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# ANALYSIS

## Challenges Facing Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA)

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## Introduction: Emerging Trends and Developments in Pakistan's FATA—Implications for the United States

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## Executive Summary

This introduction provides an overview of the challenges facing Pakistan's counter-insurgency operations and development initiatives in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and draws implications for the U.S.

### *Main Argument:*

Pakistan's progress against the militants in the FATA—whether defined in military or developmental terms—requires changes in the country's framework for comprehending the problem that are so fundamental as to be extremely unlikely. Part of the ineffectiveness of Pakistan's security forces in combating militants in the FATA results from lack of training in and appropriate equipment for counter-insurgency warfare. Pakistan's failure also stems from the fact that the country's regional interests rule out sharply aggressive and sustained military action against the FATA's predominantly Pashtun population—a population that Islamabad expects to rely on as an ally in future strategic contests in the region. Pakistan's domestic political interests also stand menaced by military operations that might deepen popular disenchantment with the Pakistani state and military.

### *Policy Implications:*

- The U.S. should understand that Pakistan's competition for influence in the region and its domestic political interests outweigh the country's interest in the U.S.-led war on terrorism.
- The perception that the U.S.-led coalition and NATO military occupation of Afghanistan is the root cause of the FATA insurgency leaves the U.S. with few palatable policy options.
- These options would be enhanced were the U.S. to recognize that there can be no meaningful change in the FATA without a basic change in its constitutional status and the gradual integration of the FATA into Pakistan's mainstream polity.
- It is important that the U.S. lend discrete but firm support to the phasing out of the seven political agencies inherited from the British colonial era; to the repealing of the Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR), the anachronistic legal framework that ensures routine and extensive abuse of power; and to the removal of all military and customs barriers to trade between the FATA, the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), and the rest of Pakistan.
- The U.S. should lend weight to the practically unavoidable attempts of the newly elected and civilian-led government in Islamabad to negotiate compromise agreements with important elements of the militant forces in the FATA.

This introduction provides a U.S. perspective on the findings and analyses emerging in the following essays on the challenges facing Pakistan's counter-insurgency operations and development initiatives in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). The first essay, authored by Ijaz Khan, addresses the challenges facing development in the FATA. The second essay, authored by Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, addresses the challenges facing a counter-militant campaign in the FATA.

This introduction also examines recent political developments in Pakistan, including the extraordinary upsurge in suicide bombings and the ousting of President Pervez Musharraf's "King's party" in the 2008 parliamentary elections. This introduction further notes that important differences in the strategic outlooks of the United States and Pakistani governments regarding the FATA are becoming increasingly apparent. These differences have far-reaching consequences not only for Pakistan's regional and domestic political interests but also for U.S. policy. The introduction is divided into three sections: a contrastive analysis of the key findings of the two essays, including the salient points of agreement and disagreement; the presentation of a U.S. perspective on these findings; and a concluding section with policy implications for the United States.

## Key Findings of the Essays

### *Points of Agreement*

Khan and Cheema understand the circumstances of the FATA very differently and tackle these circumstances from different angles. In fact, the authors seem agreed on only two important points. First, the authors agree that militancy in the FATA has reached dangerous dimensions. Second, Khan and Cheema agree that no strictly military solution to the problem is at hand, either because Pakistan lacks the will or capacity to attempt such a solution (according to Khan) or because a more aggressive military effort would likely worsen matters (according to Cheema). Both authors argue that Pakistan's security forces should aim at eliminating the militants. Not to eliminate the insurgency leaves the field open for continued militant activity and expansion. Khan, however, asserts that the Pakistani government has thus far been content merely to contain rather than to eliminate the militants. Cheema, in contrast, maintains that Pakistan's current heavy reliance on military force is not likely to succeed in the absence of major political and economic reforms. In particular, Cheema argues that the military actions of "foreign" (meaning Western, or U.S. and NATO) forces, both in Afghanistan and in the FATA, are already too aggressive and are, in fact, one of the root causes of the ongoing insurgency.

There is, of course, virtually no disagreement among observers on the first point. The second point of agreement between Khan and Cheema, however, delivers a curiously contradictory logic that what should be done cannot or will not be done and that even if such an approach were attempted, circumstances in the FATA would not likely improve. Therefore, no clear resolution to the FATA's problems emerges from these points of agreement.

### *Points of Disagreement*

Cheema and Khan are seriously at odds in regard to at least four fundamental points: (1) the effectiveness of Pakistan's counter-insurgency operations, (2) the root cause of the insurgency in the FATA, (3) possible remedies to the FATA problem, and (4) the capacity of the Pakistani government for winning the "hearts and minds" of FATA's tribesmen.

*The effectiveness of Pakistan's counter-insurgency operations.* The authors disagree on the effectiveness of Pakistan's security forces in countering the threat of militancy in the FATA. Khan argues that the failures of Pakistan's security forces are more conspicuous than the successes. The militants, he claims, are gaining ground—and not only in the FATA. In spite of developmental strategies and policies intended to integrate the tribal peoples of the FATA into Pakistani society, what is far more in evidence is a strong disintegrative trend led by religious militants. Even more alarmingly, Khan also maintains that even if Islamabad's willingness to act more aggressively were to grow, the government's capacity to counter the insurgency would still diminish as the militants entrench themselves more deeply.

Cheema, in language decidedly more military-friendly and optimistic than Khan's, concedes only that "doubts remain over whether the situation in the FATA will normalize soon." Cheema claims that the presence of Pakistan's armed forces in the FATA is a "significant and welcome development," that these forces have inflicted severe damage on hardcore militants, and that the armed forces now have increased access to Waziristan.

*The root cause of the insurgency in the FATA.* On the issue of responsibility for the situation in the FATA, Khan places most of the blame on the Pakistani government's failure over approximately 60 years to address the FATA issue squarely. Khan further criticizes the government's failure to abandon its reliance on an obsolete model of governance in the FATA inherited from the British.

In contrast, Cheema unequivocally asserts that the root cause of the insurgency is the perceived Western occupation of Afghanistan and Pakistan's acquiescence in that action. According to Cheema, the "aggressive conduct of foreign forces in the FATA has reduced the effectiveness of dimensions of the adopted approach, such as policies focused on the political process and on economic development. The similarly aggressive approach of foreign forces in Afghanistan has likewise strengthened the non-cooperative attitude of the Afghan nationals residing in Pakistan."

*Possible remedies to the FATA problem.* As for remedies to the FATA problem, Khan and Cheema plant themselves largely on opposite sides of this issue. Khan, taking a much more skeptical line, maintains that the FATA issue is more political than developmental. He insists there can be no meaningful developmental change without a basic change in the FATA's status—by which is meant the region's full political-constitutional integration into Pakistan. Any such incorporation would require a change in the government's present mindset, which Khan maintains currently sacrifices meaningful progress in the FATA to Pakistan's regional geopolitical priorities. Chief among these priorities is maintenance of the militants as "policy tools" for use against both domestic and regional adversaries.

Cheema more optimistically argues for a wide and diverse assortment of remedial measures—ranging from the decapitation of militant group leadership to the conduct of "intercultural dialogue among civilizations," and from "the identification of causes breeding terrorism" to the provision of night-vision devices to combatant forces.

*Winning the "hearts and minds" of the FATA's tribesmen.* Finally, the two authors differ on the capacity of the Pakistani government for winning the hearts and minds of the FATA's tribesmen. In Khan's view Islamabad faces nearly insuperable obstacles to achieving this goal. These obstacles include: extremely limited on-the-ground access to the tribal peoples, the absence of creditable institutions in the FATA through which to reach out to tribesmen, and, not least important, the presence in Pakistani ruling circles of widespread and unconcealed sympathy toward both Afghan and Pakistani Taliban. Cheema concedes that there are obstacles to winning the support of the people of the FATA. Foremost among these obstacles is the "common perception" that the Pakistani government acts in the FATA "as a U.S. proxy in the interest of self-perpetuation." He concedes too that Islamabad at some stage will have to negotiate with generally moderate local Taliban elements. Still, according to Cheema, the primary focus of the Pakistani government's efforts in the FATA should be "winning the hearts and minds of the FATA people."

In light of the highly complex realities of the FATA, these differences in the authors' findings are to be expected. Each of the seven tribal agencies of the FATA harbors its own unique array of actors, and each has a unique set of political and ideological drivers. Like the proverbial blind men seeking to describe an elephant, where and how one encounters the FATA will largely shape the judgments one makes.

### U.S. Perspective on the Findings Emerging from the Essays

There can be little question that Pakistan's security forces have been relatively ineffective in combating militants in the FATA. Part of the ineffectiveness results from a lack of training in counter-insurgency warfare as well as a lack of appropriate equipment and weaponry. This ineffectiveness also results from the absence of a clear military mission in the FATA—a product, according to Khan, of a mindset sacrificing meaningful progress in the FATA to Pakistan's regional geopolitical priorities. Some part of the ineffectiveness of security forces likely also stems from the natural reluctance of a Pashtun-heavy officer corps to engage militarily with co-ethnic brethren and fellow citizens.

One should not conclude, however, that the FATA has passed the point of no return—that is, that the region has already been effectively “Talibanized” and that no scope remains for recovery and reform by the Pakistani government. Even less should one conclude that significant numbers of the FATA's inhabitants are falling increasingly under the spell of the Wahhabist religious extremism spread by militants. No doubt there are plenty of angry, resentful, and frustrated people in the FATA. There can also be no doubt that a mixture of political forces garbed in various ideologies of political Islam are working hard to take advantage of these resentments and frustrations. Islamic extremism, however, is by no means the sole, or even the most important, problem facing these people.

Khan is right to insist that there can be no meaningful developmental change in the FATA without a basic change in the FATA's status. The present author disagrees, however, with Khan's view that what is required is the FATA's full political-constitutional integration into Pakistan. Now is clearly not the time to push for such change. Instead, the Pakistani government could immediately promote a number of pragmatic adjustments in the FATA's management. These adjustments would include:

- *Early phasing out of the seven political agencies.* This administrative system, inherited from the British, has bred extremely low levels of governance, high levels of corruption among the political agents, and little but contempt among FATA

inhabitants. The agencies could be replaced by a local government structure similar to that found elsewhere in Pakistan. Local governments would be staffed by well-trained administrative officers ready to act as change agents on behalf of tribal populations.

- *Repeal of the Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR)*. This anachronistic legal framework centralizes far too much power in the hands of the political agents, thus ensuring routine and extensive abuse of power.
- *Removal of all military and customs barriers to trade between the FATA, the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), and the rest of Pakistan*. The barriers are a stimulus to extortion and racketeering.

Recognition of the FATA's vast economic promise is also needed. The region's citizens are among Pakistan's most entrepreneurial businessmen and dominate the oil transport business vital to sustaining U.S. forces in Afghanistan. Moreover, FATA businessmen own a large share of Pakistan's trucking industry. The FATA's mainstream political leaders for the most part possess an attractive blend of opportunism and liberalism.

There remains abundant opportunity for the Pakistani government to win the support of the local population of the FATA. This opportunity, however, is presently compromised by this population's general perception that Islamabad does the bidding of the United States and acts for its self-perpetuation in power.

### Implications for the United States

The above observations pose a considerable dilemma for the governments of both Pakistan and the United States. In light of this situation it will be helpful to consider the implications of these findings for the United States.

First, it is clear from both Cheema's and Khan's assessments that the United States possesses few, if any, attractive options in the FATA. If Khan's position that conditions in the FATA are steadily worsening and that Islamabad may be losing its ability to control these conditions is accepted, then progress against the militants in the FATA requires fundamental changes in the Pakistani government's framework for comprehending the problem. This is the case irrespective of whether progress is defined in military or developmental terms. For all practical purposes, such fundamental changes are extremely unlikely. As Khan sees the situation, in other words, there is little opportunity

for the United States to achieve its goals in the FATA. By contrast, as Cheema sees the situation, the achievement of Washington's goals in the FATA is not really desirable.

Second, the bleakness of the above judgment reveals a profound disconnection in the strategic outlooks of Pakistan and the United States. Pakistan's regional interests, as defined by the Pakistani government, rule out sharply aggressive and sustained military action against the predominantly Pashtun peoples, upon whom the government expects to rely as allies in future regional strategic contests. Thus, U.S. and Pakistani objectives in Afghanistan today are far from fully convergent, and these objectives are perhaps least convergent when it comes to India.

The United States will need to understand that Pakistan's competition for influence in this region, and in Afghanistan in particular, vastly outweighs the country's interest in the war on terrorism.<sup>1</sup> The U.S. government neglects or undervalues this feature of Pakistan's strategic landscape at Washington's own peril. No doubt Pakistan can be pressured to act against its perceived interests to an extent. Islamabad, however, is bound to avoid military actions in the FATA that might so alienate the region's mainly Pashtun inhabitants as to arouse latent ethno-nationalist separatist inclinations or spread lethal disaffection throughout Pakistan's vast and widely distributed Pashtun population. Indeed, evidence of such disaffection is already clear. From Islamabad's perspective, the worst policy would be to pursue—in concert with the United States—military objectives in the FATA that left Pakistan friendless in the strategically crucial state of Afghanistan.

Third, there also seems to be a profound disconnection between the strategic outlooks of Pakistan and the United States in regard to Pakistan's domestic political interests. These interests, as the now civilian-led Pakistani government understands them, are menaced by military actions that threaten popular disenchantment with both the government and the all-important military. Military actions popularly conceived as attacks on innocent citizens fall into this category.

No event better illustrates the political price paid for attacks by Pakistan's security forces against domestic targets than the spectacular surge in suicide terrorism following the controversial 2007 Lal Masjid operation. The Musharraf government's ordering of this operation is one prominent explanation not only for the extraordinary spike in suicide bombings but also for the trouncing of President Musharraf's King's party in the

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<sup>1</sup> Robert G. Wirsing, "In India's Lengthening Shadow: The US-Pakistan Strategic Alliance and the War in Afghanistan," *Asian Affairs* 34, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 151–72.

2008 parliamentary elections.<sup>2</sup> There were a total of fifty-six suicide bombings in Pakistan in 2007—the last bombing killing former prime minister Benazir Bhutto. Forty-six of the attacks were against targets associated with the army, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), the Special Services Group (SSG), and the air force—resulting in the deaths of 419 members of the security forces and 217 civilians. The corresponding figures for 2006 show only six suicide incidents.<sup>3</sup> The centrality of revenge killing in the traditional Pashtun code of conduct suggests strongly that the rise in suicide bombings in Pakistan is in great part a result of this code of revenge. Up until the February 2008 national elections the country had already suffered seventeen suicide bombings, resulting in 266 fatalities.<sup>4</sup> Curiously, there have only been two suicide bombings since then.

Fourth, neither Cheema nor Khan clearly delineates the content or sequence of possible “next steps” for U.S. policy toward the FATA. Khan paints a dismal portrait of the Pakistani government’s capacity for reform—at best a baffling circumstance for the U.S. government. Cheema’s labeling of the U.S. military occupation of Afghanistan as the root cause of the FATA problem would seem to leave Washington with only unpalatable policy options. Clearly the difficulty for U.S. policy lies in the mistaken assumption that the war in Afghanistan can be conducted militarily and also unilaterally, irrespective of Pakistan’s own critical interests and indeed indifferent to the need for a transparent regionally based strategy.

Fifth, the assassination of Benazir Bhutto in late December 2007 overturned the U.S. government’s carefully orchestrated plans for Pakistan’s democratic regime makeover. The assassination thus pushed the U.S.-Pakistan relationship toward a critical crossroads. The ousting of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid-i-Azam party (PML-Q) in the 2008 elections, and the blow to President Musharraf this development represented, obviously added to Washington’s woes. This situation, however, does not

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<sup>2</sup> Far from being what many in the United States perceived as a harsh but necessary rescue of the country’s capital from pro-al Qaeda and pro-Taliban militants, the Lal Masjid episode has been widely judged in Pakistan to have been a wanton slaughter of mainly unarmed young women. The toll in lives seems to be far closer to 1,600 than the 100 or so claimed by the Pakistani government. Of the 56 suicide incidents in 2007, only 4 occurred during the first six months of the year. The other 52 occurred following the storming of the Lal Masjid.

<sup>3</sup> B. Raman, “Suicide Terrorism in Pakistan—2007,” Raman’s Terrorism Analysis web log, January 14, 2008, [http://ramanterrorismanalysis.blogspot.com/2008\\_01\\_01\\_archive.html](http://ramanterrorismanalysis.blogspot.com/2008_01_01_archive.html).

<sup>4</sup> B. Raman, “Suicide Terrorism in Pakistan—International Terrorism Monitor—Paper No. 381,” South Asia Analysis Group, Paper No. 2618, March 12, 2008, <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/papers27/paper2618.html>. Pakistan currently holds the unenvied world record in this regard. It should be recalled that in his seminal work on suicide terrorism published in 2005, Robert Pape cited Pakistan as one of five major Muslim populations least inclined toward suicide bombings. See Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Random House, 2005), 242.

necessarily mean that “Washington may be in the process of losing a friend.”<sup>5</sup> The U.S.-Pakistan connection is multifaceted, fairly deep-rooted, and carries major benefits for both sides. The relationship is thus not in immediate danger of collapse. Nonetheless, U.S.-Pakistan relations—as these relations have been shaped in the war on terrorism—have grown increasingly contrived and brittle.

Now the harmonization of U.S. and Pakistani objectives is bound to become even more difficult—and more imperative—than ever. The United States will need to factor into its plans for Afghanistan more of Pakistan’s regional and domestic political interests than has been allowed for thus far. Rumored plans “to expand the authority of the CIA and the military to conduct far more aggressive covert operations in the tribal areas of Pakistan” strike this author as running contrary to what is needed.<sup>6</sup> Such plans are virtually certain to compound the all-too-visible strains on Pakistan’s domestic political stability. The suggestion that the United States should “speak clearly and forcefully in private to Pakistani leaders about U.S. frustrations with their counterterrorism performance” likewise seems heedless of Pakistan’s own frustrations—principally the government’s mounting incapacity to cope successfully with either domestic or regional political challenges.<sup>7</sup> Washington is clearly faced with a determinedly “new approach” to the militancy problem ushered in by the civilian-led government in Islamabad. This new approach seeks “to repackage the conflict in a more palatable way for Pakistanis, and to strike a more independent stance from Washington.”<sup>8</sup>

Before taking further steps, the United States will need to consider the prevalence in Pakistan of anti-American sentiment.<sup>9</sup> Large majorities of the Pakistani population say both that the United States cannot be trusted to act responsibly and that the United States wields an unjust influence over Pakistan. Washington should realize that the U.S. military presence in the region is viewed as a threat to Pakistan and consider the implications of this sentiment when deciding what actions to take in the region.

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<sup>5</sup> Syed Saleem Shahzad, “Pakistan Takes a Step Backwards,” *Asia Times Online*, January 12, 2008, [http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South\\_Asia/JA12Df01.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/JA12Df01.html).

<sup>6</sup> Steven Lee Myers, David E. Sanger, and Eric Schmitt, “U.S. Considers New Covert Push Within Pakistan,” *New York Times*, January 6, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/06/washington/06terror.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Ashley J. Tellis, “Pakistan—Conflicted Ally in the War on Terror,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Policy Brief, no. 56, November 2007, 7.

<sup>8</sup> Jane Perlez, “Pakistan to Talk With New Militants, Leader Says,” *New York Times*, March 22, 2008, [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/22/world/asia/22pstan.html?\\_r=1&hp=&oref=slogin&pa](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/22/world/asia/22pstan.html?_r=1&hp=&oref=slogin&pa).

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, C. Christine Fair, Clay Ramsay, and Steven Kull, “Pakistani Public Opinion on Democracy, Islamist Militancy, and Relations with the US,” WorldPublicOpinion.org and United States Institute of Peace, January 7, 2008, 2–3.

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## Challenges Facing Development in Pakistan's FATA

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## Executive Summary

This essay addresses the challenges facing development in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).

### *Main Argument:*

This essay finds that the Pakistani government's policies cannot bring the fundamental changes required for meaningful development of the region. First, Pakistan's ambivalent posture toward the fight against terrorism—seeking to contain rather than eliminate militancy—has gradually undermined the country's ability to pursue successful developmental projects. In addition, the government's failure to understand and respond to the FATA's evolving socio-economic landscape and power structure has seriously compromised Islamabad's ability to implement suitable developmental changes.

### *Policy Implications:*

- The most successful changes in the FATA have only favored a small minority of the population. Efforts must be made to ensure that the benefits of development reach the FATA's predominantly illiterate, isolated, and impoverished population.
- Development strategy must be formulated in such a manner as to transform not just a few tribesmen—who after transformation become isolated from their tribal society, leaving that society unchanged—but rather the entire FATA society.
- Development of the FATA without fundamental changes to its outdated administrative system and isolated constitutional status cannot yield positive results. All efforts must be made to fully integrate the FATA into Pakistan with policies reflecting the FATA's evolving socio-economic landscape and power structure.
- Pakistan's government must ensure that various non-governmental developmental agents have secure access to the FATA.
- Political reform is needed that ensures the FATA's population is involved in developmental decisionmaking institutions.
- Pakistan's political parties should be allowed to operate within the tribal areas, thus encouraging popular participation in strengthening the FATA's stake in the federation.
- The writ of the higher judiciary must also be extended to the FATA.

This essay addresses the challenges facing development in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), a special administrative region enjoying vast internal autonomy with minimal state oversight. Due to the area's special constitutional status, isolation, and proximity to and shared ethnicity with Afghanistan, the FATA has become a safe haven for extremists and terrorists following the overthrow of the Taliban government in Afghanistan in 2001. As a result, the region is now the focus of international concern and the center of the war on terrorism.

With U.S. support and prodding, the Pakistani government has initiated a comprehensive three-pronged political, military, and developmental strategy to break the FATA's isolation and rid the area of militancy. Focusing on the developmental element of that strategy, this study finds that the government's policies are not geared to achieve any of the fundamental changes required for meaningful development of the region. Furthermore, Pakistan's ambivalent posture toward the war on terrorism has gradually undermined Islamabad's ability even to pursue successful development projects.

This essay begins with a brief summary of the current political-administrative structure of the FATA. It then identifies Pakistan's strategy for developing the FATA—noting earlier government attempts to develop the area, especially those made during Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's government (December 1971–April 1977). The next section discusses the FATA's evolving socio-economic landscape and power structure and points to the futility of the Pakistani government's reliance on outdated political-administrative structures in light of these changes. Focusing on the deleterious impact of militancy on development initiatives, the essay then examines the rise of militancy in the FATA. The essay concludes by discussing the Pakistani government's current inability to bring effective change to the region.

### *FATA's Political-Administrative Structure*

According to the system established by the British, the FATA consists of seven administrative units, which are known as political agencies, and six frontier regions.<sup>1</sup> There is also one Provincially Administered Tribal Area (PATA)—Malakand Agency. The FATA is directly administered by the federal government through the governor of the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), while each agency is administered by a political agent (PA). The PA is also the judicial officer, against whose decision there is no right of appeal.

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<sup>1</sup> For an account of the FATA's governance and legislative structures, see "Pakistan's Tribal Areas: Appeasing the Militants," International Crisis Group, Asia Report, no. 125, December 11, 2006, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4568&l=1>.

The colonial system was characterized by minimum state penetration and aimed only at ensuring security for roads and government posts. The *jirga*, which is the traditional Pashtun council of elders, was adapted to work as an intermediary between the state and the predominantly Pashtun tribal population. Because the legal code—known as the Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR)—only dealt with crimes against the state, the PA possessed absolute power. Although this administrative system still exists, most of the socio-economic realities, along with the geostrategic environment, have fundamentally changed, thus severely limiting the system's effectiveness.

### *The Government of Pakistan's Development Policies*

The Pakistani government's development policies in the FATA from 1948 until 1971 were negligible. In the 1970s the government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto initiated policies aiming at the development of the FATA. Bhutto's administrative reforms, however, did not effectively alter the existing administrative and legislative system. Bhutto brought the FATA administration under the new federal Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON) and established the FATA Development Corporation (FATADC). These organizational changes and initiatives streamlined federal government control of the FATA.

In addition, the Bhutto administration gave constitutional sanction to quotas for FATA inhabitants in educational institutions throughout Pakistan as well as in federal jobs, including the coveted Central Superior Services. Degree colleges for men were also established in all agencies and a number of high schools were established. Some industries were constructed in the state sector, while various incentives were offered to the private sector. The Bhutto administration initiated new schemes for agricultural development and paid greater attention to roads and communications in the FATA in an attempt to transform the economy and gradually integrate the FATA with the rest of the country.

Facilitating the acquisition of passports and thus travel abroad for FATA residents constituted another very important step in the development of the FATA. This policy paved the way for tribesmen to travel to the Gulf region, East Asia, Europe, and the United States—with far reaching socio-economic and political implications.

*Post-2001 development policies.* With the exception of the introduction of adult franchise in 1997, no major initiative was undertaken in the 1980s or 1990s in the

FATA.<sup>2</sup> The introduction of adult franchise, however, was not accompanied by the government's permission for political parties to operate in the FATA. In the wake of September 11 the FATA suddenly became the center of global attention. With international prodding and support, the Pakistani government has initiated a number of developmental schemes and policies.

In 2002 a FATA secretariat was set up. Four years later this secretariat was expanded to the civil secretariat of the FATA, which was established to take over decisionmaking functions. Project implementation is now carried out by the departments of the FATA's civil secretariat. The NWFP governor's secretariat plays a coordinating role between the federal and provincial governments and the FATA's civil secretariat. The Pakistani government has abolished the FATADC.

Since 2004 the Pakistani government has introduced agency councils to serve as local representative bodies in the FATA. These councils are composed of both elected members—only government-recognized maliks—and PA-nominated members. Not only do agency councils have almost no authority, but there is still no clear delimitation of their functions and powers. The thrust of the government's development policies post-2001 thus seems to be on reviving and strengthening—rather than changing—the existing FATA system.

With that said, a number of development schemes relying mainly on international assistance, especially from the United States, have been announced. In addition, the construction of roads has begun, and some health units are emerging in the FATA. The most important project completed after 2002 is the road connecting the Khyber and Kurram agencies. Though school buildings have been constructed in most of the agencies, most of these schools have yet to start functioning. Even the older existing schools are closed in North and South Waziristan as well as in Bajaur Agency and most of Malakand Division.

*The limited role of NGOs.* There is a real need for NGO activity in the FATA. Although Pakistani law does not permit the establishment of NGOs in the tribal areas, NGOs from other parts of the country—as well as international NGOs—operate in the tribal areas. The ability of these organizations to act freely and securely is hampered, however, by religious militant forces who regard NGOs as anti-Islamic or as foreign agents promoting Western and U.S. agendas. Nor does the Pakistani state adopt a

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<sup>2</sup> Adult franchise—or the right of every adult (age 18 and above) to vote—replaced the earlier voting system, which gave that right only to officially recognized *maliks*. Malik is the term used for tribal elders similar to, though also distinct from, tribal chieftains. Only maliks who suit the state's policies are recognized by the PA, and only these recognized maliks are invited to official jirgas and given stipends and other privileges.

particularly friendly view of these NGOs, which Islamabad sees mainly as unwelcome intruders with no sense of the reality on the ground.

In the end the real impact of international aid organizations does not match the level of funds and support given. Owing to the current insurgency and ineffective state authorities, these international organizations are indirect players with extremely limited access at the ground level.<sup>3</sup> Addressing this issue of the limited reach of NGOs into the FATA is at least as significant as, if not more significant than, addressing concerns over increasing the amount of foreign aid in the FATA.<sup>4</sup>

### *The FATA's Evolving Socio-Economic Landscape and Power Structure*

Bhutto's policies accelerated a process of socio-economic change with political implications that required corresponding administrative and constitutional adjustments. Yet these adjustments, including the extension of political parties into the FATA, did not accompany important Bhutto reforms. The absence of effective political-administrative changes resulted in a vacuum, which has currently been filled by the extremist forces operating in the FATA.

Educational policies and job quotas in the FATA facilitated the emergence of a new class—an educated middle class—integrated into Pakistan's socio-political structure and administration. Yet the benefits of the FATA's development are not dispersed evenly to all tribesmen. The beneficiaries of reforms are increasingly the second generation of the earlier beneficiaries who are mostly settled in Pakistani cities outside of the FATA. Therefore, these beneficiaries do not greatly advance the development of the FATA's society. This new class, however, has altered the malik's traditional authority on which the whole edifice of the existing FATA system was based. The 1997 introduction of adult franchise served to further erode and transform traditional authority.

The FATA's illegal trade has also provided income to a large population and created a new economically powerful class with political ambitions while bringing FATA tribesmen into contact with the outside world. Many tribesmen now send their children to schools and universities in Pakistani cities—and some even to schools in Dubai and the United Kingdom. The tribal diaspora is spread throughout Pakistan and most significantly has reached the Middle East, Far East, Europe, and the United States.

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<sup>3</sup> See "Pashtunkhwa—A Developmental Framework—Part One," National Democratic Consultative Process (NDCP), March 10, 2007, [http://khyberwatch.com/nandara/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=300&Itemid=137](http://khyberwatch.com/nandara/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=300&Itemid=137).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

*The Rise of Militancy in the FATA and Its Spread into the NWFP*

The tribal system suffered a serious blow when the FATA was used as a base from which to wage the *mujahideen* war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan.<sup>5</sup> The 1980s witnessed the mushrooming of militant *madrassas* (religious schools), funded mostly by Arab money and local philanthropists.

Militants arriving in the FATA following the 2001 NATO intervention in Afghanistan found an administrative and political vacuum that they have since filled in a span of just six years. If the purpose of various development strategies has been to integrate tribesmen into Pakistani society, then this goal has not been achieved; rather, the current situation is marked by a strong disintegrative trend spearheaded by religious militants.

Some FATA residents working in Saudi Arabia—mainly residents from North and South Waziristan—have developed a special connection with Arab jihadis. The relatives of FATA tribesmen in Saudi Arabia are provided secure jobs and support in Saudi Arabia by the relatives of Arabs taking refuge in the FATA.<sup>6</sup>

All agreements reached between the insurgents and the Pakistani government have ultimately failed, resulting in the expansion of the militants' territorial control.<sup>7</sup> There has thus emerged a continuous pattern of state erosion and growing militant influence spreading out of the FATA into the settled districts of the NWFP. The militants now have serious influence in most of the southern settled districts of the NWFP, including Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan, and Kohat, as well as Swat, and now have the capability to deliver threats and edicts—rather than just hide bombs—in the central NWFP districts of Peshawar, Mardan, Nowshera, Swabi, and Charsadda.

*Pakistan's Inability to Implement Effective Changes in the FATA*

The Pakistani government's military, political, and economic strategies in the FATA aim to revive state authority through the discredited and outdated PA-jirga system, which consists of the exchange of local autonomy in return for the promised protection

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<sup>5</sup> *Mujahideen* are religious warriors or those who wage jihad; in an Afghan context the term is used to describe those who fought against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the 1980s.

<sup>6</sup> Massoud Ansari, "Banking on Terror," *Newsline*, May 2005, <http://www.newsline.com.pk/NewsMay2005/newsbeat3may2005.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> Khalid Aziz, "Return of the Taliban—The North Waziristan Agreement," [http://www.khalidaziz.com/art\\_detail.php?aid=57](http://www.khalidaziz.com/art_detail.php?aid=57). Khalid Aziz is a retired Pakistani bureaucrat who served as PA in some of the FATA agencies and retired in 1991 as the NWFP's chief secretary.

of roads and government installations. The government is apparently not pursuing any fundamental changes in the FATA that reflect an understanding of the FATA's evolving socio-economic landscape and power structure.

There are many explanations for the inability of the Pakistani government to act decisively against the FATA's militants. The government's unwillingness to bring effective change to the FATA is the result of a deeply entrenched bureaucracy that enjoys vast and unchecked powers under the existing system. With the ungoverned space of the FATA having emerged as a base for various types of illegal businesses, including drugs and weapons smuggling, bureaucratic appointments in the region have become extremely lucrative.

Another foremost reason is the Pakistani government's view of these militant forces as policy tools both in external relations with countries such as India and Afghanistan and internally against various secular nationalist forces, especially among the Pashtuns.<sup>8</sup> An unconcealed sympathy toward the Taliban and its local variants in the establishment leads the government to restrain, but not eliminate, the FATA's militants while U.S. and NATO forces are engaged in Afghanistan.

The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Awami National Party (ANP) coalition governments in Islamabad and the NWFP—formed following the February 2008 elections—are committed to peace-building in the FATA and NWFP through a combination of developmental activities and political and administrative reform. Yet due to the military and bureaucratic control of power and decisionmaking in Pakistan, the extent to which the coalition government will succeed depends on the level of real power the coalition is given. Quite telling in this regard is that the new prime minister backtracked on withdrawing the FCR from the FATA in the same inaugural session of the National Assembly in which he announced this policy.

The Pakistani government's ability to deny the FATA's space to domestic militancy and international terrorism by successfully implementing development plans to integrate the FATA into mainstream Pakistan is also seriously limited. The government's unwillingness to confront militants has further increased the militants' power and influence, thereby debilitating Islamabad's capacity to bring effective change to the FATA.

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<sup>8</sup> Olivier Roy, "The Taliban: A Strategic Tool for Pakistan," in *Pakistan: Nationalism without a Nation?* ed. Christophe Jaffrelot (New York: Zed Books, 2002), 149–60. For a detailed treatment, see Ijaz Khan, *Pakistan's Strategic Culture and Foreign Policy Making: A Study of Pakistan's Post 9/11 Afghan Policy* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2007).

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## Challenges Facing a Counter-Militant Campaign in Pakistan's FATA

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## Executive Summary

This paper outlines the challenges and opportunities facing the Pakistan government in its fight against militancy in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).

### *Main Argument:*

- Militancy in the FATA is a by-product of the perception that Afghanistan is under foreign occupation and that Pakistan is acting as a “front line” state in support of the U.S. and NATO forces.
- Although there has been a general decline in popular support for the FATA’s militant elements, pockets of sympathy do exist. Nonetheless, tension is emerging between foreign Taliban and the local FATA population, which feels increasingly threatened by these foreign elements.
- Pakistan’s three-pronged military, political, and economic approach to counter-insurgency has not yet produced the desired results due to lack of coordination of military and political measures.

### *Policy Implications:*

- Pakistan’s success in managing militancy in the FATA will depend on the government’s ability to adopt imaginative, robust, and sustainable political and socio-economic measures instead of relying only on military force. The Pakistani government thus will want to focus on winning the hearts and minds of the estranged FATA population by developing soft power and working to integrate the region into the federation.
- Local tribesmen could be co-opted to rid the area of foreign militants. The Pakistani government might also marginalize militant organizations by allowing moderate political parties in the FATA.
- There is a pressing need to train Pakistani officers in special mountain warfare, especially in guerrilla and counter-insurgency warfare. Officers will also need to be trained in how to conduct counter-insurgency operations against their own people.
- Traditional dispute-resolution mechanisms such as the *jirga* could be utilized to resolve conflicts in the FATA. If properly employed and with some modifications, the *jirga* could play an important role in mitigating conflicts both within tribes and between tribal groups and the Pakistani government.

Following the seismic events of September 11, Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) shot into global prominence.<sup>1</sup> After the Taliban regime was ousted from power in 2001, remnants of Taliban forces found a safe haven in the FATA region, where these forces were warmly welcomed by co-ethnic Pashtun tribesmen. The Pakistan Army's attempt to rid the area of foreign militants and Taliban forces has resulted in a strong and violent backlash against the government.

Militancy and terrorism in the FATA are by-products of the current situation in Afghanistan. Many in Afghanistan perceive that their homeland is under occupation of foreign forces by the United States and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and that Pakistan is acting as a "front line" state in support of the Western occupation. Until these perceptions cease, militancy and terrorism in the FATA are likely to continue. Whether militancy can be managed depends on Pakistan's ability to adopt imaginative, robust, and sustainable political and socio-economic measures instead of relying only on military force.

This essay describes the nature of Pakistan's military operations in the FATA. The essay first outlines the variety of militants operating in the FATA and discusses the battle for the hearts and minds of the local Pashtun population. The essay then highlights the successes and failures of Pakistan's counter-insurgency operations and suggests effective political and socio-economic measures to counter the Taliban and Islamic militants operating in the FATA.

### *Military Operations in the FATA*

Due to Pakistan's counterterrorist operations, both the backbone of hardcore militants and the organizational structure of al Qaeda have been weakened—though both groups are far from being eliminated. It is now very difficult for al Qaeda elements of Middle Eastern origin to operate as freely in the FATA as before. Taliban elements and their sympathizers, however, have resurged, mainly following Pakistan's controversial 2007 military operation against militants lodged in the Lal Masjid (Red Mosque). Tribal militants strongly opposed this operation—especially Baitullah Mehsud, who vowed to take full revenge. The government action was seen as an affront to Pashtun ethnic and religious sensibilities. The recent spate of suicide attacks on military personnel and installations in the country testifies to this strong reaction.

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<sup>1</sup> The FATA comprises seven tribal agencies: Bajaur, Khyber, Kurram, Mohmand, Orakzai, North Waziristan, and South Waziristan.

For the first time in Pakistan's history the government is trying to extend its writ in the country's peripheral northwest regions by sending armed forces and undertaking ambitious developmental work. These actions were precipitated by developments following the Afghan jihad and the events of September 11, when many Taliban elements and foreign militants sought sanctuary in Pakistan's border regions.<sup>2</sup> Given the porous nature of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border (approximately 2,750 kilometers) and the region's difficult and treacherous terrain, confronting the FATA's insurgent groups is a challenging task for any army. That tribes with strong ethnic affinities straddle the Durand Line complicates the problem.

Despite resistance by militants, the Pakistan Army has been able to enter the "no go" areas of South Waziristan for the first time in history and has established many checkpoints in these areas.<sup>3</sup> Though a significant and welcome development, the continued Pakistani military operations in the FATA over the last three years have been far from satisfactory. Lately guerrilla activity in the FATA has increased manifold and spilled over into Swat, which adjoins the tribal region and is considered a settled area of the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP). The army launched fresh military operations after the imposition of emergency rule on November 3, 2007, and was confident that the area would be cleared of all insurgent activities and that normalcy would be restored. The situation has considerably improved, especially in Swat. Nevertheless, despite the deployment of approximately 100,000 troops and plans to both raise more units and train Frontier Corps forces, doubts remain over whether the situation in the FATA will normalize soon.<sup>4</sup>

### *Militants in the FATA and Local Support*

Although there has been a general decline in popular support for the militant elements in the FATA, pockets of sympathy do exist. This local support stems in part from the tradition of *pashhtunwali*, which is the Pashtun code for providing asylum and support to guests. Tribal clerics and militant leaders also play on popular religious feelings by stressing that the Pashtuns are fighting a "war of liberation" for themselves

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<sup>2</sup> The Afghan jihad was carried out by all Islamist groups in Afghanistan as a war of resistance against the Soviet invasion in December 1979. This war of Afghan resistance was duly aided by the United States, China, Europe, and the Islamic world and continued until 1988, when the Soviet Union finally withdrew from Afghanistan.

<sup>3</sup> "No go" areas in the tribal agencies are areas where government troops were never seen or stationed before recent military operations. These areas were generally peaceful before September 11, and lack of access and difficult terrain discouraged Pakistan's involvement. Pakistan inherited the British policy on tribal regions, which left the governance of such areas to tribal *maliks* (tribal leaders) with minimum federal control.

<sup>4</sup> The Frontier Corps is a paramilitary force assigned to defend the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

and for Afghanistan. Additionally, the aggressive conduct of foreign forces in the FATA has reduced the effectiveness of dimensions of the adopted approach, such as policies focused on the political process and on economic development. The similarly aggressive approach of foreign forces in Afghanistan has likewise strengthened the non-cooperative attitude of the Afghan nationals residing in Pakistan. The main tool of the militants is to exploit the tribesmen's guiding code of *namoos* (honor) and *badal* (revenge) to further the movement's militant ends. The continued presence of some Arabs and Central Asians and the ability of these groups to use funds to garner local support have disturbed the traditional tribal culture. In addition, Afghan warlords and private armies are also fostering militancy in the FATA by supplying manpower, material, and funds.

Three main types of militants operate in the FATA:

- Al Qaeda elements, who desire “regime change” in Pakistan, constitute the first type of militants. Those elements are primarily reacting to U.S.-Western policies perceived as anti-Muslim. The recent military occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan has fuelled this anti-U.S. sentiment.
- Afghan nationals in Pakistan—particularly those who are sympathetic to the former Taliban government and oppose Afghanistan's occupation by foreign troops—constitute the second type of militants.
- Pakistan nationals—especially some Pashtuns in the NWFP and the FATA who are sympathetic to and supportive of the above two elements—constitute the third type of militants.

The Taliban elements generally enjoy Pashtun support. The main reasons for this support include the U.S. military occupation of Afghanistan and the common perception that the Musharraf government is acting as a U.S. proxy in the interest of self-perpetuation. In addition, the long anti-Soviet jihad during the 1980s and the consequent civil war in Afghanistan have reinforced militancy in the region. Furthermore, the U.S. and Pakistani governments' earlier sympathetic support for the Taliban has exacted a toll.

The NWFP's ruling Muttahida Majlis-e Amal (MMA) government—the coalition of conservative religious groups that came to power in 2002—either condoned or seemed complicit in the actions of the Taliban and other militant Islamist groups. The MMA turned a deaf ear toward different radio stations in the tribal region, which militant leaders sponsored by the Taliban and al Qaeda—such as Maulana Fazlullah,

popularly known as the “Radio Mullah”—used to incite hatred and militancy against the government.

Another major factor contributing to the FATA’s militancy is funding both from charitable organizations and from Pashtuns living in the NWFP, major Pakistani cities such as Karachi, or working in the Gulf countries. The Afghan-based drug mafia and al Qaeda groups also support militants in the FATA. Unfortunately, the Pakistani government has not been able to effectively block these funding channels. Part of the responsibility for this failure lies with the Karzai government in Afghanistan, where drug money constitutes nearly half of the GNP.

Tension is emerging, however, between foreign Taliban (i.e., Afghans, Uzbeks, and other Central Asian nationals) and the local FATA population. The local population feels increasingly threatened by the free movement and influence of these foreign elements. A view gradually gaining traction among the local population is that these outsiders are not benefactors but instead a liability. The local population is caught in a dilemma, however. On the one hand, locals expect the Pakistani government to ensure their protection; on the other hand, the militant groups are terrorizing the tribesmen into submitting to these groups’ demands.

Some militants have moved into the settled areas bordering the FATA, thereby reinforcing concerns over Pakistan’s “Talibanization.” The free movement of Baitullah Mehsud—leader of Pakistan’s latest Taliban umbrella organization, the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)—is a case in point. The movement of these elements is difficult to monitor owing to local support for the insurgency. The influence of foreign elements impedes the Pakistani government’s efforts at political reconciliation and economic development.

### *Measures Needed to Succeed against Militancy*

At the state level, improvement in national capabilities and capacity to deal with terrorism is required for success against militancy in the FATA. Use of advanced technology—including light and mobile equipment, night-vision devices, human and technical intelligence, and unmanned reconnaissance planes—to fight in the hilly terrain is imperative. It is also essential to increase the strength of the Frontier Corps by providing its soldiers with state-of-the-art weaponry and fast-track training.

The Pakistan Army has hitherto been trained mostly to fight conventional wars against India in the plains and desert regions. Thus, there is a need to train officers in special mountain warfare, especially in guerrilla and counter-insurgency warfare.

Officers also will need to be trained on how to conduct counter-insurgency operations against their own people. Troops undertaking these operations preferably would be from the tribal regions, as such troops would know the local language, geography, and customs and not be seen as outsiders.

Military operations must be forceful, expeditious, and focused. The truces signed with the militants in the last few years have emboldened militant groups and been interpreted as weakness of resolve on the part of Pakistan's government. Some critics charge that Pakistan's reluctance to deal a "knockout blow" to Taliban forces stems from the government's need to keep the Taliban option open in the hopes of a favorable political dispensation in Afghanistan once foreign forces finally leave. Moreover, tighter coordination among NATO, Afghan, and Pakistani forces will need to be institutionalized through better intelligence- and experience-sharing mechanisms.

It is also important that Pakistan limit heavy reliance on aerial bombardment of the tribal regions. Civilian casualties could be further avoided by giving residents proper and adequate warning to evacuate homes when operations are planned in specific areas. This step was taken in the adjoining settled area of Swat, where the armed forces have generally been successful in flushing out militants and the residents have since returned to their homes.

In addition, generous compensation packages and medical facilities will need to be provided to civilians who are affected by collateral damage from the fighting. There is also a pressing need both for military reconstruction teams to rebuild destroyed property, roads, and infrastructure before the population's resettlement and for displaced civilians to be properly looked after in camps while military operations continue.

### *Strengthening Political and Socio-Economic Measures*

Military force is only one means for resolving the FATA insurgency. After the tribal regions and some adjacent settled areas are cleared of Taliban and al Qaeda elements, there will be a need for full-scale socio-economic development, the establishment of safe zones, and stronger civil administration.

A coordinated policy is required whereby local tribesmen are co-opted to rid the area of foreign militants. This policy would entail both rewarding the efforts of local tribesmen through development schemes and launching short-term welfare projects, such as medical dispensaries, schools, colleges, farming zones, local industry, hospitals,

and irrigation networks. In addition, the FATA holds a great potential for investment in gemstones, marble, hydropower, coal, forestry, dry fruit, farming, and tourism.

On the political side, mainstream and local political parties should be allowed to operate in the FATA, as these parties could marginalize the influence of militant and religious-based organizations. In the past the FATA's political discourse has been confined to religious obscurantism. The Pakistani government would benefit from negotiating with the local Pashtun moderate elements who differ from their militant Taliban counterparts. In addition, the local administration and judiciary could be revamped. The Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR), for example, derive from British colonial times and are seen as anachronistic.

Traditional dispute-resolution mechanisms such as the *jirga* could be utilized to revolve conflicts in the FATA.<sup>5</sup> If properly employed, the *jirga* could again play an important role in mitigating conflicts both within tribes and between tribal groups and the Pakistani government. The present *jirga* system needs to be reformed, however, and should only be used as an adjunct to other means when mediating conflicts.

Although the government has increased the number of checkpoints along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border to almost one thousand, there is further need to plug the gaps used by militants. The Afghan government has not agreed to Pakistan's proposal for sealing and selective mining of the border. Instead, Kabul has argued that the border between the two countries has always remained free and open, with tribal family links existing on both sides.

Mention should also be made of the role played by the Indian government in fostering militancy in Pakistan through Indian bases in eastern Afghanistan. Pakistan could address this issue by correspondingly increasing the country's missions and activities in Afghanistan. The best strategy for Pakistan to counter the Indian support of certain Taliban elements is by increasing the amount of aid, trade, and developmental work in Afghanistan—which are all initiatives perceived as serving the interest of the Afghan people.

### *Conclusion*

Pakistan's three-pronged approach to counter-insurgency—military, political, and economic—though laudable, has not yet produced the desired results due to lack of

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<sup>5</sup> The word *jirga* implies a tribal assembly of elders that often makes decisions by consensus. There are two types of *jirgas*: a grand *jirga* is often referred to as *loya jirga*, whereas the people's *jirga* is called *wolesi jirga*. The *jirga* often functions as a court in those areas where ordinary courts are not yet established.

coordination of military and political measures. There is no easy solution to Pakistan's militancy, which has been fostered by decades of violence and wars. Any solution will require a judicious mix of force and persuasion. Vigorous political means thus should complement military operations. At the global level, the problems of the region could in part benefit from an intercultural dialogue among civilizations and the identification of causes breeding terrorism. At home, a successful approach must emphasize winning the hearts and minds of the FATA people by ridding the region of militants, undertaking massive development, and assuring locals a stake in the federation.

Realistically, Pakistan must learn to live with foreign U.S. and NATO forces in neighboring Afghanistan for the foreseeable future. Any precipitous withdrawal of U.S. and NATO forces from the region might create a security vacuum for Pakistan. At the same time, the presence of these Western forces will continue to feed anti-U.S. sentiment in both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

For Pakistan it is crucial to establish the writ of the state in the troubled FATA. This is by no means an easy task, especially when these tribal regions have always been treated as national backwaters and were grossly neglected by all previous governments. For the first time in Pakistan's history, the writ of the state is being expanded, with the government trying to bring the FATA into the national mainstream. Any vacillation will only complicate matters and could endanger Pakistan's national integrity.



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