

EXAMINING THE 25TH AMENDMENT'S ROLE IN INTEGRATING FATA AND ITS IMPACT ON COUNTERTERRORISM STRATEGIES IN PAKISTAN

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.16081107>

Received	Revised	Accepted	Published
18 April, 2025	29 May, 2025	29 June, 2025	18 July, 2025

ABSTRACT

The increase in Pakistan's geopolitical prominence in international politics since 2001 can be attributed to the terrorism originating from the unstable Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Governed by the Frontier Crime Regulation (FCR) of 1901, inherited from the British colonial era, FATA remained a semi-autonomous region with minimal government control even after the partition. However, during the War on Terror, Pakistan suffered significant losses, prompting its political parties and military establishment to initiate reforms in the legal, socio-economic, political, and security systems of the region. One significant reform was the proposal to merge FATA into the mainstream, which was debated among various stakeholders for several years. In May 2018, Pakistan's parliament approved the merger of FATA and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa under the 25th Constitutional Amendment. This merger aimed to integrate FATA fully into the administrative and legal framework of Pakistan, thereby addressing the longstanding governance challenges and security threats posed by militancy and terrorism originating from the region. This paper seeks to explore the efforts made by both the United States and Pakistan in counter-terrorism endeavors, particularly in the context of FATA. It also aims to assess the impacts of the FATA-KP merger on counter-terrorism efforts and Pakistan's internal security landscape. By examining these aspects, the study aims to provide insights into the evolving dynamics of counter-terrorism strategies and their implications for regional security and stability.

Keywords: FATA, Amendment, Constitution, Implications, Pakistan.

INTRODUCTION

In the wake of the Taliban regime's collapse in Afghanistan (2001), hundreds of militants, including al-Qaeda fighters, found refuge in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) near the border. This underdeveloped and neglected region, with its unique political, legal, and administrative status, became a

breeding ground for extremism. The influx of militants fueled the rise of the Tehrike-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and disrupted centuries-old tribal customs. FATA transformed into a haven for both domestic and foreign extremists, further hindering socio-economic and political development. Decades of militant activity and

subsequent counter-insurgency operations, culminating in Operation Zarb-e-Azb (2014), devastated the region's infrastructure and livelihoods. Over a million FATA residents were displaced, most seeking refuge in the neighboring Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. While Pakistani military officials claim victory against militancy, experts warn of a potential Taliban resurgence. Consolidation of these gains requires proactive investments in FATA's political, administrative, and economic infrastructure, ultimately leading to its mainstreaming.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, Pakistan's geopolitical significance has been profoundly shaped by the unstable conditions in its FATA. Historically governed by the draconian Frontier Crime Regulation (FCR) of 1901, a remnant of British colonial rule, FATA remained a semi-autonomous, underdeveloped region largely separate from Pakistan's governance structures. The early 2000s War on Terror highlighted FATA's strategic importance as it emerged as a hotbed for terrorism and militancy, causing significant losses and security challenges on Pakistan.

Recognizing the urgent need for reform, Pakistan's political and military leaders initiated comprehensive measures to integrate FATA into the national mainstream. Following years of intense deliberations among various stakeholders, the landmark 25th Constitutional Amendment was enacted in May 2018, merging FATA with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. This historic merger aimed to dismantle the FCR, incorporate FATA into Pakistan's administrative and legal framework, and address the longstanding governance issues that had fueled instability and militancy in the region. The merger of FATA with KP marks a pivotal shift toward enhancing governance, socio-economic development, and security in the region. Residents of the former FATA now have the same political, constitutional, economic, and administrative rights as other Pakistani citizens. This transition aims to transform the region from a conflict-prone area into a stable economic zone, fostering peace and development.

This research paper examines the extensive counter-terrorism efforts undertaken by both Pakistan and the United States within the

context of FATA. It evaluates the impact of the FATA-KP merger on counter-terrorism strategies and Pakistan's internal security landscape. Additionally, the paper explores the broader implications of this integration for regional stability and security. By analyzing these dynamics, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the evolving counter-terrorism strategies in Pakistan and their significance within the broader regional context. The integration of FATA into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) represents a landmark achievement, but it's only the first step on the path towards lasting peace and security. Military operations have undoubtedly been successful in driving out many terrorist elements. However, to prevent a resurgence of militancy, continued coordinated efforts by the military are essential, and these efforts must be coupled with strong public support. Furthermore, addressing fundamental issues that plague the region is paramount. This includes ensuring free and accessible education for all, along with substantial improvements in healthcare services. Additionally, efforts must be directed towards revitalizing industries, developing agriculture, and enhancing the communication system throughout the tribal region. By implementing these measures, Pakistan can not only weaken the influence of extremist groups but also foster much-needed socio-economic progress and stability in the area. The true test of the FATA-KP integration lies in the collective strength of its people, the government's commitment, and the active engagement of civil society. This study emphasizes the necessity of collaborative efforts. Only through such a united front can the region achieve a stable and prosperous future. By fostering collaboration, the integration can not only contribute to regional security but also strengthen national security as a whole.

The Breeding Ground: Examining Terrorism and Counterterrorism in FATA

Pakistan's northwestern tribal region, despite nominal inclusion in the Islamic Republic, existed in a curious state of semi-autonomy for much of its history. Following independence in 1947, the region joined Pakistan under the condition of retaining a special, semi-autonomous status. This limited central government involvement and administration.

The colonial-era FCR remained in effect, granting significant executive, judicial, and revenue powers to a federally appointed Political Agent. Consequently, FATA remained Pakistan's most underdeveloped region. Lack of accountability, audits, and effective governance contributed to poverty rates exceeding 60%. In the absence of a robust state apparatus, tribal communities relied on their own legal codes and traditional institutions for law and administration. This decentralized system mirrored aspects of the American Wild West.

The September 11th terrorist attacks thrust Pakistan's FATA into the global spotlight. However, the portrayal was far from positive. FATA was now seen as a breeding ground for extremism and militancy, and most infamously, the hiding place of Osama bin Laden. This new focus on FATA coincided with the US-led War on Terror, prompting a joint counterterrorism effort by the US and Pakistan aimed at dismantling the Islamic extremist networks that had taken root in the region, particularly those nurtured during the Soviet-Afghan War in the 1980s. The lack of effective governance and legislation in FATA had long made it vulnerable to the spread of extremist ideology (Brown, 2000).

Following the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the porous border with Pakistan's FATA region became a refuge for fleeing al-Qaeda fighters (Witte and Ali, 2007). This influx of militants, coupled with US pressure, prompted Pakistan to launch military operations in the tribal areas starting in 2002 (Wilson and Akhtar, 2019). By December 2007, these militants had formalized their organization, establishing the TTP with a central leadership structure and regional chapters. The TTP declared war on the Pakistani state, unleashing a wave of deadly suicide attacks across the country. Since the conflict's eruption in 2004, estimates suggest Pakistani casualties, including civilians, security forces, and militants, range from 50,000 to 80,000 (Ali, 2018a).

Combating Terrorism Strategies

Deployment of Ground Forces

Following their defeat by NATO forces in 2002, elements of the Afghan Taliban, alongside Uzbek, Chechen, and Arab fighters, sought refuge in Pakistan's FATA. This influx fueled a

resurgence of pro-Taliban sentiment within Pakistan's Pashtun heartland. While these groups largely avoided anti-Pakistan activities, they openly supported the Afghan Taliban against NATO forces. Facing US pressure, Pakistan joined the War on Terror. However, this decision coincided with a rise in militancy across the Pak-Afghan border, ultimately spilling over into the settled districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Militant tactics included suicide bombings in populated areas and attacks on military installations. The deteriorating security situation prompted the Pakistani military to launch large-scale operations in FATA. These operations resulted in the displacement of millions of civilians, creating a significant internal humanitarian crisis (Yousaf et al., 2018).

In tribal areas, major military operations include:

Operation Al Mizan (Justice): Launched in 2002 under President General Pervez Musharraf, the operation deployed an estimated 80,000 troops in FATA until its conclusion in 2006 (Tellis and Nawaz, 2017).

Operation Zalzala (Earthquake): Pakistan launched a counterinsurgency operation in South Waziristan Agency targeting Baitullah Mehsud in January 2008 (Khan, 2009).

Operation Sirat-e-Mustaqeem (Righteous Path): Pakistan's military launched an operation in June 2008, aiming to dislodge Lashkar-e-Islam (LeI) from the Bara region of Khyber Agency (Hussain, 2011).

Operation Sher Dil (Lion Heart): In 2008, the military shifted its focus to the Mohmand and Bajaur Agencies, launching Operation Sher Dil in September to combat insurgent groups in the region (Fair and Jones, 2009).

Operation Rah-e-Nijat (Path of Salvation): In October 2009, Pakistan launched a major offensive in South Waziristan, deploying over 30,000 troops to confront the TTP at that time (Khattak, 2011).

Operation Brekhna (Lightening): Launched in late 2009, an operation aimed to clear the

Mohmand Agency of both criminal and terrorist elements (Abbasi, 2014).

Operation Koh-e-Sufaid (White Mountain): Pakistan's military launched Operation Koh-e-Sufaid in the Kurram Agency in July 2011 to combat sectarian violence and militant activity (“Kurram operation continuing”, 2011).

Operation Khyber 1, 2, 3 and 4 (2014-present): Expanding on Operation Zarb-e-Azb, a series of four counterterrorism operations, codenamed Khyber 1 through 4, were launched in the Khyber Agency starting in 2014 (Yousaf et al., 2018). The most recent iteration, Khyber 4, specifically targeted Islamic State (IS) militants in the region.

Operation Zarb-e-Azb and the National Action Plan (Sharp and Cutting Strike): In 2014, Pakistan launched a major military offensive, Operation Zarb-e-Azb, targeting various militant groups, including the Haqqani Network, in North Waziristan, a FATA bordering Afghanistan. This operation came amidst ongoing tensions with the Taliban, who vehemently opposed the offensive (Ali, 2016). Public support for counterterrorism efforts significantly increased following the horrific December 2014 attack on the Army Public School (APS) in Peshawar. The attack, claimed by the TTP as retaliation for military operations, resulted in the deaths of over 140 individuals, mostly students (Begum, 2018). Just days after the APS attack, the Pakistani government unveiled the National Action Plan (NAP), a comprehensive strategy to combat terrorism and extremism within the country (Ali, 2018b). Operation Zarb-e-Azb was credited with dismantling militant bases in North Waziristan, with some officials even claiming the Haqqani Network had been disrupted (Khan, 2016). The offensive also resulted in significant casualties among Taliban fighters. General Raheel Sharif, the former Chief of Army Staff, emphasized that these militants posed a threat not just to Pakistan but to humanity as a whole.

DRONE STRIKES

Drone strikes became a significant aspect of the counterterrorism campaign in Pakistan, particularly in Waziristan. While these strikes

eliminated high-profile militant commanders like Baitullah Mehsud and Hakimullah Mehsud (August 2009, November 2013), they also resulted in civilian casualties, causing public anger and resentment. In 2016, then-US President Barack Obama acknowledged civilian deaths from drone strikes (Ackerman, 2016). A controversial 2006 drone strike on a Bajaur madrassa reportedly killed dozens of students, sparking outrage and contributing to the rise of tribal militancy (Plaw and Fricker, 2012). Critics argue that drone strikes fueled anti-government sentiment and provided recruitment opportunities for extremist groups. The drone campaign did intensify under President Obama, with reports suggesting a tenfold increase compared to the George W. Bush era (Purkiss and Serle, 2017). According to the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, between 2004 and 2018, there were over 430 confirmed drone strikes in Pakistan's tribal areas, resulting in thousands of deaths and injuries (Popalzai, 2018). The effectiveness of drone strikes in achieving long-term counterterrorism goals remains a subject of debate.

INITIATIVES BY TRIBESMEN

Since 2001, Pashtun tribes in Pakistan's former FATA have utilized traditional institutions like Jirga's (councils) and Lashkars (militias) to combat militancy and terrorism. These efforts highlight the importance of Pashtunwali, the tribal code of conduct, in maintaining local order. However, terrorist groups recognize this power and have repeatedly targeted Jirga's and Lashkars to undermine tribal leadership.

The brutality of these attacks is evident. In 2010, a Taliban assault on a Jirga discussing counterterrorism measures in Mohmand Agency claimed over 100 lives, including tribal elders. Similarly, a peace Jirga in 2016 suffered a Taliban attack, killing four elders. These incidents demonstrate the Pashtun desire for peace while highlighting the threat posed by extremism.

Jirga's have also facilitated the formation of Lashkars. In 2008, the Salarzai tribe in Bajaur and the Mullagori tribe in Khyber Agency effectively used this approach. Their Lashkars not only drove out the Taliban but also deterred other militant groups (Yousaf et al., 2018).

However, the Pakistani government's counter-

terrorism efforts often disregarded these local initiatives. Military operations without consulting tribal leadership fueled resentment and distrust. Civilian casualties and human rights violations further strained relations, with some elders accusing the government of prioritizing external interests over the lives of their people (Wilson and Akhtar, 2019).

Pakistan's 25th Amendment: Integrating the former FATA

FATA REFORMS COMMITTEE

In September 2015, a historic event ignited the debate over reforming Pakistan's FATA. FATA parliamentarians unanimously demanded the repeal of the FCR and integration with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province ("MPs demand 'genuine' reforms", 2015). This bold move prompted then-Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to establish a six-member FATA Reforms Committee. Led by Sartaj Aziz, the advisor on foreign affairs, the committee spent eight crucial months traversing tribal agencies. They met with tribal elders and other stakeholders to gather insights and develop a roadmap for FATA's future (Ali, 2015). The committee meticulously explored four options:

1. **Maintaining the Status Quo:** This conservative approach kept the existing system in place.
2. **Establishing a Council:** Similar to Gilgit-Baltistan, this option envisioned a separate council governing FATA.
3. **Creating a Separate Province:** This path proposed carving out a new province from FATA.
4. **Merging with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa:** This option involved integrating FATA with the neighboring Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province (Desk, 2016).

THE GOVERNMENT'S REFORM

Following months of discussions, the government of then-Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in March 2017 unveiled a groundbreaking plan for Pakistan's FATA. This plan aimed to fundamentally reshape FATA's future by merging it with the neighboring Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The official reforms committee considered creating a separate FATA province, but ultimately dismissed it due to concerns about financial

stability and long-term sustainability (Raza, 2017).

The core objective of the reforms was to empower FATA residents. This would be achieved through several key measures. First, by integrating FATA into the national legal framework, the reforms aimed to grant them the same constitutional rights as other Pakistani citizens. Second, the plan envisioned a modernized system of governance with a formal judicial system, modern policing, and local government structures. Finally, a wide range of economic and social development initiatives were designed to improve living standards and economic opportunities in FATA. Additionally, the plan aimed to facilitate reconstruction by supporting the return of internally displaced persons and rebuilding areas affected by past conflicts (Raza, 2017). By the end of 2018, this ambitious plan envisioned a future where FATA residents were fully integrated into Pakistani society, enjoying the benefits of a modern legal system, improved governance, and a revitalized economy.

The 25th Amendment and FATA's Integration

On May 24, 2018, Pakistan's National Assembly achieved a historic milestone by passing the 25th Constitutional Amendment bill, facilitating the merger of the FATA with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The amendment garnered overwhelming support with 229 votes in favor and one against (229-1). While major political parties embraced this amendment, Jamiat Ulema-e Islam (JUI-F) and Pakhtunkhwa Mili Awami Party (PMAP) opposed it for various political reasons. The Senate also ratified the amendment on May 25, 2018 (Hussain, 2018). This amendment extends the jurisdiction of the higher judiciary to FATA, allowing residents to seek recourse in the Supreme Court and the Peshawar High Court without constraints. The administrative structure is also revamped, replacing political agents with Deputy Commissioners and Assistant Commissioners. Moreover, the archaic FCR, a relic of British rule, are repealed. Until 2023, FATA's existing representation in the National Assembly and Senate remains intact, after which it will be assimilated into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. FATA will also receive a 3% share in the National Finance Commission (NFC) award, and a substantial sum of Rs. 100

billion will be allocated over the next decade for development projects. This transformative step marks the dawn of a new era for the region, promising significant political, economic, social, and cultural shifts, along with newfound opportunities for its inhabitants (Haq, 2018). The merger ensures that FATA residents enjoy equal political, constitutional, and economic rights as their counterparts across the country.

FATA'S MAINSTREAMING AND POLITICAL STABILITY

Terrorism inflicted severe damage on FATA's social, economic, and political structures. Governed by the FCR, the region's political system relies on the Jirga system overseen by appointed political agents. However, the assassination of local leaders by militants disrupted this system, weakening the authority of political agents. Militant groups initially provided swift justice, leading the public to seek their intervention for dispute resolution. Yet, these groups soon exploited their power, leaving communities with little recourse but to support them. Despite efforts by other political groups, military pressure and other challenges hindered their support among locals. Additionally, in conflict-ridden areas, women are largely excluded from political decision-making processes.

New FATA Deal Aims to Reduce Terrorism Threat in Pakistan

In these regions, various criminal factions have emerged, engaging in activities such as robbery, plundering, burglary, looting, kidnapping, and killing innocent civilians. The social and political rights of locals in the tribal areas have been compromised, leading to widespread dissatisfaction among the residents. This environment of uncertainty and turmoil has fueled anti-American sentiments and escalated terrorist activities, including suicide attacks (Khalid and Roy, 2016).

According to the United States, extremists in this region find safe havens and launch attacks by crossing into Afghanistan, where a significant number of US forces are stationed. Following the overthrow of the Taliban government in Kabul by US-led forces, several terrorist groups sought refuge in the tribal belt, which shares a lengthy and porous border with Afghanistan.

Over the past decade, Pakistan's military has conducted numerous operations in the volatile tribal belt to eradicate militant sanctuaries and Taliban strongholds. The amalgamation of the seven tribal agencies into the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and their regulation under state law marks a significant change in the region. These developments are expected to impact the ongoing war on terror in the area positively. The merger is anticipated to restore basic rights to the people who have been deprived of them and contribute to the healing process following years of conflict.

DRONE ATTACKS

Between June 2004 and January 2018, the United States conducted 430 drone attacks in Pakistan, targeting insurgents primarily from the Haqqani network, among other groups. Pakistan has strongly criticized these airstrikes, citing violations of sovereignty and denying the presence of the Haqqani network in the country. As the tribal region undergoes mainstreaming, Pakistan's response to drone strikes is anticipated to be more robust. The hope is that this merger will lead to a notable decrease in drone strikes. However, local reactions are expected to be overwhelmingly negative, and the United States will likely seek to avoid further deterioration of its relations with Pakistan (Anwar, 2018).

Political Intervention and the Establishment of Institutions Ignite Positive Transformations REPRESENTATION EXTENSION IN THE PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE

Recently, the Pakistani government implemented substantial reforms, including the integration of FATA into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Designated as special zones, the tribal areas now fall under the direct responsibility of the President of Pakistan, who delegates authority to the Governor. The Pakistani Constitution empowers the President to extend the Federation's executive authority to these regions. The adult franchise, which has been granted in other parts of Pakistan since 1947, had not been extended to FATA until late 1996, presumably due to political reasons. However, in a significant move, the Pakistani government decided to extend the adult vote to the FATA.

Initially, only a select few notables and Malik's were permitted to vote, while the common people in tribal areas were denied this right. The 1997 elections marked a historic milestone for FATA, with adults exercising their voting rights to elect 12 members to Pakistan's National Assembly. This decision was widely celebrated as a pivotal moment in tribal history, reshaping the socio-political landscape. FATA's representation in the provincial legislature reflects its previous status as a federal subject.

The repeal of the colonial-era 'black law' in FATA is aimed at benefiting the general population and combating the rising threat of militancy. By extending these reforms, the government hopes to curb militants' efforts to impose their ideological agenda on the people. This historic decision is expected to help contain the region's growing militancy and provide opportunities for educated tribal youth to engage in positive political activities. Despite being perceived as a hotbed of militancy, reforms are seen as transformative, leading to peace and prosperity in the tribal territories (Shah, 2012). Many Pakistanis believe that these new laws will effectively combat terrorism and usher in a new era of growth and progress in FATA. Increased responsibility and trust in the political system among tribesmen are also anticipated, contributing to the preservation of democratic institutions and systems.

In the modern era, both established and emerging democracies confront a critical challenge: balancing the preservation of democratic principles with effectively addressing the threat of terrorism. This requires a delicate balance between democratic values and security imperatives. The executive branch, with support from the legislative branch, bears primary responsibility for combating terrorism, ensuring both public safety and the preservation of democratic norms. These branches must evaluate the country's needs and risks, formulate clear policies, and implement them effectively. Ultimately, countering terrorism requires a collaborative effort between the executive and legislative branches (Mersel, 2017).

It's widely acknowledged that democracies are more susceptible to terrorism compared to other forms of government. The assumption is that if potential terrorists and sympathizers could participate openly in competitive politics and

have their voices heard, terrorism would diminish (Gause, 2005). In this regard, the current political engagement of tribesmen plays a crucial role in combating terrorism. Pakistan recently conducted its first-ever provincial elections in a hilly region near the northern border with Afghanistan, once known as the "epicenter" of international terrorism. On July 21, 2019, voters in FATA participated in one of the region's most free and fair elections to date (Sherani, 2016). These elections in the seven districts of FATA are seen as essential by Pakistani officials for supporting regional and global efforts to promote peace in Afghanistan and combat violent extremism. Notably, the historic vote coincided with Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan's first meeting with US President Donald Trump at the White House, where counterterrorism discussions were on the agenda (Gul, 2019). The new approach primarily focuses on a law enforcement counterterrorism model and engagement with tribal leaders to undermine support for extremist groups. The overarching goal of the new government is to develop FATA and integrate the region into the global economy and politics, with a clear incentive to eliminate its status as a terrorist safe haven (Sherani, 2016).

INSTALLATIONS OF JUDICIAL SETUP AND COUNTER-TERRORISM MEASURES

FATA's court system has long been plagued with challenges. A judicial system typically encompasses recognized procedures of justice validated within a particular jurisdiction, which may include both formal and informal methods as long as they are acknowledged and coordinated. In FATA, political authorities wielded influence over a segment of the justice system, while the Jirga served as an informal judicial entity. However, both systems proved inadequate in dispensing justice and maintaining peace, creating a vacuum exploited by militant groups (Sherani, 2016).

In response, preventive measures have been implemented through the judicial system to counter terrorism. These measures include detention, arrest, house demolitions, interrogation methods, provisions for civil liability of armed forces, and electoral laws prohibiting candidates with ties to terror activities. Arrest and detention are commonly

employed by security forces to preempt future terrorist acts, while the demolition of terrorists' homes is used as an administrative measure to prevent suicide bombings and attacks, often resulting in the displacement of entire families despite their non-involvement in terrorist activities (Mersel, 2017). Recent mergers have extended the jurisdiction of the higher judiciary to FATA. The Supreme Court of Pakistan and the Peshawar High Court now wield authority over legal proceedings in the region, including the implementation of preventive measures against terrorism.

Pakistan's "anti-terrorism" legal framework comprises several key legislative acts, including the Anti-Terrorism Act of 1997, the National Counter-Terrorism Authority Act, the Investigation for Fair Trial Act, the Protection of Pakistan Act of 2014, the Twenty-Point National Action Plan to Counter Terrorism (which established military courts to try alleged terrorists), the 21st Constitutional Amendment Act, and the Pakistan Army (Amendment) Act, 2015 (Mehsud, 2017). The recent merger marks a significant stride in safeguarding the fundamental rights of the people of FATA under Articles 184(3) and 199 of the Constitution. The higher judiciary will now ensure the protection of FATA residents' rights as outlined in Articles 8 to 28 of the Constitution ("What is the Levies Force?", 2012). This move is expected to foster a sense of patriotism among the region's inhabitants, dissuading them from engaging in activities against the state with external support.

The Levies form an integral part of the security setup bridging the gap between the FATA and settled regions, known as the Frontier Region (FR). Unlike the Khasadars, who are appointed by tribal authorities and often referred to as "tribal police," the Levies are appointed by the political administration based on merit and are provided with arms and ammunition by the government (Sherani, 2016). The primary policing forces in the area consist of the Levies and Khasadars. To enhance their effectiveness, the reform package suggests increasing the number of Levies and providing them with specialized training, equipment, and facilities. These recommendations are crucial for bolstering the capacity of civil armed forces to combat terrorism and maintain law and order

effectively. The Levies have been adequately trained and organized to serve as the local police force, and the recruitment of 20,000 Levies has been seen as a positive step in improving the volatile law and order situation in the tribal belt (Shigri, 2019). It is recommended that the Khasadar and Levy forces be integrated into the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police force at the earliest opportunity, as a locally sourced force is likely to yield practical results in maintaining peace. With the merger of FATA into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police will assume responsibility for policing in the region (Mehsud, 2019).

Following directives from the Supreme Court of Pakistan, the process of integrating nearly 20,000 Khasadar and levy forces with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police is expected to be completed within six months. This move aims to enhance security in the newly merged tribal districts. The local forces possessed a distinct advantage - their familiarity with local dynamics and people. This expertise, according to some (Ghauri, 2009), contributed to greater security in the past when the region was plagued by militancy. The merger signifies a positive step. By combining these local forces with the provincial police, a unified security unit with the ability to address tribal concerns will be established. This bolstered force, with its enhanced local knowledge, is expected to improve overall security in the region.

ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

Reasons for Economic Backwardness of FATA

Tribal societies typically exhibit resistance to change, with tribal chiefs staunchly opposed to altering customs, legal systems, or administrative structures. They often have a vested interest in maintaining illiteracy among the populace to retain control. Development initiatives are often resisted by tribal leaders fearing loss of control over their people. Social and political instability in FATA has deterred investors and hindered socio-economic progress, exacerbated by the influx of Afghan refugees straining already fragile tribal economies. Additionally, the constitutional status of tribal territories has hindered development by lacking checks and balances between tribal leaders and political administrations managing development funds. The absence of enforcement mechanisms and

intelligence systems has allowed unlawful activities to flourish unchecked. Moreover, the absence of political parties in tribal areas, prevented by tribal leaders viewing them as a threat, further limits avenues for societal progress (Yousufi and Mustafa, 2019).

ECONOMIC CAUSES OF TERRORISM IN FATA

Economic poverty and displacement are significant drivers of terrorism in Pakistan, particularly in the FATA region. Poor economic policies by the government have exacerbated the spread of terrorism in the area. Economic deprivation is a key factor contributing to the issues in FATA, alongside political and socio-political factors. Weak government policies have left FATA residents feeling marginalized, leading some to turn to extremist groups. Factors such as ideological beliefs, religious motivations, personal grievances, and power dynamics have influenced individuals to join anti-state operations in the region.

UNDERDEVELOPMENT

Decades of underdevelopment plague the FATA, making it one of Pakistan's most impoverished regions. This isn't just an economic issue; it's a security concern. FATA's isolation, restrictive traditions, and ineffective government policies have choked economic opportunities, leading to high unemployment and illiteracy. This lack of education and frustration with limited prospects create a breeding ground for extremism. Experts argue the government's neglect is a major factor. The absence of positive social programs, a weak education system, and even uncontrolled media leave a vacuum that extremist groups like the Taliban exploit to recruit unemployed and uneducated youth. To truly address extremism in FATA, tackling underdevelopment is crucial.

ECONOMIC DEPRIVATION AND TERRORISM

Poverty, unemployment, economic injustice, class discrimination, and the allure of economic gains through association with the Taliban are all significant economic factors fueling terrorism in the region. A poll conducted by the FATA Research Center found that over 90% of respondents believed that poverty contributed to

the strengthening of terrorism in FATA. Additionally, a study by a US institute identified poverty as one of the six primary factors contributing to global terrorism. The Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) also attributed increased terrorism in the country to financial insecurity, which leads to imbalanced societal development. Individuals living in financially impoverished societies struggle to meet basic needs and invest in education, healthcare, and future generations due to economic inefficiencies and socio-political policies (Ghauri, 2009).

Moreover, class inequality, unequal wealth distribution, and the indifference of the elite class towards the plight of the poor have further fueled support for the Taliban among disenfranchised individuals. To address these issues and pacify the people of FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the government must implement protective measures such as creating job opportunities, promoting foreign investment, establishing industries, improving economic policies, and ensuring stable income for the populace. The overall consensus suggests a strong correlation between economic marginalization and terrorism in FATA (Yousufi and Mustafa, 2019).

COUNTER MEASURES

The government must implement protective measures to address the root causes of terrorism, including the creation of job opportunities, the encouragement of foreign investment, the establishment of industries, improved economic policies, and the provision of stable income. Pakistan is employing both military and non-military means to improve conditions in tribal areas and has collaborated with international partners such as the United Nations, the United States, and the United Kingdom on various development projects aimed at addressing terrorism's underlying causes. Notable initiatives include Pakistan's Annual Development Programme Fund for FATA 2008-09, the FATA Sustainable Development Plan (SDP) 2006-2015, and US Development Assistance for FATA (Noor et al., 2018). It is imperative for the international community, particularly the United States, to leverage its influence to assist Pakistan in tackling the main challenges, notably

terrorism, which poses a constant threat to global peace.

10-YEAR SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND TAX EXEMPTING

To address the social and economic underdevelopment in FATA sustainably, the government has devised a 10-year Socio-Economic Development Plan. This plan is hailed as a significant milestone with far-reaching implications for the region's peace and prosperity. Its objective is to develop and implement integrated sectoral policies covering infrastructural development, enhancing human development parameters, promoting women's socio-economic development, and encouraging private sector investment in the region (Wasim, 2018). Given FATA's historical exclusion from the national financial distribution mechanism through the NFC, the government has allocated a three percent share for FATA under the NFC, in addition to the existing public sector development allocation. This proposed allocation, based on recent budgetary data, amounts to approximately PKR 120 billion per annum (Noor et al., 2018).

Furthermore, the government aims to improve financial inclusion standards in FATA and increase the number of beneficiaries of government-sponsored social welfare programs such as the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP). Measures have been proposed to digitize individual property rights using modern technology like GIS mapping and record digitization, alongside plans to expand the presence of commercial and farm banks in FATA.

The government is strategizing a 10-year Socio-Economic Development Plan aimed at tackling the long-standing social and economic underdevelopment in FATA. This plan stands as a significant achievement with profound implications for the region's peace and progress. It aims to design and implement integrated sectoral policies addressing infrastructure development, human development, women's socioeconomic empowerment, and fostering private sector investment in the region (Wasim, 2018). Recognizing FATA's exclusion from the national financial distribution system via the NFC, the government has earmarked a 3%

share of the NFC budget for FATA, alongside the existing public sector development budget. This proposed allocation, totaling approximately PKR 120 billion annually, as per recent budgetary data, marks a significant step towards addressing FATA's economic needs (Noor et al., 2018).

Due to the 25th Constitutional Amendment, FATA and Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA) are granted a tax exemption for the next decade. Encouragingly, the Economic Coordinating Committee (ECC) is actively seeking investments from industrialists and traders nationwide for FATA, a move hailed by locals, especially the youth, as it promises to generate new employment opportunities ("PDWP approves 20 projects", 2020). In support of FATA's development, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has allocated substantial funds: Rs62 billion in the 2019-20 budget (Ashfaq, 2020), Rs183.1 billion in the 2020-21 budget (Ali, 2021), and Rs199 billion in the 2021-22 budget for the merged districts ("PDWP approves 20 projects", 2020). These funds are designated for vital sectors like education, healthcare, road infrastructure, agriculture, livestock, and sports facilities. Additionally, the Provincial Development Working Party (PDWP) sanctioned a Rs945 million Ten Year Development Program (TYDP) for the merged districts on November 21, 2019, focusing on initiatives spanning education, healthcare, agriculture, and housing (Michael, 2007).

The implementation of the multibillion-rupee 10-year socioeconomic plan is poised to usher in substantial development in the war-torn FATA region. Beyond enhancing health and education services, the plan underscores the importance of significant infrastructure advancements in agriculture and communication sectors, which are expected to spur job creation and business opportunities in the region. This recent initiative signals a beacon of hope for the marginalized population of the conflict-affected area.

SOCIAL CHANGES

Terrorism and Tribal Society

Terrorism inflicts long-term consequences on individuals, groups, and society as a whole, fostering human conflict and corruption. This

conflict often escalates into violence or terrorism, profoundly affecting the general public. The repercussions extend beyond economic development, impacting societal well-being and individual psychosocial health (Chughtai, 2013). In FATA, terrorism has dramatically altered the social landscape, with militant control disrupting social life and imposing radical ideologies. Extremist groups have imposed their ideologies forcefully, leading to a significant shift in cultural norms and social behaviors (Haider and Jameel, 2017). Consequently, tribal society has witnessed profound changes in outlook, behavior, and lifestyle. The relentless cycle of terrorist activities and military operations has ravaged local culture, leaving behind a scarred environment (Shah, 2012).

The people of FATA have endured immense suffering, witnessing the destruction of their land, property, and livelihoods at the hands of militants and security forces alike. They have experienced the brutal loss of loved ones and the displacement from their homes due to counter-insurgency measures. Amidst these adversities, the war on terror has brought both positive and negative impacts to tribal life.

FATA AMALGAMATION INTO KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA AND ITS SOCIAL IMPACT

The recent announcement by the Pakistani government regarding the merger of tribal areas holds significant promise for the people of these regions, marking a pivotal moment in their quest for emancipation and socio-political development. This move offers a historic opportunity for tribal communities to assert control over their destiny, free from the influence of militants that have long plagued the area (Noor et al., 2018). Successful military operations have paved the way for stability, instilling hope for positive social transformation in FATA (Shah et al., 2019). With the 25th constitutional amendment, FATA residents now have access to higher courts, enabling them to exercise their fundamental rights and gain representation in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly (Tariq, 2019). This merger has set the stage for a peaceful environment in the region.

Residents of FATA often seek education in other cities, highlighting the dire state of the

education sector in the region. However, the recent merger has sparked a wave of development, with education emerging as a top priority for reform. The Federal Government, in collaboration with the Pakistan Army, has initiated efforts to rebuild educational institutions in FATA, allocating Rs240 million for this purpose (Yusufzai, 2020). Additionally, the integration is expected to improve healthcare access, addressing the longstanding issues of inadequate hospitals, medical staff, equipment, laboratories, and medicines in the region (Sherani, 2016).

The multibillion-rupee 10-year socioeconomic plan, coupled with the 3% NFC share, signifies a substantial commitment to socioeconomic development in the conflict-affected FATA region. Beyond improvements in health and education, the plan emphasizes significant infrastructure development in agriculture and communication, aiming to generate employment opportunities and foster economic growth (Shah and Areas, 2018). This comprehensive agenda offers hope for the marginalized communities of the war-torn region.

Pashtunwali, known as the "Pashtun way of life," embodies the rich Pashtun culture rooted in local customs and a code of conduct. Central to Pashtunwali are principles guiding the management of tribal issues and conflicts, traditionally overseen by the Jirga, a council of tribal elders. While the Jirga reflects Pashtunwali values, it also perpetuates human rights violations, particularly concerning the rights of women and children who lack representation in this system (Khan et al., 2021). The recent integration signals a need for systemic reforms, including the establishment of formal courts and policing structures, which would diminish the reliance on the Jirga system in resolving disputes. As the government invests in infrastructure for law enforcement and judicial processes, there is optimism for progress and peace in the region (Gregory, 2011).

A robust mechanism is imperative for implementing educational reforms in these areas. Addressing the grievances of the marginalized segments of society necessitates improvements in education and healthcare provision. Generalizing education enhances social consciousness and job opportunities,

fostering societal advancement. The government must prioritize education and healthcare services in these regions to restore and sustain peace and security. Economic, legal, and political interventions can enhance social cohesion, steering society towards political and social stability, thereby fostering peace and development in tribal areas.

The inhabitants of the newly merged districts exhibit a progressive attitude towards development. They aspire for immediate changes to bring prosperity to the region, yet change is gradual and time-consuming. Rapid and positive transformations are not foreseeable in any society. Even primitive societies respond to new customs and values in a modernizing manner. The process will be protracted and intricate. Political development marks the initial phase of change. The merger signifies a pivotal moment in the history of the tribal region. A systemic transformation will entail changes in all facets of individuals' lives. Change indicates a society's willingness to adapt its way of life, reflecting efforts to amend societal norms and traditions.

CONCLUSION

The integration of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa marks a significant and positive milestone orchestrated by the Pakistani government. This move heralds a promising future of peace, prosperity, and development for the former FATA region. With the integration, residents of FATA now enjoy equal political, constitutional, economic, and administrative rights akin to other citizens of the country. The transformation of the erstwhile war-torn economy into a stable economic hub is anticipated, transitioning the region from a geostrategic to a geo-economic zone.

Moreover, the historical conflict-ridden area of former FATA has been transformed into a bastion of peace and harmony following its integration with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The eradication of terrorism and militancy ensures not only regional but also national security. However, sustaining this peace and security requires the effective implementation of measures. Although the Pakistani military has successfully ousted the Taliban from the tribal areas, ongoing coordinated military efforts and public support are vital to prevent militant

regrouping and reassertion of control in the border region. Furthermore, this integration is indispensable for mitigating the risk of border disputes with Afghanistan, thereby safeguarding the security and stability of the entire region, including Pakistan. Given FATA's adjacency to Afghanistan, instability in the latter could ripple across South and Central Asia, as well as the Middle East. Hence, the integration of FATA holds paramount importance in ensuring regional peace, stability, and prosperity.

The extension of the Pakistani constitution to tribal areas and the permanent abolition of the oppressive FCR are indeed commendable steps forward. However, addressing other fundamental issues requires careful consideration. To curb the influence of groups like al-Qaeda, a comprehensive overhaul of the tribal society's infrastructure is imperative. The foremost priority should be to ensure free and accessible education for all, accompanied by substantial enhancements in healthcare services. Additionally, efforts must be directed towards agricultural development, revitalizing industries, and enhancing the communication system in the tribal region. These measures will not only mitigate the influence of extremist elements but also foster socio-economic progress and stability in the area.

The resilience demonstrated by the people of the region in the face of terrorism and prolonged social conflict is commendable. However, urgent attention from the government towards rapid development is crucial to prevent foreign hostile elements from exploiting the masses under the guise of identity, potentially reigniting conflicts that have been managed at great cost by both the people and government forces. The tribal belt's history of corruption, illegal trade, and militancy has significantly impacted the governance system. The proposed reforms hold promise for positive change in the region, but their implementation poses a formidable challenge. Therefore, the involvement of civil society, particularly the youth, is essential as locals are best positioned to contribute meaningfully to the region's development efforts.

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