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The Afghan Islamists' political failure to produce realistic agendas for change¹ is cited by some analysts as an example of the failure of political Islam. Some others however argue that Muslim societies seem to have been characterized in the 20th century by two contradictory structures. The clan, tribe and ethnic group does not seem to exist in a peaceful equilibrium with the state and religion.² Thus, it is usually the small group versus the larger faith, or the tribe versus the Ummah, or the religious clique against the state which has been the main focus of commitment, as opposed to tension against the state. This 'dualism', if you will, also manifests itself in the paradigms of Islam as opposed to Islamism, or the more commonly (but inappropriately) used term 'fundamentalism'. It is important to differentiate between the two; either all connections between them are cleanly severed, or they remain interconnected, in which case Islam gets paradigmatically linked to the latter. Of course, identifying Islam with fundamentalism, which in itself is an inadequate term for expressing this phenomenon, only adds to the intensity of the furor of Islamophobia.³ Islam as a religion of peace is being overshadowed by the Islam of politics, which vies against the state for expression of its grievances. This political variant is the struggle of the small tribal clique of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) against the state, which, they feel, has marginalized them. It is then a conjunction of traditional grievances, which have joined hands with the rebound phenomenon of radicalism 'coming home to roost' as it were, from neighboring Afghanistan. Thus, an insight into the tribal socio-economic and socio-political dynamics is just as important as understanding the religious indoctrination, which has prompted the tribal *lashkars* (raiding parties) to take on the form of a formidable army.

The Pashtuns of FATA and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province (called the North West Frontier Province until early 2010), along with their sizeable populations in Pakistan's Balochistan province and Karachi city in the Sindh province, account for 38-40 million people. FATA forms a 1,200-kilometer wedge between Afghanistan and the settled areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. According to the 1998 national census, close to 3.2 million people (the current estimate is 3.5 million) live in FATA, which covers an area of 27,220 square kilometers. The Durand Line divided Pashtun tribes between British India and Afghanistan in 1893, and since then this delineation has been viewed with great contempt and resentment by Pashtuns, the principal ethnic group of FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. After Pakistan's emergence in 1947, this line became a major source of tension between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The Pashtuns have been subject to invasions throughout history. The invaders have left their marks on the area in the form of genealogy. Many Pathans have the admixture of blood of various warriors who passed through this area, for instance, the Afridis have "an admixture of Greek blood."⁴ The Mongols under Genghis Khan and Timur Lane managed to subdue these areas; the region which includes "Afghanistan and the North-West Frontier of Pakistan ...(which) have seen perhaps more invasions in the course of history than any other country in Asia, or indeed in the world."⁵ Even in the face of great

armies, the Pashtuns retained their independence and fierce tribal loyalties, a source of great pride to them.

The British colonial administrators of India tried to control them by various methods; proxy wars, installation of 'friendly' governments and direct intervention. Failed attempts at direct rule encouraged the British to introduce the Sandeman system, whose effect was the raising of tribal levies, or Khasadars, which institution survives even today. It consisted of ruling this unruly area by building roads and infrastructure with the help of local Maliks, who could control the loyalties of the tribes. In return, Maliks got large grants and subsidies. The British issued a new Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) in 1901, replacing the earlier generation of laws. A typical colonial device of vesting the executive with judicial powers was introduced to enable the former to be an absolutist source of power in the area. The FCR is a set of draconian laws more in tune with medieval times than the 21st century. "The most notorious sections of the regulations are 21-24 that deal with the issue of collective territorial responsibility. These are particularly problematic clauses which have empowered the political agent—the principal representative of the federal government in a tribal district—to punish an entire tribe or clan for crimes committed on its territory by imposing fines, arresting individuals, seizing and even demolishing property anywhere in the country."⁶

In 2008, with the coming into power of the new government in Pakistan, the issue of repeal of FCR was raised. The FATA tribesmen are still confused over whether the FCR should be reformed and/or repealed or not. One thing, however, is clear: they want an end to the unlimited powers of the political agents and support the institution of the tribal Jirga to become all powerful.⁷ Another tribal point of view is that the Islamic system of Shariah should be introduced, phasing out the FCR. Some assert that the Jirga should be democratically elected.⁸ As a substitute to democracy, unelected Jirga leaders from the region were invited to become full members of successive elected National Assemblies of Pakistan to represent FATA until 1997. In 1996, the federal government decided to introduce adult franchise for the first time in FATA for the elections held in 1997.

The society is divided into tribes in FATA. An approximate system of enumerating the tribes puts the number at around 60; the number is around 400 if all sub-clans are counted. Pashtunwali is the pre-Islamic Pashtun code of conduct which has regulated the intra and inert tribal dynamics. It is more a set of principles than codified law. Honor and chivalry occupy a central theme in this tradition, along with undying loyalty to the tribe, and fierce opposition to occupation. This code consists of core elements of Nang (honor), Badal (revenge), Melmastia (hospitality), Nanawatay (forgiveness) and Hamsaya (neighbor).

However, the effects of Pashtunwali on social dynamics in FATA have sometimes been exaggerated. It may be more fruitful to try to understand the FATA society through the lens of social solidarity which exists in group structures like tribes and clans. For this, it may be relevant to refer back to an early Muslim social scientist Ibn-e-Khaldun, whose treatise the Muqqadimah has been celebrated as one of the most profound works in social dynamics.

Khaldunian logic gives social solidarity an enabling and inhibiting⁹ effect which essentially creates a public benefit in people coming together by enhancing the capacity of a group. When a tribal society like FATA adheres to its group values at the levels of the tribe, clan, family, nation etc., there is a conscious

effort at the level of the members of the particular group to try and approximate their value to an ideal set of behavior, which has been transmitted intact by preceding generations. Khaldun called this group solidarity *Assabiyya*.

There is a dark side to *Assabiyya*. When it remains inflexible and rigid, it breaks down into tyranny. Excessive *Assabiyya* also leads to rigidity and can be counterproductive to secular notions of democracy, as demonstrated by the monarchy of Saudi Arabia, which has built up from a tribal-based structure into a nation state. Social capital which is nurtured by *Assabiyya* has been criticized by theorists as being elitist and exclusive, for example, social capital that is created by “buddy” relationships on the golf course is limited in its membership, and therefore is inaccessible to the majority of people, especially women. Though it seems poles apart, the same relationships work in a patriarchal society like FATA, where males exert dominance in public life to the exclusion of women. When a conservative tribal-based society like FATA tries to counter the onslaught of globalization by closing ranks, it sometimes tends to fossilize its tribal paradigms to the exclusion of enlightenment.

FATA is an extremely poor area by any comparison. “There are few livelihood opportunities available to the people. The local economy is chiefly pastoral, with agriculture practised in a few fertile valleys. Most households are engaged in primary-level activities such as subsistence agriculture and livestock rearing, or small-scale business conducted locally.”¹⁰ A telling statistic for FATA is that the population of around 3.5 million has so little arable land that each acre of cultivable land has to be utilized for supporting at least 40 people. In the absence of viable options to earn a living, the lure of illicit activities such as smuggling (of consumer goods and weapons) and drug trafficking is as difficult to resist as the call of extremist Islamist elements.¹¹

“No systematic quantitative data is available on poverty. What is known, however, is that poverty in the tribal areas is high compared to the rest of Pakistan. The results of a recent participatory assessment, meanwhile, reveal the existence of a nuanced system of determining social status, involving more than a dozen classifications for poverty including *miskeen* (meek), *aajiz* (needy), *ghareeb* (poor), *faqeer* (beggar), *bechara* (pitiable), *spera* (hungry or unfortunate), *tabah-o-barbad* (destroyed), *khwaar* (frustrated) and *bebakht* (unlucky).”¹² It is indeed an ironic state of affairs, since the preceding information is an official version of the socio-economic indicators, provided on the Government of Pakistan’s FATA website. The literacy rate in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas is 17.42 percent, which is below the 43.92 percent average in Pakistan. Only 29.51 percent of the males and a mere 3 percent of females receive education.¹³ Electricity is free and no taxes are collected. Only about 7 percent land is cultivable. There is one hospital bed for every 2,179 people in FATA, and one doctor for every 7,670 people. Only 43 percent of FATA citizens have access to clean drinking water.¹⁴

It does seem that the inherent structural imbalances in distributive social justice in FATA have left gaping wounds, which the extremist project is quick to exploit. One of the reasons for militancy in the tribal areas may very well be the legitimacy deficit both on the political and economic fronts; for instance the unemployment rate for the 15-25 years age group in Waziristan is above 80 percent.¹⁵ With such abysmal statistics, it hardly needs a huge stretch of imagination to conceptualize that the unemployed youths may be attracted towards militancy as a way of venting their grievances. It is pertinent to mention here that many of the vigilante acts of the Taliban in FATA have been endorsed by the local populace, since these are seen as non-discriminatory acts aimed at punishing criminals. In an area where

the locals have traditionally complained of ineffective governance, a heightened local sense of security may be a driving factor swelling the ranks of Taliban followers.¹⁶

Now the question arises as to how and why FATA remained in complete isolation from the rest of the Pakistani society, to the extent that the permeation of extremism has started affecting the settled areas of the country. The roots of this variance can easily be traced back to the period of British occupation, when a tacit agreement was arrived at between the British rulers and the tribals, for a power-sharing formula involving the representation of tribals through a congregation of their elders known as the Jirga. The British government was represented through their state functionaries, forming a part of their well-organized and well-trained Indian Political Service, a department of the Indian Civil Service during the British Raj. This system was evolved in consequence of the realization that it was more or less impossible to maintain law and order in the settled districts like Peshawar, unless the tribals were paid a fixed sum for keeping the roads open and safe for travelers, with the British seldom interfering in their local customs and traditions. These arrangements were found functionally satisfactory for the maintenance of law and order through Frontier Constabulary and Khasadars, the informal paramilitary force recruited from the tribes, and formed an integral part of the civilian security forces. Rebellion against the British and violation of law was further encouraged due to scarce agriculture and other resources for employment; hence the Government looked the other way to smuggling and large-scale establishment of weapons factories as cottage industry for want of an alternative.

The Durand frontier line between Pakistan and Afghanistan was also a nominal demarcation, as the tribes were spread across the region on both sides of the border. The tribes were given a safe conduct for movement across the border, and *powindahs*, or nomadic tribals, moved freely across the border in search of food and shelter against the onslaughts of weather. Afghan designs on this territory are also germane to this problem.

Geographical contiguity and porous borders with Afghanistan, along with shared tribal and religious affiliations make these areas more akin to Afghanistan, rather than Pakistan. The present Pak-US joint intervention in South Waziristan is an extension of the past, where criminals (and now terrorists) could easily find safe havens and recruiting grounds in these geographically sequestered areas of the country. Whereas the reasons for this new development could possibly be socio-political, or ethnic, extremism catches on fastest if given a religious tinge. Amid the absence of education and economic opportunity, the masses are susceptible to manipulation by indoctrinators for revenge, who exploit their religious sentiments. The most viable educational institutions are the madrassas since they are backed by religious sanction. These generally free board and lodging seminaries prepare militants and Jihadis for exploiting the popular disillusionment in the existing socio-political scenario.

There has been a physical and cognitive divide between the FATA areas and the settled ones ever since Pakistan gained independence in 1947. The world changes almost unrecognizably beyond a flimsy barrier separating an urban centre like Peshawar from a FATA area like Darra Adam Khel. The open display of weapons is perhaps the most striking change, accompanied by stark socio-economic deprivation. Women almost completely disappear from public view, and the area is conspicuous by a near complete lack of women's educational institutions. The few institutions for women's education are often poorly attended. The state's writ is represented not by the regular police but by tribal levies. In many parts of FATA it had often been impossible even before 9/11 to enter without the permission of

the political agent or sans a military/paramilitary escort, especially for foreigners. These areas have remained relatively isolated from the rest of the society due to a strong cultural identity. This is a classic example of what social anthropologists analyzing cultural relativism interpret as a case of a culture closing ranks for fear of being wiped out,¹⁷ but in the process, fossilizing itself to the exclusion of enlightenment. Thus, the FATA areas would seem a most logical choice for radical movements like militant extremism to take root. Is it incredible to grasp that the children born and bred in extreme poverty and difficult circumstances are attracted towards the religious seminaries that not only guarantee them a square meal but also eternal life in paradise for sacrificing their life, which has been extremely mundane in this material world? Is there not a possibility that a person inculcated with this extreme ideology finds all others not adherent to it as *Wajibul Qatl*,¹⁸ especially when he perceives a huge class divide and inequity around him? These are questions which are beginning to demand urgent answers in the Pakistani society, with the ideology represented above presenting a clear cognitive divide between the urban and the tribal society.

It is thus important to comprehend the ideological base for the Taliban movement so as to clearly demarcate the neo-theological discourse it bases its rationale upon. The answer lies in transmigration of extremism from a neighboring country. In Afghanistan, Afghan communists and Taliban as the pinnacle of Islamic extremism were the two dominant ideologies of the past decades. Both tried to impose radical change on a traditional social structure by a revolution from the top, which only resulted in an exponential increase in chaos. Their failure to account for the strong bonds of tribalism and ethnicity in the complex equation of social change, which they wanted to produce instantaneously, was a major reason for their failure.

The Taliban in Pakistan attempted the same in an even more circumscribed area, where tribalism had been the main source of inspiration for centuries. It is doubtful from the very onset that they would succeed; once the army operations started in the area with commitment and resolve, the troops have made significant headway on all fronts. The Taliban had initially set out as an Islamic reform movement and, before they had started indulging in cruelties, had succeeded in gaining some popularity as well. The Taliban were acting in the spirit of jihad when they attacked the rapacious warlords around them in Afghanistan. This degenerated into autocracy and ethnic killing in the name of the Taliban interpretation of jihad. This alienated the non-Pashtuns in Afghanistan, since the ethnic minorities saw them as using Islam as a cover to exterminate non-Pashtuns.

While examining the religious lineage of FATA, it is worthwhile to trace the influence of Sufism on the Pak-Afghan tribal areas. Comprehension of the religious milieu of FATA demands a close look at the politico-religious evolution of Islam in Afghanistan, since both are now inextricably linked. Many commentators, particularly western ones, err in assuming that the Taliban's religious ideology in the Pak-Afghan border region was a distillation of a radicalized Islamist thought process in Afghanistan which had always been there. But history shows otherwise. Sufism was a moderating factor for Islam in Afghanistan in particular; this being the trend of mystical Islam, which originated in Central Asia and Persia. There were two main Sufi orders in Afghanistan; Naqshbandiyah and Qadiriya. These provided a separate track of resistance to the Soviets by their network of associations and alliances outside the mujahideen parties and ethnic groups. These were quite influential; the Mujaddadi families were leaders of the Naqshbandiyah, their most prominent member being Sibghatullah Mujaddadi,¹⁹ the head of Jabha-i Najat Milli Afghanistan (National Liberation Front of Afghanistan)

set up in Peshawar. Later, he was a president of Afghanistan in 1992, as chairman of the Jihad Council. The other important Sufi order was epitomized by Pir Sayed Ahmad Gilani.²⁰ He set up the Mahaz-e-Milli in Peshawar. Even though Mujaddadi and Pir Gilani were leaders of mujahideen groups, their views were too moderate to 'suit' the jihad. This was also due to the fact that they were relatively moderate Muslims (as opposed to other warlords), and had their own conceptions about the conduct of warfare.

Adherence to Islamic ritualism is inbred in the lifestyle of the Afghan and Pakistani tribals, regardless of whether they really are religious or not. The panoply of adherents includes former Afghan king Zahir Shah, communist pro-Russian ministers, and Mujahideen warriors in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Islam in the Pak-Afghan tribal belts has historically been ritualistic but at the same time laissez faire, and not at all the 'push it down your throat' type it has now become.²¹ Religious minorities such as Sikhs, Hindus and Jews had enjoyed minimal persecution in Afghanistan; in fact they were quite wealthy and controlled the money markets. Similarly, there were large Sikh communities living in Orakzai Agency in Pakistan, which virtually controlled the money markets in the area. Even the Afghan and FATA mullah was a laissez faire variety of preacher who would admonish people for not coming to prayers regularly, but would rarely preach sectarianism or politics. The year 1992 saw a watershed; this year, not coincidentally, corresponds to the Taliban gaining strength in Afghanistan.

After 1992, the brutal civil war created irreconcilable schisms within Islamic sects and ethnic groups, setting the stage for the contemporary intolerant Afghanistan. Ahmad Shah Masud's massacre of the Hazaras in Kabul in 1995, the Hazaras' massacre of the Taliban in Mazar in 1997, and the Taliban massacres of Hazaras and Uzbeks in 1998 mark brutal 'Islamocide' perpetrated by Muslims in the name of their indigenous breed of ideology.²² This was a novel phenomenon in Afghanistan's history, creating the present religious divides. Minority groups all but fled the country after the ethnocide cited above and the Taliban's anti-Shia program, and transformed the fiercely independent tribalism of the Afghans into militant fundamentalism.

Eighty percent of people in Afghanistan belong to the Sunni Hanafi sect, which is generally considered to be the most liberal of the four Sunni schools of thought.²³ The minority strains were the Shia Islam of the Hazaras in the Hazarajat, the beliefs of scattered Pashtun tribes, Tajiks and Heratis, and the Ismaelis, followers of the Aga Khan. Even though there is no separation of politics from religion, the Sunni Hanafi creed prevalent in Afghanistan for ages admirably suited the loose Afghan confederation politics, since it was quite flexible; tribalism being the preferred state of government, and state interference was kept to a minimum. Since many commentators assume the present state of heightened religiosity in FATA to be the Afghan jihad, it is important to contextualize the current radicalization of FATA as a transmigration of these tendencies from neighboring Afghanistan. Similarly, Deobandi Islam never really had a foothold in FATA until the Afghan jihad started. The Pashtun village mullahs were the centre of village and social life, and Jirga the preferred adjudicative body.

Formal education was largely provided in small madrassas where students or Talibs studied the basic tenets of religious education. Herat was a central nucleus of learning in Afghanistan, which attracted students from FATA as well. From the seventeenth century onwards, Talibs aspiring to a higher level

of religious learning traveled to Central Asia, Egypt and India to study at more renowned madrassas. Islam was also embedded in the political structure in Afghanistan because Shariah law governed the legal processes as late as 1925; a civil legal code was introduced to enable the two systems to co-exist. Shariah Faculty was set up at Kabul University in 1946.²⁴ A protégé of this eclectic mix was Muhammad Musa Shafiq, the populist last prime minister under the monarchy, who was later executed by the communists. Shafiq combined all these strands of education, having been educated at a madrassa, followed by studies at the Kabul University Shariah Faculty, and a degree from Columbia University in New York.

As the emphasis was more on tribalism than religious inclinations, the more traditional tribal-based parties as opposed to radical one were preferred by the Afghan Ulema. In the beginning of the Afghan jihad, most joined Harakat Inqilabi-Islami, headed by Maulana Muhammad Nabi Muhammadi, and Hizb-e-Islami, led by Maulvi Younis Khalis.²⁵ Both men were Maulvis (religious leaders) who had studied for a time at the Haqqani madrassa in Pakistan, and then established their own madrassas in Afghanistan. After the Soviet invasion, they set up organizations which were decentralized, non-ideological and non-hierarchical, but they rapidly lost out as the weapons suppliers supported the more radical Islamic parties.

Before the Taliban, Islamic extremism had never really managed to gain a foothold in the Pak-Afghan tribal belts. The Wahabi sect, for example, spread from Central Asia and India, but was a movement of inconsequential importance before the ascendancy of the Taliban. However, the Saudis preferred to fund the Wahabi warlords; an early export was Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, who set up a Wahabi party, the Ittehad-e-Islami, in Peshawar. He can be characterized as the archetypical conservative, "anti-West," "anti-American" and hard line Islamic fundamentalist. He was a scion of Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt, and a member of the Afghan group Akhwan-ul-Muslimeen (Muslim Brotherhood) founded in 1969 by Gulbeddin Hikmetyar and Dr. Syed Burhanuddin Rabbani. This was defined by some as just a chapter of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Sayyaf cultivated a close relationship with Osama bin Laden, establishing a network of training camps, bunkers and emplacements in the Jalalabad area with mutual collaboration, which were later utilized by Al Qaeda militants.²⁶ The Wahabi strain of puritanical thought was further distilled in the Salafi thought process of Afghans. Ordinary Afghans however viewed this movement with disdain, because of their traditional and deep-seated suspicion of anything foreign. Even Bin Laden, when he joined the Afghan jihad, was considered an 'outsider'; however, in war, finances tend to get depleted at an alarming rate and freely available money is welcome, which eventually enabled him to win a small Pashtun following. However, Arab 'Mujahideen' continued to be treated as outsiders by Afghans, who were not above murdering them at times out of disdain for their 'arrogance' and what the Afghans perceived as their 'holier than thou' attitudes.

Pakistan had provided sanctuary to Hikmetyar and Masud even before the Soviet invasion, since 1975 to be precise, when both had been forced to flee Afghanistan after failed uprisings against President Muhammad Daud. Pakistani President Ziaul Haq was thus the supporter of both these groups. Masud however was a commander with a mind of his own, leaving Hikmetyar as the sole recipient of the cash flowing in. Not coincidentally, Hikmetyar was also the most radical minded of all mujahideen. The continued Pakistani support for him sometimes flew in the face of facts on ground; he was not very well accepted in Kabul, Masud having greater credibility in the eyes of

ordinary Afghans.

It can thus be seen that the ideological sanction for the Taliban was basically imposed by external sources, the most militant ideologies competing for the cash and ammunition. Pakistan was the main indoctrination base for the Taliban ideology; it follows naturally that the Pakistani Taliban have imbibed the philosophy from the infrastructure of madrassas remaining largely intact, despite ineffectual efforts by the Pakistani authorities to regulate their curriculum.

It would also be relevant to have a closer look at the inhabitants of the tribal agencies in FATA and their mutual relations to gain insight into the tribal worldview. North Waziristan is home to about 375,000 people, mainly belonging to the Wazir and Dawar tribes. Many militant tribal leaders have become legendary figures in the area. This has remained a largely reactionary area even after the independence of Pakistan in 1947, even though many tribesmen are enrolled in the Pakistan Army. The strong Pashtun identity of these people has meant that they relate more with Afghanistan than Pakistan. South Waziristan is the largest of the seven tribal agencies in FATA in size, having a population of about 425,000 people, mainly from Mehsud and Wazir tribes. Both tribes are renowned as formidable warriors and frequent blood feuds erupt between the two even today. According to historian Sir Olaf Caroe, the Mehsud tribe would never consider submitting to a foreign power that has entered their land. Nek Muhammad was a legendary militant leader from this agency, who was succeeded by Baitullah Mehsud. Bajaur's prominent tribes are Tarkani and Utmankhel. Over the years, there have been some unconfirmed media reports about Osama bin Laden hiding in the area. In Khyber Agency, the main inhabitants are the Afridis and the Shinwaris. Afridis have been known in history as good fighters and respectful to Sufis (mystics) and their shrines, which intellectually aligns them with Barelvi Sunnis, the antidote to conservative and pro-Taliban Deobandi groups. The Shinwaris, who are mostly businessmen, reside mainly in the Nangarhar province of Afghanistan.

The relative high educational ratio in Orakzai Agency has not stopped its tribes from falling under the thralls of Talibanization. They are amongst the most conservative of the tribals, being amongst the first to ban NGOs from operating in the area, declaring them anti-Islamic. The possession of televisions was declared a punishable crime under the influence of the local Taliban. Most of the state-run educational institutions have been shut down by the local Taliban. Mohmands, residing in Mohmand Agency, are renowned guerrilla fighters. A characteristic hallmark of these people is that they are particularly reverent to their religious leaders, to the extent of fighting their wars under leadership of local clerics.

Kurram Agency is mostly inhabited mainly by the Shia Bangash tribe, which makes it anti-Taliban by default. The other tribe, Turi (Turkic origin), has also constantly been at loggerheads with pro-Taliban, Deobandi elements in the neighboring areas.

Tribal affiliations dictate even the trajectories of militancy in these areas to a large extent. Mulla Nazir in North Waziristan, for example, turned vehemently against his ally Baitullah Mehsud when it seemed to him that Uzbeks were infiltrating into his areas at the behest of Mehsud. Tribal tradition then dictated that these foreigners could not be tolerated, and this led Nazir to have a disagreement with Mehsud.²⁷ Also, the Mehsud tribe and Nazirs have had a longstanding history of tribal rivalry, which is a potent driving factor in the areas of FATA.

Similarly, even though Mehsud had collected many of the splinter Jihadi groups under the banner of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), he did not entirely succeed in keeping some regional and ethnic militant groups united under him.²⁸ One of the aims of the Tehreek-e-Taliban was to coordinate and take joint decisions on talks with the government. Some militants were in favor of halting attacks against Pakistan Army, in order to conserve tribal military energy for the fight against American and NATO forces across the border. Militants from the Ahmadzai Wazir tribe in South Waziristan in fact became pro-government to the extent of pushing back TTP fighters to fall back into their area.²⁹ In North Waziristan, one of the important militant leaders, Hafiz Gul Bahadar³⁰ also kept to a ceasefire. This may be explicable in terms of tribal affiliations, which tend to direct the ideological viewpoints of the warlords. Even though Gul Bahadar was named as the TTP head in North Waziristan he clashed with Mehsud over the decision to engage Pakistan Army. As journalist Rahimullah Yusufzai explained: "Association with the TTP and being its deputy leader did not mean much when it came to the territorial and tribal limits of each Taliban group and commander. Hafiz Gul Bahadar was particularly furious when Mehsud's men started firing rockets into the army's camp at Razmak, a town in North Waziristan, during the recent fighting between the military and the Mehsud-commanded militants. It was also evident that Hafiz Gul Bahadar and his Taliban fighters failed to abide by one of the major decisions of the TTP by refusing to coordinate attacks on the security forces in North Waziristan to help ease pressure on the Taliban fighting under Mehsud's command in South Waziristan. This failure defied a Taliban decision that every Taliban group was required to come to the assistance of others in its area of operation that were under attack from the Pakistan Army."³¹ Yusufzai postulates that the variance of strategic approaches between Mehsud and Gul Bahadar and his allied commanders arose due to their tribal differences, which shape their ideological approaches. Gul Bahadar and his allies belong to the Torikhel and Daur Wazir tribes, which have tended to lead an uneasy existence with the Mehsud tribe.³²

Tribal affiliation and traditional animosities in FATA are much too entrenched to disappear even in the presence of the cementing bond of Talibanization. Mehsud, for example, could not freely operate in the Ahmadzai Wazir tribe dominated Wana area.³³ Even though the Mehsud and Ahmadzai Wazir tribes have long co-existed in South Waziristan, a history of feuds and uneasy co-existence has tended to dictate the organizational structures, even though both tribes are equally radical. The Taliban among the Ahmadzai Wazir thus tended to function rather independently of Baitullah Mehsud, though temporary alliances tended to spring up.³⁴ It may be more than a coincident that the above-mentioned commanders became pro-government since they presumably needed support against TTP in an area where they shared an uneasy co-existence with the latter. Thus, it is obvious that the particular tribal paradigm does shape the strategy of the Taliban, regardless of the fact that they are purportedly claiming to support universal jihad. A point in fact would be the Wana Taliban's denial of assistance in their area to Uzbek militants aligned with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.³⁵ In this context, it is discernible that factors other than trade-offs were responsible for driving some ostensibly pro-Pakistan warlords into the arms of the state, and trade-offs were not the only material benefits pushing them towards it. In fact, it can be argued that the pro-state warlords aligned with the state primarily for factors other than material benefits, which had historical or tribal contexts. Thus, these tribal trajectories maybe one of the overarching umbrellas under which militancy thrives in these areas. Summing up, FATA is a complicated area to comprehend by any standards, and thus any attempt to win hearts and minds in the area needs to be augmented by intense efforts to understand the ground realities; barring that, it may very well continue to be branded as the 'most dangerous area in the world' for a long time to come.

Notes

- ¹ Bassam Tibi, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism: Political Islam and the New World Disorder*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), ix-xxiii.
- ² *Ibid.*, ix.
- ³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴ Olaf Caroe, *The Pathans*, (London: Macmillan and Company Limited, 1965).
- ⁵ George L. Montagno, *The Pak-Afghan Detente*, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 3, No. 12 (Dec., 1963), pp. 616-624
- ⁶ Special Report, *The News on Sunday*, April 13, 2008, <http://jang.com.pk/thenews/apr2008-weekly/nos-13-04-2008/spr.htm>.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁹ Sughra Ahmed, 'Bridging' Social Capital Seminar Series, Seminar 2: Social capital and dimensions of equality, July 31, 2008, at Carnegie UK Trust. (London) http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/uploadedFiles/NCVO/What_we_do/Research/Social_Capital/Social_capital_and_equality.pdf
- ¹⁰ The Government of Pakistan's official website on FATA. <http://www.fata.gov.pk/index.php>.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*
- ¹² *Ibid.*
- ¹³ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁵ Syed Manzar Abbas Zaidi, *The New Taliban*, (New York: Nova Publishers, 2009).
- ¹⁶ Syed Manzar Abbas Zaidi, "The New Taliban Warlords and Organization," *Defence against Terrorism review* (a NATO COE DAT Journal), Vol.1 Issue 2, Fall 2008. <http://www.coedat.nato.int/>
- ¹⁷ Henry J. Steiner and Philip Alston, *International Human Rights in Context: Law, Politics, Morals*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 376-8.
- ¹⁸ Liable to be killed without evoking any religiously generated legal sanction; a term commonly used by extremists to justify terrorism.
- ¹⁹ Ahmed Rasheed, *Taliban*, (New York: Pan Macmillan, 2001), p. 84.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 85.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 82.
- ²² *Ibid.*, p. 83
- ²³ *Ibid.*
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