainstream the militants who have either given up arms struggle or got training and could be used for such activities in future. At the end, the government must review its internal and external policies which create reactionary and extremist sentiments in the country. The problem of ongoing insurgencies in the country is complex one and it needs multi-pronged, all-encompassing and comprehensive strategy to deal with it.

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³⁵ David E. Sanger, *The Inheritance: The World Obama Confronts and the Challenges to American Power* (New York: Harmony Books, 2009), pp.234–66.

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