

PAKISTAN'S TRIBAL AREAS: A CRITICAL NO-MAN'S LAND

Dr Claude Rakisits

Consultant, Webster University, Adjunct faculty.

Paper delivered at [Webster University Forum](#), Geneva, 25 April 2008.

This article will discuss the political evolution of Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and how it has been intrinsically linked to developments in neighbouring Afghanistan. I will argue that it is the history of poor governance and socio-economic underdevelopment in FATA which has facilitated the growth of Pakistan militancy and the establishment of al Qaeda and Taliban safe havens in those tribal areas. I will also examine how the latest political developments in the Tribal areas will potentially affect the Coalition's war effort in Afghanistan.

FATA, which is about the size of Switzerland with a population of over 3 million, is composed of seven agencies: Bajaur, Khyber Agency, Hurrām Agency, Mohmand agency, Orakzai, South Waziristan and North Waziristan. This rugged and mountainous area, with its many passes (including the Khyber Pass), has been a strategically important gateway to many invaders – Turks, Mughals, Persians and Greeks to name a few.

FATA, and Baluchistan to the south of it, is separated from Afghanistan by the Durand Line. The Durand Line, named after Sir Mortimer Durand who surveyed and established this division in 1890 of 1893, is the 2,500-kilometre border drawn by the British colonial rulers of India between today's Pakistan and Afghanistan. The border was delimited in such a way as to avoid cutting through tribal territories. But inevitably, tribes were bisected, notably the Muhmands and Wazirs.

And while the Durand Line has been the *de facto* border between British India (later Pakistan) and Afghanistan, the government in Kabul has still to recognise it officially.

Let me first turn to the political administration and economy of FATA and then I will discuss FATA's four discreet political periods since 1947.

Political Administration of FATA

The British policy towards the tribal belt was based on a mix of persuasion, pressure and armed intervention. Britain instituted its "Forward Policy," which essentially consisted of 'pacifying' the tribes as far west as possible. This eventually led to the 1897-1898 Tribal Wars. Realizing it would never be possible to completely subdue the frontier tribes, the colonial administration decided to implement the Close Border Policy which involved establishing a number of tribal agencies, enclosed by a chain of posts and cantonments, where the Pukhtun tribes would be allowed to govern their society according to their own laws and customs.¹

To ensure control, London stationed troops in these agencies but also granted these areas a semi-autonomous status in return for tribal acquiescence to colonial rule.² This special status was codified in treaties that required *maliks* (tribal elders) to keep the border passes open for trade and strategic purposes in return for allowances and subsidies they could distribute among their tribes. Nevertheless, the tribal areas showed some of the strongest anti-British resistance on the sub-continent during British rule.

¹ Rakisits, Claude, "National Integration in Pakistan: The Role of Religion, Ethnicity and the External Environment", *Ph.D. Dissertation*, University of Queensland, 1986, p. 221.

² Bangash, Mumtaz A., "Administrative and Political Development of the Tribal Areas: A Focus on Khyber and Kurram", *Ph.D. Dissertation*, Area Study Centre (Central Asia), University of Peshawar, 1996, as cited in "Pakistan's Tribal Areas: Appeasing the Militants," in International Crisis Group's *Asia Report*, No 125, December, 11, 2006, p. 2.

G E O P O L I T I C A L
A S S E S S M E N T S

Providing analysis and advice on international issues

Although the founder and first Governor-General of Pakistan, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, withdrew Pakistan's army from FATA, Pakistan retained the colonial administrative and legal structures, codified in a special legal framework, the Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR) 1901. The FCR mixes traditional customs and norms with discretionary police, judicial and executive authority in the political agent. By doing so, it chose to treat FATA's population as separate from, and unequal to, other Pakistani citizens. Pakistan continued to provide allowances and subsidies. In return the local tribes declared their loyalty to Pakistan.

The political agent (PA), a federal, and at times provincially recruited, bureaucrat heads the local administration of each FATA agency. He is all powerful. Backed by *khassadars*³ and levies (tribal militias), as well as paramilitary forces that operate under army control, the PA exercises a mix of extensive executive, judicial and revenue powers and has the responsibility of maintaining law and order and suppressing crime in the tribal areas.⁴

The FCR preserves the Pukhtun tribal structure of *jirga* (council of elders),⁵ to which the political agent can refer civil and criminal matters. The *jirga* ascertains guilt or innocence after hearing the parties to a dispute and passes verdicts on the basis of *rewaj* (custom). However, the PA retains ultimate authority. The political agent initiates cases, appoints the *jirga*, presides over trials and awards punishments without even the technical possibility of revision by a regular court of law.

The PA grants tribal elders the status of *malik* (with the consent of the governor) on the basis of male inheritance. But the PA can also arbitrarily withdraw, suspend or cancel *malik* status if he deems the individual is not serving the interests of the state. Maliks receive financial privileges from the administration in line with their tribe's cooperation in suppressing crime, maintaining social peace and in general supporting the government.⁶ The state relies on the services and collaboration of these *maliks* to administer FATA. Like the British before them, the Pakistan state rewards the loyal *Maliks* with a special status, financial benefits and other official rewards.

This anachronistic legal arrangement continues to this day. So while FATA is formally a part of Pakistan, it more closely resembles a colony whose population lives under laws and administrative arrangements that set it apart from the rest of the country.

However, particularly relevant to Pakistan's involvement in the "war on terror", are FCR clauses that empower the political agent to punish an entire tribe for crimes committed on its territory by fines, arrests, property seizures and blockades.⁷ The political agent can order detention of all or any members of the tribe, seize their property or block their access to the settled districts if he has "good reason" to believe that a tribe or its members are "acting in a hostile or unfriendly manner," have "failed to render all assistance in their power" to help apprehend criminals, "connived at, or abetted in a crime" or "suppressed evidence" of an offence.

³ *Khassadars* are an irregular force under the PA's overall command to protect roads and other government installations and perform guard duties.

⁴ The PA also acts as each agency's development administrator and chief coordinator for provincial line departments.

⁵ The *jirga* relies on the Pukhtun code of honour (*Pakhtunwali*), based on *melmastia* (hospitality), *nanawati* (hospitality cannot even be denied to a criminal or enemy) and *badal* (the right of revenge). The greatest tests of honour involve *zar* (gold), *zun* (women) and *zamin* (land). Settlements and punishments are derived from *narkh* (tribal precedent); the *jirga* can impose strong sanctions and punishments, including excommunication of a noncompliant person or clan, confiscation or *girvi* (mortgage) of property, fines and formation of a *laskhkar* (tribal militia) to punish the accused party, as cited in "Pakistan's Tribal Areas: Appeasing the Militants," in *Asia Report*, No 125, December 11, 2006, p. 6.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p 4.

⁷ FCR (1901), sections 21-24.

And while Pakistan's 1973 constitution guarantees fundamental rights for citizens residing in the entire territory of the country, which includes the tribal areas,⁸ Article 247 (7) bars the Supreme Court and the High Court from exercising any jurisdiction under the constitution in relation to a Tribal Area, unless parliament by law allows it.

The Economy of the Tribal Areas

FATA is one of Pakistan's most economically backward areas. Per capita income is half that of the very low national per capita income of \$500; some 60% of the population lives below the national poverty line. Per capita public development expenditure is reportedly one third of the national average.

Social development indicators are shockingly low. The overall literacy rate is 17.42% compared to 56% nationally. Male literacy is 29%, female literacy a mere 3% compared to the national 32% for females. There are only 41 hospitals for a population of 3.1 million. FATA has a per doctor rate of 1:6,762 compared to the national 1:1,359.⁹

Natural resources, including minerals and coal, are under exploited. Most locals depend on subsistence agriculture since there is little industrial development and few jobs. This situation is made worse by the fact that about 15% of the population is between the ages of 15 and 22.¹⁰

The political agent is FATA's chief development agent and planner. He is all powerful in that sphere as well. One of the PA's main instruments of economic control is the granting of export and import permits for each agency. These export permits are a much sought after prize. Import permits for wheat and other basic necessities are another source of patronage distribution. Moreover, the political agent approves and carries out developmental works based on political and administrative considerations. There is "almost no input from the local population or even their parliamentary representatives in development initiatives."¹¹

And to make things worse, the economy is completely distorted by the thriving trade in arms, drugs, as well as other cross-border smuggling. These are a direct consequence of the events in neighbouring Afghanistan. Poor law enforcement at FATA's borders with Afghanistan encourages lucrative smuggling of luxury consumer goods, causing significant revenue losses in uncollected duties and taxes.

Not only has the army done nothing or has been unable to stop this smuggling, but this trade provides the Afghan Taliban and their Pakistani supporters, the militants in the FATA agencies, with funds and arms. Most significantly, the army has not prohibited sale of guns and ammunition in FATA, which supplies the whole of Pakistan.¹²

Let me now turn to FATA's different political periods since Partition.

FATA's Four Political Periods

FATA has known 3 distinct political periods - 1947-1979; 1979-2001 and 2001-2008, with the contours of a fourth one beginning to emerge following the February 2008 federal and provincial elections in Pakistan.

⁸ These include equality of citizens before law, equal protection of law, freedom of speech and expression, right to association, right to assemble peacefully, and right to form or be a member of a political party.

⁹ "FATA Development Statistics 2005", Bureau of Statistics, Planning and Development Department, government of NWFP, Peshawar.

¹⁰ Aziz, Khalid, "Causes of Rebellion in Waziristan," in *Policy Report*, Regional Institute of Policy Research and Training, Peshawar, 2007, p. 37.

¹¹ "Pakistan's Tribal Areas: Appeasing the Militants," *Op. Cit.*, p 9.

¹² Rashid, Ahmed, "Who's winning the war on terror," in *Yale Global Online*, Sept.5, 2003, as cited in *Ibid.*

The first period: 1947 – 1979

The inclusion of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and FATA in the Pakistan scheme was probably one of the most troublesome problems facing the departing British administration. In NWFP there was the charismatic Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, nicknamed the “Frontier Gandhi,” who led a Muslim organisation (Khudai Khidmatgars – Servants of God) which advocated the establishment of an independent state for the Pukhtuns, i.e., Pukhtunistan.¹³ This organisation considered Mohammad Jinnah’s Muslim League a British creation and therefore opposed the idea of Pakistan as being a British invention. On the other hand, the Pukhtunistan scheme was ardently supported by Afghanistan and the Congress Party. The Afghan authorities, not recognizing the Durand Line, wanted the ‘Pakistani’ Pushtuns to either join Afghanistan or create their own state of Pukhtunistan out of NWFP and parts of Baluchistan, but without including the Pukhtun areas of Afghanistan. Afghanistan also demanded that Pakistan provide Afghanistan access to the sea by giving it a special corridor through Baluchistan or creating a free Afghan zone in Karachi.¹⁴

A second source of trouble for the Muslim League came from the Congress Ministry of Dr Khan Sahib, the brother of the “Frontier Gandhi” in NWFP. Fearing that a Congress-led NWFP would opt not to join Pakistan-to-be, the Muslim League put pressure on the British to call a referendum, directly asking the people for their decision. The plebiscite, held in July 1947, only offered two choices: to either join India or Pakistan; there was no Pukhtunistan option. Dr Khan called for a massive boycott of the plebiscite. The results were very close: of the 51% of eligible voters who took part, 97% voted for Pakistan, i.e., only 50.5% of the population voted in favour of joining Pakistan.¹⁵ One week after Partition, Governor-General Jinnah sacked Dr Khan, as allowed under the adapted Government of India Act, 1935, for fear that the Pukhtunistan issue could be used by Afghanistan and India to create domestic problems for Pakistan.¹⁶ The new chief minister, Khan Abdul Qayyum Khan, used a heavy-handed approach towards the Pukhtun, including using the army and air force to suppress disturbances in the Tribal areas.¹⁷ This confirmed that already then Pakistan’s central authority interfered in FATA’s affairs.

Although the central authorities, particularly under Zulfikar Bhutto (1971 – 1977) intervened on a regular basis in the provincial affairs of NWFP including dismissing the Governor of NWFP on 12 February 1973,¹⁸ and arresting Wali Khan, the National Awami Party (NAP) leader, on charges of secession, FATA was generally left on its own.

Interestingly, Afghan President Daud was close to reaching an agreement with PM Bhutto in August 1976, which involved Afghanistan’s recognition of the Durand Line in return for the release of Pukhtun and Baluch National Awami Party (NAP) leaders from Pakistani gaols. However, this agreement was never implemented as Bhutto was toppled in 1977 by General Zia who subsequently released all NAP leaders imprisoned.

The second period: 1979 – 2001

With the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan in 1979, the political dynamics between Islamabad and FATA took a dramatic turn. One of the main causes was, of course, the influx of some 3 million Afghan refugees

¹³ Entessar, N., “Baluchi Nationalism,” in *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 7, No 2, Nov – Dec. 1979, p. 79.

¹⁴ Aziz, Khalid, “Causes of Rebellion in Waziristan”, in *Policy Report*, Regional Institute of Policy Research and Training, Peshawar, 2007, p. 14.

¹⁵ Rakisits, Claude, *Op. Cit.*, p. 225.

¹⁶ Al Mujahid, Sharif, *Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah, Studies in Interpretation*, Karachi, Quai-i-Azam Academy, 1981, p. 135.

¹⁷ Ziring, L., *Pakistan: The Enigma of Political Development*, Folkestone, Wm Dawson, 1980, p. 77.

¹⁸ His dismissal was related to the low intensity guerrilla war that was being waged in Baluchistan.

who settled in NWFP and FATA and which inevitably led to clashes between the local residents and the refugees. Most disputes were, however, settled by the *Jirgas*.

An important element complicating the refugee situation was the presence in the Tribal areas of the *Mujahideen*, the Western-supported anti-Afghan government guerrillas, who launched their attacks against the Soviet and Afghan forces from Pakistani territory. Bin Laden was, of course, one of those *Mujahideen* leaders then supported by the West.

And like the situation some 20 years later, the Pakistan government was unable or unwilling to control the activities of these insurgents, with some of these rebel groups establishing quasi-government enclaves in the tribal areas.¹⁹ Realising the damage the presence of these *Mujahideen* were having on the local scene, a *Jirga* of elders in FATA demanded in 1985 that Islamabad recognise the Soviet-backed government in Kabul and return the refugees after having come to an acceptable agreement with the Afghan authorities.²⁰

The embedding of the *Mujahideen* in the tribal areas was facilitated by General Zia-ul Haq's Islamization process in Pakistan and Islamabad's close relationship with Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Both factors made it conducive for the increase in the political clout of the Islamic parties. This included the very substantial growth in the number of *Madrassas* (religious schools),²¹ the most radical of which spawned the *Mujahideen* fighters. Given the low level of socio-economic development in the Tribal areas, it is not surprising that up to 80% of boys still go to these *Madrassas* for their education today.

The overwhelming majority of the *Madrassas* are run by the Jamiat-e-Ulama Islam (JUI), an Islamic party which believes in the revival of Islamic values according to the Sharia. The JUI is an ideological sole mate of the Taliban. Not surprisingly, most of the founders of the Taliban went through these JUI-run *Madrassas*.

Not only did the introduction of some \$66 billion worth of weapons between 1978 - 1992 compound the gun culture in the region, but the presence of thousands of *Mujahideen* led to the creation of a worldwide network of Afghan war veterans of all nationalities. One of these organisations was al-Qaeda.²²

Another complicating factor in the Afghan-Pakistan relationship at the time was the thriving heroin trade which involved a major tribe, the Afridi, whose members straddle the Durand Line in the area of the Khyber Pass. The drug smugglers were given military and moral support by the Soviet-backed Afghan government in return for the Afridi's support in stopping the crossing into Afghanistan of the *Mujahideen*.

Under intense Western pressure to do something about this growing heroin trade, General Zia-ul-Haq's government in Pakistan having failed to stop the heroin trade, including having farmers grow alternative crops, decided to send para-military forces into the Khyber Agency in 1985. Over a six-week period it destroyed 100 houses belonging to heroin traders as well as a number of laboratories.²³ Moreover, with the aim of preventing a resurgence of the illicit trade and check arms smuggling, the government decided to permanently station law enforcement agents in the agency and build fortified posts in strategic locations.²⁴ This marked the beginning of the central authorities' regular interference in FATA affairs.

¹⁹ Malik, Hafeez, "The Afghan Crisis and its Impact on Pakistan," in *The Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. V, No 3, Spring 1982, P. 46.

²⁰ *The Muslim*, December 27, 1985.

²¹ The number of *Madrassas* increased from 900 in 1971 to 8,000 registered and 25,000 unregistered by 1988. Rashid, Ahmed, *Taliban, Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, Yale University Press, 2001, p.89.

²² Aziz, Khalid, *Op. Cit.*, p.22.

²³ *The Australian*, March 25, 1985 and *The Muslim*, December 31, 1985.

²⁴ Rakisits, Claude, *Op. Cit.*, p. 342.

There was some support for the military action, as there was a genuine sentiment that something had to be done to arrest the heroin trade. But there was also a feeling that the root cause of the heroin problem in FATA was the continued implementation of the Frontiers Crime regulations, the lack of universal adult franchise, the lack of social and political integration with the rest of the country and the low level of development which only benefited a few *maliks*.²⁵

Benazir Bhutto's civilian government attempted to deal with some of these issues by introducing adult franchise in FATA in 1996. However, Bhutto's political liberalization only went so far. Political parties were - and still are - formally forbidden from extending their activities into the agencies. However, mullahs have always enjoyed free entry. This has assisted the Islamic parties to further consolidate their political influence in the area. Moreover, not only does FATA have no representation in NWFP's provincial legislature, but while the constitution mandates representation for FATA in the national parliament, the parliament cannot legislate on any matter concerning FATA. This makes the FATA-elected members of Parliament rather superfluous.

The third period: 2001 – 2008

Following their defeat in October 2001, the Taliban and al-Qaeda escaped across the border into the tribal areas of Pakistan. Hundreds of these foreign fighters settled and married into local tribes. They have since then established safe havens in FATA, especially in South and North Waziristan and Bajaur Agency, and have been attacking coalition forces in southern and eastern Afghanistan with success, particularly since 2005.

It is important to remember that the links that were developed between Afghan, Pakistani and Arab groups during the 1980s were still active and are now being used against US and NATO forces in Afghanistan.²⁶

Part of the Pukhtun's tribal honour is to offer hospitality, regardless whether the guest is welcomed or not, a criminal, a friend or an enemy. Accordingly, it was easy for these militants to settle down in FATA. However, it has become obvious in the last year or so that some of these militants, particularly the non-Pukhtun, i.e., the Arabs, Chechens, Uzbeks and Uighurs, are starting to overstay their welcome. Deadly battles causing scores of fatalities have broken out between the local residents and these non-Pukhtuns, particularly in early 2007.²⁷

Not only has a Taliban mini-state in the tribal areas been established - and this is bad news for Pakistan in the long-term - but it has also led to the creeping Talibanization of FATA and neighbouring NWFP, including in the Swat valley. This has included imposing Shariah law, attacking music and video shops, closing barber shops and killing women working in schools or for NGOs. It has encouraged pro-Taliban Pakistani militants to flex their muscles, including murdering politicians, killing innocent Pakistani civilians, attacking army personnel and assassinating government officials, including by using suicide bombers.

So who are these pro-Taliban fighters in the tribal areas? Simply put, they are Pukhtun tribesmen who have been radicalized by the rhetoric of Jihad which started almost 30 years ago with the anti-Soviet jihad, continued during the Afghan civil war and the subsequent Taliban rule and finally today with the presence of the Taliban and Al Qaeda in the region. They also include an increasing number of Punjabis whose families had been evicted from their lands in southern Punjab in the 1980s and have accordingly become landless. These militants have been indoctrinated by Islamic parties and the Taliban to believe that it is

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 343.

²⁶ Gunaratna, Rohan and Muhammad Amir Rana, *Al Qaeda Fights back inside Pakistani Tribal Areas*, Pak Institute for Peace Studies, Lahore, 2007, p. 48.

²⁷ "Waziristan Clash toll rises" in *Dawn – the Internet*, March 22, 2007.

lawful to wage *jihad* against a government or other fellow Muslim who support the West's 'war on terror.' They include military commanders who fought the Soviets as well as the Northern Alliance and, of course, many unemployed youth who have been drawn to the Jihad "as a way of gaining a livelihood or enhancing their social importance and power."²⁸ They cooperate closely with the Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters.²⁹

In an attempt to hunt down the Taliban, al Qaeda fighters and Pakistani militants, the Pakistan army sent 80,000 troops into the tribal areas, and lost over 1,000 troops in the fighting. A negative consequence of the use of the military has been the political displacement of the Political Agent and the *Maliks* who kept the system working in favour of the pro-Taliban militants who have established a parallel system of administration, justice, summary trial courts and taxation in the tribal areas.³⁰ And the break down of the tribal structure has been reinforced by influence of the Islamic parties and the presence of the Taliban and al-Qaeda, whose fighters have executed tribal leaders who disagreed with their policy or agenda.

Unfortunately, not only did the Pakistan army suffer a very high number of military casualties and fatalities but in the process of using military means it also killed many innocent civilians as well. This has provided political ammunition to the pro-Taliban militants in the tribal areas.

Similarly, the use of American Predator strikes – sometimes unilaterally without the Pakistan government's prior agreement – has fuelled an already strong anti-American mood in Pakistan, in general, and in the tribal areas, in particular. Reportedly, there is a "tacit understanding" between Washington and the Pakistani army that permits US strikes on foreign rebels in Pakistan, but not against Pakistani Taliban.³¹

If the goal is to discourage the local population in the tribal areas from providing support to the Taliban, using indiscriminate military means only is clearly not going to be successful in the long term.

On the other hand, making deals with local leaders and mullahs, as the Pakistan Government did in South Waziristan (April 2004 and Feb 2005) and North Waziristan (Sept 2006) - which called on the tribesmen to expel the foreign militants and end cross-border attacks into Afghanistan in return for the army stopping major operations in those agencies and pulling most of its soldiers out of tribal area - was not the way to go either.

The deals were a failure, as there were more attacks across into Afghanistan following those agreements. And the Taliban maintained its sanctuaries. Furthermore, the Pakistani militants continued to rule in North and South Waziristan, killing and attacking officials and military personnel at will. The major flaw with the deals was that it assumed the tribes controlled the areas when the Taliban are increasingly in control of the area. Moreover, there were no enforcement provisions.

The fourth period: 2008 – Present

Realising that using strictly military means to deal with the militants in the Tribal areas was not working, the new civilian government in Islamabad is considering a combination of well-targeted military strikes, especially against high value Taliban and al-Qaeda leaders and commanders, and political and socio-economic programs to bring the tribal areas into mainstream Pakistan political and economic life. This approach would also include negotiations with Pakistani militants willing to put down their arms.³² The

²⁸ "Pakistan's Tribal Areas: Appeasing the Militants" *Op. Cit.*, p. 22.

²⁹ Rohan, Gunaratna and Muhammad Amir Rana, *Op. Cit.*, p. 49.

³⁰ Aziz, Khalid, *Op. Cit.*, p. 39.

³¹ "US Stepping Up Unilateral Attacks in Pakistan: Report", in *AFP*, March 27, 2008.

³² For example, the Pakistan government released on 21 April 2008 Maulana Sufi Mohammad, leader of the Tehrik Nifaz-e-Shariat Mohammadi (TNSM) which demands the enforcement of Islamic law in the Swat valley, in return for which he has committed his followers to renounce violence in the Swat valley. "Pakistan Taleban praise release", in *BBC News*, April, 22, 2008. The leader of

government's aim is to convince the local population, through non-lethal measures, that there is much more to be gained for them by being fully integrated with the rest of Pakistan than by supporting the Taliban. As in parts of southern and eastern Afghanistan today, local residents have acquiesced to Taliban-type rule out of fear of the militants combined with resentment against a corrupt administration and draconian laws. The pro-Taliban militants are able to restore order quickly and dispense speedy justice.³³

Accordingly, two of the measures the new federal government is considering to induce the locals to drop their support for the Taliban and their fellow travellers are repealing the Frontiers Crimes Regulations (FCR) in FATA and fully integrating politically the tribal areas into the neighbouring province of NWFP. While there has been some opposition to the repeal of the FCR in some quarters, these are measures that are on the whole welcomed by the local residents of FATA.³⁴ Certainly, the National Awami Party-led government in NWFP is fully supportive of this idea.

Importantly, now that Islamic parties were soundly defeated in the recent provincial and national elections, the pro-Taliban militants can no longer rely on their political support to promote their agenda.³⁵ The people of NWFP have made very clear that they reject religious extremism. And more importantly, they have also rejected the religious parties' corrupt and incompetent rule in the province.

For over 40 years we have seen the increasing involvement of external players in FATA, notably the *Mujahideen*, the Taliban and al-Qaeda, the Pakistan military and Islamic parties. The result has been a break down of the traditional societal structure.

The new provincial and national civilian governments must now use their new popular mandate - and the people's rejection of the Islamic parties - to assist the people of the tribal areas to integrate economically as well as politically with the rest of Pakistan.

What Does it All Mean for the War in Afghanistan?

There is no quick fix to ending the war in Afghanistan. But something needs to be done quickly and successfully. And that includes from the Pakistan side of the Durand Line. These tribal areas of Pakistan are the Taliban's and al-Qaeda's vital and safe rear base from which they can prepare and launch attacks against Afghanistan and Western interests elsewhere. These safe havens must be destroyed at all cost.

The US is not particularly pleased with the new Pakistan government's decision to combine negotiations with military operations to deal with the local militants. The UK, on the other hand, is more receptive to this approach. The fact is that using only one or the other approach has not worked in the past. As opposed to previous agreements with the local militants, it will be vital that these have vigorous enforceable clauses to prevent the tribesmen from backsliding on their commitments.

Afghanistan is a turning point battleground: were the West to lose this battle, this would be a major military and, more importantly, psychological victory for al-Qaeda and international terrorists. And it would be particularly so given how things are panning out in Iraq.

The negative blowback effect on Pakistan of a Taliban victory in Afghanistan could be immeasurable. It would encourage and invigorate the pro-Taliban Pakistani militants in the tribal areas to further Talibanise

the Pakistani Taliban, Baitullah Mehsud, has ordered his fighters to cease all their armed activities. *Dawn the Internet*, April 24, 2008.

³³ "Pakistan's Tribal Areas: Appeasing the Militants" *Op. Cit.*, p 22.

³⁴ Interview with a local member of the NWFP Provincial Assembly, April 2008.

³⁵ The Islamic parties had 10 out of the 12 seats allocated to FATA in the National Assembly. In the 2008 elections, these parties lost all their seats.

into neighbouring NWFP. But, importantly, a Taliban-dominated government in Kabul - probably harbouring al-Qaeda - would not necessarily be friendly to Islamabad. On the contrary, it would not be sympathetic to a Pakistan government officially an ally in the War on Terror.

Accordingly, it is in Pakistan's national interest and the new civilian government to vigorously and unswervingly hunt down the Taliban and al-Qaeda leaders and permanently shut down their network in Pakistan while at the same time extending democratic freedoms, extending the rule of law and promoting sustainable economic development for the residents of the tribal areas – Pakistan's no-man's land.

Bibliography

- Al Mujahid, Sharif, *Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah, Studies in Interpretation*, Karachi, Quai-i-Azam Academy, 1981.
- Aziz, Khalid, "Causes of Rebellion in Waziristan," in *Policy Report*, Regional Institute of Policy Research and Training, Peshawar, 2007.
- Bangash, Mumtaz A., *Administrative and Political Development of the Tribal Areas: A Focus on Khyber and Kurram*, Ph.D Dissertation, Area Study Centre (Central Asia), University of Peshawar, 1996.
- Entessar, N., "Baluchi Nationalism", in *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 7, No 2, Nov – Dec 1979.
- "FATA Development Statistics 2005", Bureau of Statistics, Planning and Development Department, Government of NWFP, Peshawar.
- Gunaratna, Rohan and Muhammad Amir Rana, *Al Qaeda Fights back inside Pakistani Tribal Areas*, Pak Institute for Peace Studies, Lahore, 2007.
- Malik, Hafeez, "The Afghan Crisis and its Impact on Pakistan," in *The Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. V, No 3, Spring 1982.
- "Pakistan's Tribal Areas: Appeasing the Militants" in *International Crisis Group's Asia Report*, No 125, December 11, 2006.
- Rakisits, Claude, *National Integration in Pakistan: The Role of Religion, Ethnicity and the External Environment*, Ph.D Dissertation, University of Queensland, 1986.
- Rashid, Ahmed, *Taliban, Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, Yale University Press, 2001.
- Rashid, Ahmed, "Who's winning the war on terror," in *Yale Global Online*, Sept. 5, 2003.
- "US Stepping Up Unilateral Attacks in Pakistan: Report", in *AFP*, March 27, 2008.
- "Waziristan Clash toll rises" in *Dawn – the Internet*, March 22, 2007.
- Ziring, L., *Pakistan: The Enigma of Political Development*, Folkestone, Wm Dawson, 1980.