

**FATA: The New Epicentre of Terror**

**Ashok K. Behuria**

The interior minister of Pakistan, Mr. Moinuddin Haider stated on 1 July 2002 that seven Al Qaeda men had been apprehended in the joint combing operations conducted by the Pakistan security forces and the American operatives in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in western Pakistan.[1] The arrest of Abu Zubedah, one of the most important Al Qaeda members after Osama and his deputy Al Jawhiri, on March 27, 2002 in Faisalabad confirmed suspicions that the tribal areas in north west Pakistan has emerged as the safest sanctuary for Al Qaeda and Taliban forces fleeing the Afghan territory. The death of Riaz Basra, the head of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, in a police encounter near Miramshah, the suicide bomb attack on May 8 in Karachi that killed 11 French nationals, the subsequent blast near US embassy and stories of attack on Pakistani forces engaged in a drawn out combing operation in FATA suggest that the tribal areas in north western and western Pakistan have been infested with terrorists of all hue—the Taliban, the Al Qaeda, the radical sectarian groups like Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, groups like Harkatul Mujahideen, Jaish-e-Muhammad, Lashkar-e-Toiba etc. The only thread that joins them is their overarching consensus over a strong radical Sunni-Wahabite Islamist agenda. Many analysts in recent days have hinted at FATA developing into another potential epicentre of Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism and bracket it with the Ferghana Valley in Uzbekistan.[2] The FATA region in Pakistan, known for its semi-autonomous status in the federal union, is thus posing a challenge to internal security of Pakistan by acting as the nerve centre for all outlaws parading themselves as guardians of faith. It is useful to discuss what charm FATA has for these forces.

**The FATA region in history**

Federally Administered Tribal Areas or better known in its acronymic form, FATA, is a region in Pakistan which is in Pakistan but not of it. The region has retained its virtual independence till now by default. Situated on the Khyber pass, the terrain is witness to most of the invasions on the India from the west and north-west. The list of invaders is rather too long— Alexander, Mahmud, Muhammad of Ghur, Ghengis Khan, Tamarlane, Ahmad Shah Abdali and many others. Their invasions have had their impact on the tribes inhabiting the region. Known for their unruly behaviour and aggressive instinct, throughout history, the people of the region brooked no interference in their internal affairs. The wily British, aware of their tribal temperament and their fierce love for independence, did not trust them with representative administration and, in the name of administering them from the Centre allowed them lot of independence. One of the main reasons for this concession was that the British wanted to use the terrain and its people as a buffer against invasion from the Afghan side.

It is useful here to situate the region in colonial history. The area emerged as a specially governed area within North West Frontier Province (NWFP) which was carved out of undivided colonial province of Punjab on November 9, 1901, by Lord Curzon, the then Governor General in India, for administrative convenience. The British decision to carve out a separate province of NWFP was conditioned by their realisation that it was difficult to exercise a more rigid

administrative control over it compared to other areas in India. Lord Curzon was guided by the expert advice of the British officials that due to its distance from Lahore, the capital of Punjab, the region could not be governed effectively. The British administrators hoped a new province with its headquarters in Peshawar could effectively subdue the rebellious Pushtuns through the classic carrot and stick approach.

In fact, Curzon was guided by a policy that was already in the pipeline. Governor General Lord Lytton (1876-80) had a plan to 'march on Tashkent' and to institute a province on the northwestern Indian frontiers comprising areas of Balochistan and Peshawar region, answerable directly to the centre.

However, Viceroy Lord Curzon (1899-1905) pursuing this plan, visited Peshawar in the spring of 1901 and held a series of meetings with local leaders that culminated in the decision to form a new province which was to be called North West Frontier Province (NWFP). It was also decided that the new province, NWFP, would have two categories of territories that were to be administered differently: the settled areas comprising the districts of Hazara, Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan and the tribal areas comprising the political agencies of Khyber (established in 1879) the Kurram (1892) and Malakand Division (1895), which covers the areas of Dir, Swat, and Chitral. At the same time the North and South Waziristan agencies were created.

The settled areas comprised districts where the writ of the government was rather effective. In contrast, the tribal areas bordering Afghanistan were mostly left to their own devices because the British felt the warlike Pushtuns would be provoked by government interference in their internal affairs and way of life. Anthropologists like Dr Akbar S. Ahmad gave the name *nang* (honour) to the tribal areas because the tribes-people refused to pay taxes and preferred an independent existence. The settled districts were referred to as the *qalang* (tax) area because their inhabitants accepted government authority and paid taxes.[3]

### **System of colonial administration in the region**

Earlier after the British took over Punjab from the Sikhs in March 1849, they had to devise new ways of administering the north western region which had a predominant tribal population. The territory was first put under the direct control of the Board of Administration at Lahore and raised to a division status, under a Commissioner, in 1850. The areas specified in this arrangement were the districts of Peshawar, Kohat and Hazara, each under a deputy commissioner. Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan were then not included in this proclamation and were part of the Leiah division of Punjab, with one deputy commissioner for each district. The British still found the aggressive tribes along the frontier region difficult to contain.

After the establishment of the province of NWFP in 1901, the British evolved a two-tier administrative system in the northwest; one dealing with the province under the Chief Commissioner and the other with the tribal belt under the governor general with the same authority. Peshawar became headquarter of both the administrations placed under direct supervision of the foreign department of the government of India. Malakand agency, since placed inside the NWFP, remained a provincial subject while those located on the border with

Afghanistan, termed the Durand Line since 1893, became part of the Indian foreign affairs and treated as a central government issue.

The Frontier administration was patterned slightly differently from the rest of India. The British took care not to disturb the existing tribal systems in both areas in the Frontier and in fact did everything to ensure the perpetuation of the highly iniquitous feudal system obtaining in the areas. Thus for instance, the Khans in the settled areas and the Maliks in the tribal areas became powerful colonial instruments of the state administration. As in the British principalities, the landed gentry in the settled areas served as powerful instrument for revenue collection, maintenance of law and order and advancement of European traditions.

In the few cities of the province, the urban administration was garrisoned by the regular army, stationed in the cantonments. Apart from this, a small but brutal police force was placed in a limited number of police stations. Similarly other institutions like the judicial courts, public welfare and revenue collecting institutions were located only in the settled areas mostly in urban centers, whereas the people in rural areas were administered through the Jirga system under the local administration. The Khans were patronised by the British administration and titles of Khan Bahadur, Nawab, knighthood and even cadre services were awarded to them and their sons and scions to ensure their loyalty to the colonial authorities. The Khans maintained liaisons with the local administration and even collected information for them on important matters. The Maliks in the tribal belt carried out similar duties to the political agent who extended governmental honours, courtesies and favour to men and tribes of their choice.

While the settled areas contributed to the provincial revenue, even if the contribution was marginal in comparison to the total revenue of the state, the tribal belt remained exempt from all kinds of taxes. Rather in some cases monetary assistance was extended to the Maliks, tribes and individuals. In return the tribesmen protected the security infrastructure in their areas and helped maintain peace.

The British administration in NWFP operated in three forms. The civil administration dealing with policy matters, maintenance of peace and general administration, took priority over other services. This was looked after initially by the chief commissioner and later by the governor assisted by a row of civil and military staff under him. Second in order came the criminal affairs, initially controlled by the judicial commissioner and later by the high court and lower courts. The fiscal side was controlled through the revenue commissioner whose collection during the British tenure in NWFP was confined to income from agricultural produce, excise and other duties.

The judicial administration in the region devised a specific law governing NWFP— the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) in 1872. The FCR was periodically revised, first in 1887 and then 1901 to cope with changing requirements. It limited the power of the judiciary and empowered the civil administration, particularly the deputy commissioner. The latter also enjoyed magisterial powers to institute a jirga, comprising three to four elders nominated and presided over by the deputy commissioner himself to adjudicate any civil or criminal nature case. Its jurisdiction extended to "Pathan and Baloch" both in the settled (rural) and tribal areas. The nature of cases referred to the jirga were mostly for imperial consumption to justify coercive exercise against a tribe or individual who posed or was likely to pose administrative problems for

the state. It also served as a penal code in many tribal feuds, murders, violation of tribal customs, debt, claims, matrimonial or land-disputes, etc.

As has been said earlier, the British sought to enforce effective control over the tribal belt, southeast of the Durand Line. Thus the British created a new military force comprising roughly one third of local tribesmen with varying names like Scouts, Rifles, Levy, Khasadar and Militia (Frontier Constabulary). These forces were positioned in garrisons located in and around each agency headquarter. The garrisons were established at Shagai for Khyber Agency, Miramshah for North Waziristan, Wana for South Waziristan, Malakand, Khar for Bajaur Agency, Parachinar for Kurram Agency and Shabqadar for Momand Agency. These establishments were led by British officers of the Indian army, excepting the constabulary, which though established later, received officers from the police. The additional two thirds of the levies came from the Indian regiments. Wana and Razmak later on became regular cantonments of the British army.

However, the people of the Frontier did not warmly welcome the creation of the new provincial unit. The Hindus, an elite urban class of the Frontier, were instead in favour of merger with Punjab. Many in Hazara and Dera Ismail Khan were also unhappy with the decision. The Muslim leadership in the Frontier was also traditionally averse to any steps taken by the British side. Many Pushtun nationalists even today bemoan the lines that the British drew on their land "to divide us in various administrative units like the NWFP, Balochistan, federally administered tribal area (FATA), and the Durand Line". This sense of public rejection, however, had little impact on the shape of things to come in the province. The British colonialists seem to have been able to effect an ingenious administrative demarcation in the region, which has survived their departure even to this day.[4]

### **The spirit of the people**

The fiercely freedom-loving Pushtuns[5] (the British called them Pathans and the name caught on) of the area were loath to idea of subservience under alien rule and in a bid to preserve their independence a 3,000-strong tribal lashkar (force) mostly comprising Mahsud tribesmen (the most numerous among the Pushtuns in the area) attacked the British-held town of Tank in 1860.

Other Pushtun tribes like the Wazir, Daur, Bhattani, Mohmand, Safi, Afridi, Orakzai and Shinwari also actively took part in the battles against foreign rule. The Burki, Turi, Bangash, Utmankhel and other small Pashtun tribes contributed their bit in the armed uprisings. Such was the ferocity of the armed resistance that four out of the 34 British political agents between 1857 and 1947, four were murdered and yet another committed suicide out of sheer frustration caused by his inability to control the people in the region. These tribal groups in western Pakistan were thus regarded as a separate set of subjects and dealt with separately by the British.

In the settled areas the Yusufzais, Khattaks, Khalils, Mohammadzais, Jadoons, Gigianis, Gandapurs, Marwats, Swatis, Mashwanis, Bannuchis, were less violent and mostly waged political struggle. This is not to deny of course even then there was occasional armed resistance in the settled areas. Freedom-fighters Mulla Pawinda, Mulla Malang, Mulla Mastan, Faqir Ipi, Ajab Khan Afridi, Ajab Khan Yusufzai, to name a few, raised the banner of revolt from time to time to earn immortality as heroes. Haji Sahib Turangzais and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan,

affectionately called Bacha Khan by his Red Shirts followers, and more popularly known as the Frontier Gandhi in India, kept up the tradition by waging their own struggle for freedom.

The kind of problems that the British faced in administering the tribal areas in contrast to the settled areas is best explained by their need to deploy about 50,000 troops equipped with artillery and aided by air force to maintain their grip over only the Mahsud territory in Waziristan during 1937-38. The area dominated by Mahsuds (one of the major tribal groups belonging to the same Pustun family) in Waziristan was not more than an average tehsil in terms of size and population but even then the British despite such a large force were never really able to effectively keep it under control.

Due to its peculiar circumstances, the British treated the NWFP differently and the reforms of 1909 that were introduced elsewhere in India were not enforced in the Frontier province. Similarly, the Montague Chelmsford reforms of 1919 were introduced in the NWFP in 1932 and the Government of India Act, 1935 was enforced in 1937. The 1935/37 act finally made the NWFP an autonomous province like other provinces in the subcontinent. The delayed implementation was meant to keep it secluded from the independence movements active in rest of undivided India.

### **The post-colonial phase**

Soon after the creation of Pakistan in 1947, Muhamad Ali Jinnah, the main architect of Pakistan ordered the ending of the “Forward Policy” adopted by the British to subjugate the people of the Tribal areas. This led to voluntary declaration of loyalty to Pakistan by a number of tribes, which had earlier refused to accept British suzerainty. Later rulers, however, failed to continue the policy aimed at national integration. Till now, the same system of administration as well as the same principle of non-interference in the socio-political affairs of the Tribal population in the area is in place in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). During last 55 years nothing has changed.[6] The Pakistani constitution also recognized the same principles that guided the colonial policies. In fact, the constitution defines in clear terms vide Article 246 that the Federally Administered Tribal Areas includes (i) Tribal Areas adjoining Peshawar district; (ii) Tribal Areas adjoining Kohat district; (iii) Tribal Areas adjoining Bannu district; (iv) Tribal Areas adjoining Dera Ismail Khan district; (v) Bajaur Agency, (va) Orakzai Agency, (vi) Mohmand Agency, (vii) Khyber Agency; (viii) Kurram Agency; (ix) North Waziristan Agency, and (x) South Waziristan Agency. The relevant portions of the following article (Art. 247) focuses on the system of administration to be in place in these areas. They are:

Article 247. (1) Subject to the Constitution, the executive authority of the Federation shall extend to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas...

(3) No Act of Majlis- e- Shoora (Parliament) shall apply to any Federally Administered Tribal Area or to any part thereof, unless the President so directs.....and in giving such a direction with respect to any law, the President .....may direct that the law shall, in its application to a Tribal Area, or to a specified part thereof, have effect subject to such exceptions and modifications as may be specified in the direction.

(5) Notwithstanding anything contained in the Constitution, the President may, with respect to any matter, make regulations for the peace and good Government of a Federally Administered Tribal Area or any part thereof.

(6) The President may, at any time, by Order, direct that the whole or any part of a Tribal Area shall cease to be Tribal Area, and such Order may contain such incidental and consequential provisions as appear to the President to be necessary and proper: *Provided that before making any Order under this clause, the President shall ascertain, in such manner as he considers appropriate, the views of the people of the Tribal Area concerned, as represented in tribal jirga.*

(7) Neither the Supreme Court nor a High Court shall exercise any jurisdiction under the Constitution in relation to a Tribal Area, unless Majlis- e- Shoora (Parliament) by law otherwise provides: *Provided that nothing in this clause shall affect the jurisdiction which the Supreme Court or a High Court exercised in relation to a Tribal Area immediately before the commencing day.*[7]

Even if there is enough scope in the constitution for Presidential intervention in tribal affairs, the central administration in Pakistan has never considered it useful to try to drag these groups into the political mainstream. The colonial reflex of using the area as a buffer has persisted to this day. Even Pakistan has an additional problem. The majority Pushtun population (almost 98 percent out of a total population of 5.7 million in FATA) of the area have looked towards their ethnic cousins in Afghanistan and the porous Pak-Afghan border that goes in the name of Durand line has kept the ethnic ties in tact. The passion for an independent Pushtun dominated tribal state called Pakhtunistan/Pushtunistan has fired the imagination of the people in the whole region. Due to lack of political control in FATA, this passion is at an all time high in the region and always threatens to shift to neighbouring regions in NWFP. The rulers in Islamabad have always viewed with suspicion anything that comes up with a distinct ethnic (Pushtun) flavour, howsoever innocent its motives might be. The way the Nawaz Administration treated the demand for renaming NWFP as Pakhtunkhwa (with contempt and disdain) proves this point. The possibility of such a demand taking roots in the semi-autonomous stretch of tribal wilderness in FATA has compelled Pakistani rulers to be cautious. Thus, the central administration has thought it wiser not to stir the hornet's nest by side-stepping on the traditional socio-political arrangements in the area and allowed them to continue with their traditional feudalistic loya-jirga(tribal assembly)-driven politics in the whole region that stretches from Chaman (in Balochistan) till Torkham.

The region is thus regarded as a vanishing point of jurisprudence. Lack of civic political order and persisting medieval socio-political structures has made the people regressive in their outlook and uncritical about the processes of legitimation in the socio-political context. The inflow of refugees (most of them Pushtun) from the Afghan side since 1979-1980 and planting of the jihad culture in the region has aggravated the medieval mindset of the people in the region. There has also been a mushrooming of madrassas in the area that preached violence and hatred in the name of Jihad. Gradually by 1990s the area had developed into a seedbed for extremism, largely because the prevailing anarchy facilitated the operations of the radical sectarian and Islamist forces. This had its impact on the neighbourhood in Peshawar and rest of NWFP. In fact the

impact has been so severe that the entire north west frontier region has been burning since the days of the US sponsored anti-communist Jihad.

### **The Crime factor**

The impact of Afghan Jihad on the people of FATA has been devastating. The proliferation of arms in the region has given rise to a criminal bent of mind that has made violence a way of life among the tribals of the region. The dewatering drive undertaken by the Musharraf regime in 2000-2001 failed miserably in this region. It has been reported that official records reveal that out of 16,988 registered proclaimed offenders in the NWFP, 99 percent took shelter in Darra Adam Khel, Orakzai Agency, Kurram Agency and Khyber Agency, reported Pakistan's largest circulated newspaper, Dawn, in early 2001. The total strength of the NWFP police, including officers and reserve personnel, is 34,000. But these forces are ill-equipped, poorly trained and poorly paid. According to a report of the Pakistani crime branch, the number of proclaimed offenders are wanted by the police for crimes such as murders, car jacking, kidnapping and robberies run into thousands. The list also includes the names of criminals from other provinces who have taken shelter in the FATA.

The report says that the main hindrance in arresting the criminals is geographic closeness of the tribal areas with the cities, which helps culprits to disappear within minutes from the scene of a crime. In addition, the government has no writ in the FATA owing to constitutional restrictions. The constitution guarantees full independence of the FATA and any interference by the government has been prohibited. That is why the FATA serves as a sanctuary for offenders and drug-traffickers. Moreover, the tribal system in the FATA is very strong and whenever it has been disturbed the *Maliks* have retaliated by creating a law and order situation. The other problem is the long and porous Afghan border with the FATA. Even if the political administration tries to conduct operations with the help of the army in these areas, the criminals flee to Afghanistan. Under the complicated tribal culture proclaimed offenders have to pay a fixed amount to the *Maliks* for refuge, which forces them to indulge in all sorts of crimes to earn a livelihood for themselves and their families. Thus a dangerous cycle of violence unfolds in the entire region.[8]

### **The post-September Eleven phase**

No leader in Pakistan so far had thought in terms of taming the war-loving tribes of the FATA. As has been hinted above, through the years of Afghan jihad the tribals in the area developed an intimate relationship with the Afghan mujahideen, most of whom were their ethnic cousins. Later the Taliban through their emphasis on Pushtun ethnic identity and conservative Islamist policies endeared themselves to the tribal population and the relationship grew further with Pakistan jealously cultivating the Taliban as their best strategic option in the region. There was thus a visible dismay in the area when Musharraf chose to side with the Americans in their "War against Terror" and later announced his policy of taming the tribals.

It has been too difficult on the part of the local population to shed the pro-Jihad inertia that was strategically cultivated by Pakistan until now. The strategic somersault by Musharraf was not received well and the local population viewed it in utter disbelief imagining there must be a parallel official policy of providing a helpline to the Taliban and Al Qaeda in distress fleeing the

American raids and sneaking into their terrain. The Musharraf government, in spite of the General's January 12 speech, did not do much to drive home the point of severing all ties with these forces in the wake of the September 11 tragedy. The tribal population was allowed the luxury of interpreting the Musharraf policy according to their own convenience. But the forces of terror had their own way of making their presence felt. The Daniel Pearl murder, attack on the French nationals, the continued attack on the Shiites, the attack on Christians and their places of worship, the explosions targeting American embassy etc. gradually compelled Musharraf in way to look closely at the emerging scenario.

By November 2001 the reports of Taliban and Al Qaeda men entering the tribal agencies in the FATA started coming up on regular basis. It was also reported that a section of the military establishment aiding and abetting the fleeing Al Qaeda and Taliban forces and helping them establish their bases in Pakistan.[9] The negotiations between Pakistani officials to allow return of Pakistanis (who had gone to Afghanistan to join the fight against the US) led by Mulla Sufi Muhammad who headed Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM)— an organisation that openly supported Taliban and AL Qaeda—was deliberately protracted, many analysts would say, to enable Mullah Sufu Muhammad to smuggle in most of the top leaders of Taliban and Al Qaeda into Pakistan.[10] Mulla Sufi Mohammad finally surrendered to the Pak army on November 22 and was quickly put in a jail in North West Frontier Province (NWFP). But his mission many would say had been accomplished as in this melee Bin Laden and others had already entered Pakistan on or around November 19.

Later, as Pakistan army and intelligence started penetrating into the region and grew aware of the presence of the Al Qaeda and Taliban forces, the familiar policy of diverting these forces towards Kashmir, which is as old as the October 1947 attack on Kashmir by tribal lashkar, seemed to unfold with increasing incidence of terrorist violence in Kashmir from December 2001.[11] From March, 2002 American intelligence following intelligence leads started zeroing in on the nerve centre of terrorism in Pakistan. The FATA needed thorough scanning and it was deemed more important to synchronise this operation with the security operations conducted by the allied forces on the other side of the border in southern and eastern Afghanistan.

The operations started in late April 2002 and continue to this date with little success. Initially the Pakistani establishment denied any presence of Americans in the semi-autonomous Tribal areas and later said there were handful of American telecommunications experts to track down messages exchanged by the Taliban and Al Qaeda men supposed to hiding in the region and thus render great help to the Pakistani forces asked to trace out Al Qaeda-Taliban presence in the region. Musharraf himself admitted presence of Americans and said that it was part of the pledged logistics support and intelligence-sharing from the Pakistan side in its campaign against terrorism in neighbouring Afghanistan.

Recent media reports suggest that the operations started in late April 2002 in Razmak in North Waziristan and Wana in South Waziristan and that the Americans lodged in the premises of an abandoned vocational college were under rocket attack supposedly mounted by the dregs of Al Qaeda and Taliban forces who have moved into the region in recent months. The initial attacks followed joint raid on a madrassa in Darpakhel near Miramshah run by former Afghan mujahideen leader Mulla Jalaluddin Haqqani on 26 April 2002. It is important to mention here

that Haqqani served as a minister of tribal and border affairs in the Taliban government. In fact he is the most wanted man for the Americans after Osama bin Laden and Taliban supremo Mulla Mohammad Omar. With his familiarity with the terrain and vast experience of guerilla warfare against the Soviet occupation troops in Afghanistan during 1979-89, he is believed to be having a dent in the FATA and the adjoining area in Afghanistan. In fact, the growing number of guerilla attacks on US and allied forces in Khost and Paktia province in southern Afghanistan are partly attributed to Haqqani. The US military has made several futile attempts to kill or capture Haqqani and killed scores of innocent people in the process. Among those killed were young Taliban studying in another Haqqani madrassa near Khost and one of his brothers-in-law in his house that was rocketed in Gardez.

The raid on Haqqani's madrassa made public the presence of US operatives in North Waziristan. The US helicopters flying overhead providing air-cover to the forces conducting raid were too obvious to be missed by the natives. Ahead of the operations US forces had cut off five entry points along the Pak-Afghan border close to Angor Adda in South Waziristan Agency to plug the escape routes of fighters. Similarly, a limited number of regular Pakistan Army troops in addition to the jawans of the Frontier Constabulary have been stationed in Wana in South Waziristan Agency to trace the Al Qaeda and Taliban fighters.

There were talks of tribal resistance once the attacks on madrassas came to limelight. Since then the Pakistani establishment has dealt with the problem in a very cautious manner trying its best not to offend the sensibilities of the tribal jirga. The usual practice has been to send a political agent to seek the permission and cooperation of the local tribal leaders for any government action there. As has been discussed earlier, the central administration has always found itself weak vis a vis the tribal areas and the weakness of Islamabad's grip over the region can be gauged from the fact that, until April-May 2002, the Pakistan army had never — in the country's 55 years' history — set foot in FATA. However, one cannot lose sight of another significant fact that for the first time perhaps Pakistan government has started the operations before consulting the tribal leaders. The policy of coopting the tribal elders has been followed in the meanwhile and media reports suggest that the jirgas have been won over. This approach was followed this time immediately after the establishment sensed some resentment brewing up in the region against the presence of the American operatives.[12]

Since May 2002 the reports of Pakistani troops engaging the Al Qaeda forces and fighting a see-saw battle with them have appeared in Pakistani and international media. The resistance offered by the forces ensconced in the tribal belt has in a way made the Pakistan army and its establishment aware of the challenges they are going to face in the future unless the swelling tide of anarchy is not contained now. In fact, it was reported the religious parties are mobilising to resist US-Pakistan military operations. Pamphlets were distributed recently in Miran Shah by a group called "Mujahideen of Northern Waziristan." They called for Muslims to "wake up, because the hypocrite ruler [of Pakistan] has challenged faith and honour by bringing American commandos to Miran Shah." Jamiat-Ulema Islam, a strongly pro-Taliban Party, called for rallies across the North West Frontier Province on Friday to demonstrate against military operations and raids on madrassas. Jamatat-I-Islami, the country's most powerful religious party, backed the protest call. The massive upsurge of local anger caused US commandos to call off their operations for a few days.[13] Another reports said that the two powerful bombs blew up a 90 feet long suspension bridge on 15 May 2002 in the Kanikurram area of South Waziristan

Agency, in FATA. The bridge was used as the only communication source by the people of Kanikurram, which is mainly inhabited by Burki and Warmar tribes and the whole of the population is concentrated on a single mountain. This was purposively done to make the terrain inaccessible for the forces conducting the joint operation.

Yet another report from South Waziristan said that on June 25, 2002, the Pakistani forces met with fierce resistance from militants holed up in a house in South Waziristan Agency near the Afghan border. In the gun battle that followed, a number of combatants, including two officers, eight jawans and two Chechen fighters, were killed. The death of 10 Pakistani security men has further shown that the joint operations will have to continue for long to bear fruit. The guerrilla warfare that is slowly emerging in the region could take months or even years and the alliance against terrorism is slowly getting used to the intricacies of terrain war in the mountains.

In the meanwhile, the US intelligence has gathered scraps of intelligence that reinforces the earlier hypothesis advanced in this article that it could have been the strategic aim of the forces of terror to sneak into Kashmir and keep it boiling and add to Indo-Pak tension so that international attention shifts to India-Pakistan relations and they get a respite from focussed attack on their hideouts. On the other hand, there is remarkable coterminality in the strategic aims of the Pakistani establishment too—nothing would serve Pakistani interests better than the policy of diverting the forces of terror towards Kashmir, so that international pressure mounts on India to enter into negotiations with Pakistan over Kashmir. The rising incidence of terror in Kashmir in the recent years, despite the pledge by Musharraf to Armitage to stop cross-border infiltration, confirms that this strategy has partially succeeded till now. But as the international community is getting increasingly aware of the politics of blackmail that underlines such strategies, one expects some sanity in the strategy adopted by Pakistan in the days to come. Pakistan's continued if not committed, engagement in FATA may well be the beginning of a strategy of 'live and let live', which will bring about perceptible change both at the internal level within Pakistan by stemming the tide of sectarian violence and at the external level lower the temperature in Kashmir and make bilateral discussions between India and Pakistan possible.

## Endnotes

1. *The News*, 2 July 2002

2. Ahmed Rashid, the Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia correspondent for the *Far Eastern Economic Review* and the *Daily Telegraph*, London, and known for his work *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil, and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (London: IB Tauris, 2000), has come out with such observation in his new book, *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001). In an interview with Nermeen Shaikh of *AsiaSource*, he recently expressed this opinion. Available on [http://www.asiasource.org/news/special\\_reports/rashid.cfm](http://www.asiasource.org/news/special_reports/rashid.cfm)

3. Most of the information pertaining to the formation of NWFP have been taken from the following articles: Rahimullah Yusufzai, "NWFP then, NWFP now" in *The News, Sunday Edition* (22 April 2002), "Those who know celebrate", and "Raid on Terror: Our side of the

border”, in *The News, Sunday Edition* (19 May 2002), Amir Mohammad Khan, “Following the British line”, in *The News, Sunday Edition* (19 May 2002), Quraysh Khattak, “The men at the top”, in *The News, Sunday Edition* (19 May 2002),

4. The centenary celebration, which was originally scheduled to be held in November 2001 but was postponed due to the effect of September 11, took place in April 2002 and this demonstrated the popular acceptance of the colonial policies, in spite of its artificial delineation of provincial boundaries in clear disregard of the ethno-national considerations.

5. As per the 1191 official census out of FATA’s 5.7 million population, more than 98 per cent are Pashtuns and speak Pushto.

6. It was only recently that some reforms were proposed for FATA including enforcement of the devolution plan there, election for a Nazim who would head the administration in each of the seven tribal agencies, representation for the tribal areas in the NWFP Assembly and amendments in the much-criticised Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR). The reforms have led to polarisation in FATA with the tribal elders and the privileged classes opposing the changes that would curtail their influence and the common tribals and educated sections of the population becoming the most vocal supporters of the reformist agenda. If the reforms materialise, it would be the first time that an administrative system that was devised by the British to advance their imperialist designs would be changed in accordance with the wishes of the majority of the tribal population and in keeping with the needs of the modern times. A new element has been introduced into Frontier politics by giving the people of FATA representation in the provincial assembly. It could work either way and one will have to wait until the October elections to find out if the tribal electorate, until now depoliticised, and disenfranchised as well prior to the 1997 polls, would vote to strengthen the provincial government by helping one political party to win more seats or weaken it further by accentuating the split mandate that has been a hallmark of Frontier politics.

7. See the Constitution of Pakistan on the web,

<http://www.pakistani.org/pakistan/constitution/part12.ch3.html>

8. Sultan Shahin has dwelt at length on the issue by quoting Pakistani sources in, “Islamabad’s Plan to tame tribal areas”, 15 November 2001, <http://www.jammu-kashmir.com/insights/insight20011201b.html>

9. Serious international observers like Ahmed Rashid closely following the emerging political scenario would say: “the performance of Musharraf does not match the rhetoric of Musharraf. This is clearly exacerbating the situation...There is still support among some sections of the military for the Taliban. But more important than that, there is a very powerful group of retired and serving intelligence officers who have, over the last 20 years, built up very effective grids with each other and with militant groups, and are fuelling these extremist groups even now. Nothing has been done to stop them, especially the retired officers, who are giving simply outrageous statements which are undermining Musharraf’s attempts to crack down on these groups. But the army refuses to discipline these generals; there are very senior retired generals

from the Pakistan army who are making scandalous remarks which are fuelling extremist sentiment in the country and confirming the impression that there are anti-Western grids within the military.”

10. Rajeev Sharma, “How Osama was smuggled into Pakistan”, *The Tribune*, January 2, 2002

11. Apart from the attacks on J&K Assembly on October 1, 2001 and on Indian Parliament on 13 December, the recent Kaluchak massacre in May 2002, attack on a Hindu temple in Jammu, assassination of moderate Hurriyat leader Abdul Gani Lone, the increasing brutalisation of violence signal a qualitative change in the pattern of violence in Kashmir.

12. At another level the administration in Pakistan is trying its best to turn this crisis into an opportunity and make a permanent dent into the tribal areas at all levels. Musharraf has already introduced elements of representative governance and is now thinking in terms of extending tax laws to the FATA, a distinctly non-taxable area in Pakistan. It remains to be seen whether Musharraf will carry his present policy of intrusion into these areas to any logical conclusion or leave it midway like most of his predecessors.

13. Iffat Malik, “Trouble in FATA”, *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, 16 - 22 May 2002, Issue No.586, <http://web1.ahram.org.eg/weekly/2002/586/in2.htm>