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Talibanisation of Pakistan: Myth or Reality

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The President of Pakistan Parvaiz Musharraf termed ‘Talibanisation’ as a potential threat to national security,’ of Pakistan. Pakistan’s famous newspaper Daily Dawn, reported, the 15-page presentation at the National Security Council of Pakistan, which speaks of the Taliban of having regrouped and reorganised, bringing about serious repercussions for Pakistan. The presentation highlights that “Talibanisation has not only unfolded potential threats to our security, but is also casting its dark shadows over Fata and now in the settled areas adjoining the tribal belt. The reality is that it is spreading.” The members of the NSC were informed by the high officials of Pakistan that “The rising militancy manifesting itself in the shape of suicide attacks, harassment of NGOs, bombings of barber and video shops, threats to religious minorities, girls schools and politicians and attacks on law-enforcement personnel. Clerics were making full use of illegal FM radio channels to preach extremism and militancy and some madressahs were involved in recruiting young boys for ‘jihad.’ Now government is trying to block illegal FM transmission and to launch a media campaign to create awareness and counter militant propaganda.”

The dynamics of the uneven development patterns in South Asia has been among the predominant causes of politically and religiously driven violence. Interference from the external powers, from neighbouring and extra-regional elements (both as official sponsorship and by independent groups also called Non-state actors) has given a dangerous tilt to the situation. There are many reasons behind the threat of Talibanisation of Pakistani society such as, like political and social perpetration by some governments and social groups, within a socio-political environment of unjust cultural norms, injustice in the society, ideological contradictions, rigid religious beliefs, close society and foreign interventions. While, socio-economic factors like poverty, unemployment, ignorance and unequal social opportunities have added in the deterioration of situation. Almost all of these above mentioned reasons have roots in the socio-economic inequalities and politically manipulative processes. It is interesting that with the end of cold war the ideology-based violence has increased all over the

South Asian region and so as the ongoing arms race between the India and Pakistan, which also refers to the proliferation of weapons. Pakistan is facing many internal security problems such as the issue of illegal immigration, drug trafficking, ethnic divisions, sectarian violence and intolerance, Narco-terrorism and loose control of government in some areas such as FATA.

The short-sighted policies of some leaders provided the opportunity to Islamic radicals to exploit the public disappointment with stagnant economies, disenchantment with governments, thus succeeding in preaching their own version of superiority of Islamic system and values.

**Definitions of Talibanisation**

There are various definitions of Talibanisation such as,

1. “A firestorm of ideologically driven violence and intimidation - described as
   “Talibanisation”

2. “The Taliban philosophy is representative of Muslim political thought except that it is heavily influenced by the tribal traditions — not only of the Pashtoons but also the Arabs. It is about the ‘imposition’ of tribal and rural values on the public at large.

3. “Talibanisation” is comparatively new term, which indicates the influence of Islamic radicals aiming at radicalisation and weaponisation of the society. This phenomenon emerged when an armed political group got hold in Afghanistan during mid 90s.

4. Since the Taliban and Afghan Jihad have set a model, the term Talibanisation is frequently used in this context to describe any madrassa-based activity or event.

**Introduction of Talibans**

The terms ‘Taliban’ and ‘madrassa’ are in use since centuries in Afghanistan and adjoining areas. They reflect age-old Islamic institutions of higher learning. The word ‘Taliban’ is the plural of ‘Talib.’ This term is commonly used in Pushto for the student studying in Islamic school or institution.

According to Ahmad Rashid, a renowned scholar, ‘The Taliban derive much of their religious inspiration from Deobandism, a Sunni movement that arose in India in the late 19th century. It was aimed at regenerating the real Muslim Society. The Deobandis actually sought to harmonise classical Islamic texts with the current realities - which the Afghan Taliban have ignored to do. They are interpreting a stricter version of Islam, which is primitive and extreme
in nature. Saudi Arabian funds and scholarships have brought the Taliban’s version closer to the Wahabism, currently prevalent in Saudi Arabia.  

The majority of Talibans are all rural based. They are not educated in either the so-called ‘worldly’ studies or religious disciplines, because none of them ever went to Deoband or any other historical house of knowledge. Besides, there are very few writings by Taliban leaders. The only related literature that one can find is through Rasmi Jareeda, famously known for its reproduction of the various farmaans (orders and edicts) of their (self appointed) Amir ul Momineen Mullah Omar and their Ministry of Amr Bil Maroof Wa Nahi Anil Munkar (the promotion of virtue and the abolition of vice) and, at times, through the radio commentaries or speeches of the Taliban leaders. However, the available literature is not enough to know about political programme of Taliban. If we read the Rasmi Jareeda or listen to their radio channel, ‘Da Shariat Ghag’ (Voice of Shariat), we find that they are preaching Shariah, or Islam for that matter, except that there is no coherent writing on Shariah.

It is also significant to note that there are different groups of clerics having their respective central figure dictating the group and followers. They have been unable to evolve a unified set of objectives or a political philosophy, yes the strategy and tactics of harassing the population through violence is the only commonality among them. “It is hard to know what kind of state(s) they want to create by implementing their respective Shariahs. For instance, Mullah Sufi Muhammad and his son-in-law, Maulana Fazlullah, concentrated on Malakand, then Taliban of Waziristan and Bajaur wanted to have control in their respective tribal agencies. Then the Jamia Hafsa-Lal Masjid famed Aziz brothers had their eyes on Islamabad at least as the base of their Islamic State. In fact, the outlook of Waziristans’ Taliban has been so narrow and specific that they virtually turned Waziristan into a cleric state, which was referred to as Islamic State of Waziristan in the media.”

**Historical Background**

The current debates over the Talibanisation of Pakistan, prompted by the increasing incidents of religious extremism, fundamentalism and sectarianism, which generate the feeling that the country is gradually moving towards Talibanisation, as has happened in Afghanistan. The State of Pakistan, and its politico-religious forces, and deeni madaris are called as the breeding grounds of religious fanaticism, particularly by the international media. The Afghan

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4 Ibid
war, Soviet withdrawal and their linkages with Taliban, provided a great motivation to the Politico-religious forces of Pakistan. They also started to call themselves Taliban and take pride in it. Endorsing the Taliban model, they have begun striving for and dreaming about the establishment of a Taliban-style government in Pakistan. Some hard-core followers are often heard saying that they would welcome a Taliban take-over in Pakistan.⁴

Now the question is how and why the Islamic parties gained influence in political spheres? Even to the extent that now they have their own military wings and after the successful experiment of Afghanistan (according to the perceptions of these parties) they are trying to impose the same modal on Pakistani society.

To analyse this we have to go back to 1979, when the Soviet forces entered Afghanistan. Besides countries who supported the Afghan freedom fighters and their war against Soviet forces, for their own interests, Pakistan’s president at that time also tried to gain political benefits out of it. After the executing the former Prime Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto in 1979, General Zia-ul-Haq, the military dictator and president of Pakistan at that time, was bearing domestic pressure for the restoration of the democratic process. Under these circumstances his regime tried to legitimise itself through the program of Islamisation of Pakistan. The support of the Pakistani politico-religious parties was essential to achieve this objective. The Jamaat-e-Islami, a religious party, was the first one to come to the forefront in this regard. John K. Cooly, the author of the book “Unholy Wars” writes that ‘Jamaat-e-Islami’s partnership with the military, no doubt, helped General Zia take over power in 1977.’ Peter Marsden, a Research Associate at the Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford University, opines that when Zia extended support to the Afghan Mujahideen, the Afghan Islamist parties found a leader, whose ideological aspiration were very much in line with their own thinking, and with that of their counterparts in Pakistan, such as Jamaat-e-Islami (JI). The JI had a good understanding with the Hizb-e-Islami of Gulbadin Hikmatyar⁵ in Afghanistan. Also, the Afghan exile leaders in Pakistan, found it an opportunity to claim the leadership of the resistance movement. Zia-ul-Haq, at the same time, considered involvement in Jihad an opportunity to establish a friendly government in Kabul, over which Pakistan could exercise its influence to establish a strategic strength⁶ against India and work for the formation of an

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⁵ The former prime minister of Afghanistan and an educated engineer.

⁶ Some scholars called it an effort to get strategic depth. The concept of “Strategic Depth” was first initiated by Gen. Mirza Aslam Beg. This concept is about preserving Pakistan’s nuclear arsenals, military and second strike capability in some other country, to survive any nuclear attack or first strike by India. For this reason they see Afghanistan and Central Asian states as strategic depth for Pakistan.
Islamic bloc stretching from Pakistan to Central Asia. These Madrassas or religious schools also played a vital role in gaining public support in some quarters of the society for Zia-ul-Haq.

In Pakistan, the Jamia Darul-Uloom-Haqqania, Akora Khattak, (NWFP), run by the former Senator Maulana Sami-ul-Haq of Jamiat-e-Ulama-e-Islam, JUI (S), is one of the most popular madaris. After the successful experiment of Akora Khattak, former Senator Maulana Sami-ul-Haq has established more than one thousand such madaris of different sizes, mainly in Pakistan and some in other countries. Which provides him a religious base to exploit to further his political agenda. Jamiat-ul-Uloom-ul-Islamiya, located in Binori Town (Karachi), is another important madrassa that belongs to the JUI (S). It was founded by Maulana Mohammad Yusaf Binori. Jamiat-e-Ulama-e-Islam (Fazal-ur-Rehman Group-JUI-F), headed by the former MNA, Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman, (he was also involved in monitory corruption) is also believed to be running a large chain of deeni madaris in Baluchistan and some parts of the NWFP. Besides these, there are a large number of madaris, scattered throughout the country, which are either run by individuals, local groups or charity organizations.

Interestingly these madaris have an international reputation, as students not only from Pakistan, but also from Afghanistan, the Central Asian States, Iran, India, Bangladesh, Africa and many other Muslim countries, come and study here. A significant number of the Afghan Taliban’s current leadership and former Mujahideen have studied in the madaris of Akora Khattak, Binori Town, and those situated in Baluchistan.

The madaris, which were functioning in Afghanistan before the Soviet occupation of the country, also moved into Pakistan and established themselves in different parts of the country. Saudi Arabia was active in developing Islam-oriented institutions, madaris and mosques in Afghanistan and the Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan. In the refugee camps almost every Mujahideen group had established its respective madaris according to its own religious affiliations.

Since massive funding was being done by different Muslim sources in the name of Islam, Jihad, and refugees, they found that by opening madaris, it was an easy means to muster support and strength. Thus, a mushroom growth of madaris began, both in and outside the refugee camps. Almost every group invoked Islam as a source of inspiration for waging war against the Soviet troops, and the Kabul regime, which sided with the Soviets. Since

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7 The funeral of Zia-ul-Haq was the biggest funeral of Pakistan and a large number of Afghans attended the funeral and called him their Father. Now every year on the death anniversary of Zia-ul-Haq many Afghans come to his grave to pay him tribute.
massive population displacement had taken place, as the war took its human toll, the number of orphans also increased. Poverty was common. Every madrassa attracted students, because besides education, food, accommodation and clothing were also offered free. Regarding education, apart from the traditional education, the students were imparted military training as well, which went down well in view of the Soviet presence in their country. This connection certainly gave Jamaat-e-Islami an indirect boost in domestic politics. One should also keep into the account that all these madaris strictly adhere to their respective sectarian groups and preach their own interpretation of the Quranic tenets. According to an estimate, deeni madaris in Pakistan have sharply grown from 1,745 in 1979 to around 15,000 in the year 2000. In Punjab province alone, the number of the registered students in deeni madaris is around (two hundred nineteen thousands) 219,000. Basically, these madaris and religious organisations are not a monolithic entity. They harbour very deep sectarian intolerance towards each other.

Maulana Sami-ul-Haq claimed that most of his students joined the Taliban after 1997. In his words: ‘Mullah Omar, the head of the Taliban movement, personally rang me and requested me to send my students to go to Afghanistan and fight for the Taliban.’ Ahmed Rashid, opines that in 1996, the Taliban handed over the control of training camps in Afghanistan to the JUI factions, and thus enhanced their image and influence within Pakistani and Arab Taliban.

Another reason is the growing awareness among politico-religious leaders, regarding the increase in public disapproval. Therefore they are establishing small, local-based, religious reform movements to get hold in the masses. The largest such movement, akin to the Taliban model, currently is in the North and South Waziristan Agencies, Hangu, Bannu and the peripheries of Dera Ismail Khan, which stand out as economically backward areas and where conservative traditions have a hold on society. The local Pakistani Taliban have begun enforcing the Afghan Taliban model i.e. by asking males to have long beards, banning the VCR, television, music and other recreational activities, the locals have been used to. A similar movement has been underway in the Orakzai Agency. In the Khyber Agency, the Tehreek-e-Ittehad-e-Ulama-e-Qabil is running a parallel administration to the political administration set up by the government. It has its own courts, jails and enforcement personnel. Another such noteworthy movement is that of the Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM) in the Malakand Division, where the JI has a strong hold. Led by Maulana Sufi Mohammad, it has given a tough time to the Governments since 1995, through demonstrations demanding Sharia enforcement in the division. The Frontier Corps were deployed to retake the control of the Saidu Sharif airport, roads, police stations and judicial
courts in the area. The Sharia courts were eventually introduced in the Malakand Division by the Benazir Bhutto Government in 1995-6, under the pressure of this organisation. In Peshawar and other places in the NWFP that abut the tribal areas, the local Taliban has ordered schoolgirls to veil themselves and men not to shave their beards. Elsewhere in FATA, armed Taliban men stop vehicles and remove cassette players and radios and force men to grow beards.

At times, the governments themselves seem to have been intimidated by such groups. For example, in December 2000, Tanzim-ul-Ikhwan, led by Maulana Mohammad Akram of Chakwal, demanded that the Musharraf Government promulgate Sharia and threatened otherwise to storm Islamabad with his followers. It first dispatched the Home Secretary, Punjab, followed by the Inspector General Police, Punjab, to negotiate with Maulana Akram, who remained adamant. Finally, the Minister for Religious Affairs, at that time, Dr. Mahmood Ghazi, visited the Maulana who agreed to defer his plan. There are reports that this group has a strong influence over the middle-ranking officers of the Army.

The emergence of similar movements cannot be ruled out in other parts of the country, particularly where poverty, unemployment and illiteracy are common, and where the feudal hold remains strong, such as in the southern parts of the Punjab, in interior Sindh and in the remote areas of Baluchistan. When the religious organisations reach out to these poverty-stricken masses with food and shelter assistance, they acquire immediate followers. Another reality, which is significant to understand the issue of Talibanisation, is the economic condition of Pakistan. Pakistan, is an impoverished and underdeveloped country. Which is suffering from decades of internal political disputes, low levels of foreign investment, and a costly, ongoing confrontation with neighbouring India and issues with Afghanistan.

The most affected area of this Talibanisation is Pakistan’s Frontier province known as NWFP as we discussed the situation in some of its parts earlier. This province is largely a Pushto speaking province and was directly involved in Afghan affairs since 1979. It area which borders with Afghanistan is called FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Area). There are seven tribal agencies lying on the international boundary line between Pakistan and Afghanistan (The Durand Line) and roughly covers around 800 miles of international boundary between the two countries. Although a part of Pakistan, the writ of the government is weak and in name only. FATA comprises seven Agencies of Mohmand, Khyber, Kurram, Orakzai, Bajaur, North Waziristan and South Waziristan and six Frontier Regions (FRs), including the Malakand Agency. The region stretches nearly 230 km from Bajaur Agency to South Waziristan. According to a 1998 national census, it has a population of nearly 5.7
million, but presently expected to be about 7 million. Of the size of Belgium, it is approx
27,220 sq kms porous border with Afghanistan. FATA is one of the poorest region of
Pakistan where majority of the population lives in rural areas. According to a WHO report of
2001 nearly 50 per cent of tribesmen are living in abject poverty, 75 per cent have no access
to clean drinking water. Problems of infant and maternal mortality are severe. The population
growth rate is 3.9 per cent as compared to nationally cited figures of 1.9 per cent. The literacy
rate is 17 per cent against the national average of 40 per cent while female literacy is less than
one percent. Nearly 66 per cent of households live below the poverty line. The government of
Pakistan launched many military operations to clean this area from Talibans and Al-Qaida
elements, who took refuge in this area after the ISAF forces captured Kabul.

The first real challenge to the writ of Gen Musharraf came when he sent in over
80,000 troops to FATA to force tribals to end support for the Taliban. The Pakistan army have
fought a bloody L.I.C in FATA, losing over 700 soldiers. More ominously, over 300 officers
and men reportedly face disciplinary action for refusing to take up arms against fellow
Pashtuns. Pakistan army has launched four military operations (Operation Almizan) in the
tribal area since the September 11 attacks. The first was carried out on 27 June 2002; the
second on 2 October 2003, the third on 8 January 2004 and the fourth, and and latest one was
launched on 13 March 2004. Pakistani security officials say that the earlier operations lacked
the support of the local population and tribal elders.

While following the stick and carrot approach by the government Development of
FATA region has taken top priority in as much as funds have been increased from on Rs. one
billion in 2001 to nearly four billion in 2004, although the amount demanded was Rs. 4.8
billion. In 2003, the allocated amount was Rs. 3.3 billion against the demand of Rs. 3.9
billion. Education is getting top priority with 22 per cent of the budget. Nearly rupees half a
billion were sanctioned by army in developing the region in building roads, health centres,
education and social centres infrastructure. Besides it was also monitoring development work
by NWFP Governor’s FATA Secretariat in agencies such as South Waziristan. In addition,
Rs. 8,169 million were donated by ADB, World Bank and US, Norway, Britain, Germany and
Japan for construction of dams and water and farm water management systems. For
agriculture, drinking water and hydroelectric generation, six small dams have been completed
while another six are under completion. Also, feasibility studies for 12 small dams are being

8 See Rahimullah Yusufzai’s, interview with Governor of NWFP, Lt. General (Retd) Syed Iftikhar Hussain Shah,
“NWFP for a Development Strategy to End Social Deprivation in FATA,” Rising Pakistan, The News,
9 Ibid.
made. At the same time, efforts to improve security include a three-year plan to train and equip 32,000 khassadars tribal force in FATA bringing its salaries and allowances at par with Frontier Corps.

After discussing all these above mentioned issues, one can assume that

**The causes, which contributed, towards the Talibanisation can be;**

- Zia-ul-Haq’s Islamisation program with the help of religious forces.
- Access of the politico-religious forces to the power corridors, and their influence over the decision making process.
- Availability of resources in terms of men and material due to the involvement in Afghan war.
- Linkages with similar organisations in the Muslim World due to Afghan war.
- Suspension of the mainstream politico-democratic process caused a vacuum for leadership.

**Before reaching to a specific conclusion we need to find out the answers of following questions;**

- Does Pakistan’s political, economic, social and cultural environment is conducive for Talibanisation?
- Does the people of Pakistan believe that politico-religious forces are playing a positive development role in the country?
- How public responded to them at different stages, such as elections, demonstrations, and protests?
- If these forces face a popular disapproval or rejection, then how they will react?
- Is there any difference between Talibanisation and Islamisation?

**So the answers to these questions can be;**

- Despite the fragile democracies the leadership vacuum has never occurred. Pakistan still has, strong, organised, and a functioning institutional set up, though like every political system it has some shortcomings. Therefore despite several economic, social, ideological and religious hurdles, Pakistan has passed the various periods of transitions successfully.

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10 Ibid.
• The politico-religious forces in Pakistan are not a monolithic entity unlike Afghan Taliban. So the politico-religious environment is not conducive for Talibanisation as every group has his own version of Islam to impose on rest of the public. It is also a fact that a considerable number of Pakistanis is influenced by Sufi school of thought, which is opposite to radicalism or Talibanisation.

• Sectarian intolerances are a highlight of all religious organisations. Though they all believe the western values are dangerous for the society and globalisation is westernising the Islamic society of Pakistan, but they do not have any one-consensus model for Islamisation. They are sympathetic exclusively to their own respective versions of Sharia.

• The religious parties are failed to bring common man to the streets, in the name of Islam or to create problems for the Musharraf regime. During last nine (9) years only the lawyers community is able to arrange most noticeable movement against the current regime. This lawyers community is suppose to be liberal part of the civil society. The coalition government of religious parties in NWFP is still unable to address the problems of common man. Despite solving the actual problems such as poverty, illiteracy and unemployment, rather their emphasis was on signboards with ladies photographs, and futile issues such as Hasba bill. Therefore now the common man of NWFP asks that what difference is made by the government of Islamic parties? And the Muthida Mujlis-e-Amal (MMA) government has no positive answer.

• Though Pakistan has some under-developed and ignored areas, but still it is possible to find the elements of modernity in Pakistani society, such as schools, electricity, roads, dispensaries, and telephone services, even in the small villages in far-flung areas. The people, have a cosmopolitan outlook and are aware of national and international developments. Most probably the social fault-lines are located in economic conditions. For a common man ideological differences are not the overriding factor. The society as a whole has shown during various elections that it remains unreceptive to the Islamic parties and Talibanisation phenomenon.

• In case of general disapproval, which is there right now these may use violence to assert their existence and it is what exactly they are doing today. One can take the issue of Lal Masjid as a case study to support this argument.

• One should not mix the Anti-Americanism and pro Talibanisation elements, in Pakistani society.

• Now the Islamisation vs Talibanisation, A number of steps have already been taken for Islamisation of Pakistan, such as the establishment of Sharia faculties, compulsory
teaching of Islamiyat in schools and colleges, the promulgation of Hudood and other ordinances, Baitul Maal, and Zakat and Usher, and so forth. On the other hand, Talibanisation is the implementation of a specific rigid explanation of Islam according to one specific sect, which is not Islamisation for the Muslims belong to other sects. We should also keep it in mind that Talibans in Afghanistan were oppressive against the Shia sect of Islam. While talking about the Talibanisation of Pakistani society one cannot ignore the religious and political powers of Shias, who are educated, well settled and are on important key posts and not at all oppressed.

Now the question arises that why Talibanisation affected some parts of Pakistan?

- As a consequence of Pakistan's participation in the international coalition against terrorism Pakistan has suffered both internally as well as externally. Internally it has experienced severe damage to its economy while also having the society divided into two groups over the support of war against terrorism. Acts of terrorism have considerably increased. All such acts not only disturbed Pakistan's image but also took a heavy economic toll and deterred investment. The fact is that can we term these activities of religious extremists as Talibanisation, as well?
- After the attack of the US led forces on Afghanistan many of Jihadies from other countries such as Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Arab world, Africa, were compelled to take refuge in the tribal areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan, as their own governments were unwilling to take them back. Their activities in Pakistan also helped the extremists to use them to enforce the rigid version of Islam. Recently there were clashes between the Uzbek Talibans and Pushtoon Talibans, and the later forced the first one to evacuate the area, and Uzbek Talibans escaped from the FATA area in great numbers.
- The illegal sale and spread of weapons throughout Pakistan is linked to the Afghan War, which contributed in establishing the “Talibanised pockets” in Pakistan. According to many estimations there are more than one million, unlicensed weapons in Pakistan most of which were obtained through illegal means.

Some Observations:
The rising unemployment particularly among the students of religion is creating a dangerous situation. By their funding of traditional education in madrassas, government and foreign powers have made available a large number of young people who have acquired only...
religious knowledge, to the exclusion of other disciplines. This disaffected youth without jobs is readily available target to be brainwashed for political ends. There are efforts to regularize and register the religious schools and mosques and many of the extremist groups have been banned and their activities suspended. The Musharraf Government enacted new laws under which, religious institutions would be required to maintain audited accounts, discourage an atmosphere of religious confrontation, sectarianism and hatred against any class, and refrain from indulging in militancy or paramilitary training. At the same time government has undertaken the review of syllabus pertaining to Islamic teachings to avoid creating sectarian sentiments from the very basic education level. This policy shall help in long run to curtail extremism and sectarianism from society to quite some extent. The government has allocated US $215 million to introduce new subjects into the syllabi of seminaries. In the future grants will be given to religious schools that get themselves registered with the government's religious education board and amend their syllabi according to the government’s directives. The federal government has also recently announced six billion rupees for madrassa reforms.

Talibanisation is equal to criminal group for international media, such as a news item, “Enough murder, enough mayhem. Tribes vow to fight Talibanisation” published in The Guardian on 21 June 2007. The reporter quoted, Mr Kamal, a parliamentarian and former minister that “The Taliban had gone too far, in recent months 11 people had been kidnapped from Marwat territory, and the tribe’s honour had been impugned. Something had to be done.” The reporter further wrote “where a firestorm of ideologically driven violence and intimidation - described as "Talibanisation". In Tank, a town in the "settled area" just outside Waziristan, the Taliban raided the home of a senior government official this month killing 13 of his relatives. Further north, in Lakki Marwat, Talibanisation has brought kidnappings. Last month a mobile phone company paid £40,000 to free five employees; last week two government doctors were abducted on accusations of working for a British aid agency.

Talibans have also banned the girls education in areas under their influence. At least four girls’ schools have been bombed over the past 12 months.11 Despite all these threats the Pakistan, literacy figures for women have risen steadily since the 1990s. On the other side the Girls' enrolment at school has increased 77% since 2002 in NWFP, according to official figures.

The latest move of Taliban, right in the middle of Islamabad, they are mocking government laws and Burka-clad militants from Lal Masjid, a radical mosque just a few streets from Gen Musharraf’s office, have kidnapped prostitutes, attacked police and issued

fatwas against journalists in recent months. But the local police seem unable, or unwilling, to stop them. Lal Masjid also has links to the wider pattern of destabilisation. Its chief cleric recently boasted of having 10,000 suicide bombers at his disposal. One of the main suspects in the recent Charsadda suicide attack, Hafiz Said ur Rehman, is a former student of Lal Masjid.” After the coercive action started against the Talibans in lal msjid they were unable to resist and started to accept the amnesty offered by the Government. The many religious leaders of Pakistan found it shameful when the head of this famous Lal masijid was arrested by police while trying to escape in a Veil (Burqa). This small act shows that how they use the name of Islam and things related to it for their own personal interests.

The government can also use the philosophy of Sufism to counter the Wahabi radicalism in the society.

The End

Further Information about NWFP
For Maps see
http://www.maplandia.com/pakistan/n-w-f-p/
http://www.maplandia.com/pakistan/f-a-t-a/

GEO POLITICS OF NWFP 12

There are seven tribal agencies lying on the international boundary line between Pakistan and Afghanistan (The Durand Line) and roughly covers around 800 miles of international boundary between the two countries. The people inhabiting these agencies are ethnically Pakhtoon and the same people live on the western side of Durand Line, thus on both sides of the boundary, live people of the same ethnic stock and religion. These similarities have made them much closer than any body else. The result is/ was that they share each other miseries and joys. When the Afghan crisis began and the Afghans started migrating from their troubled country, overwhelming majority chose to migrate to Pakistan and settled mostly in the Pakhtoon areas. The people of tribal areas whose territory was trespassed by migrating Afghans and later by Afghan Mujahideen shoed large heartedness and cooperated with them in every field of life.

The Afghan crisis that started as a local affair became as issue of international magnitude with the involvement of big powers and the cold war was fought more actively on the soil of Afghanistan. Obviously such events started affecting the adjacent areas of Afghanistan and more specifically FATA. These crisis have left indelible impact on the economic, social, religious and political life of the people of the area.

12 An Unpublished Research Paper by Shahbaz Saeed, Research Fellow, Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad, Pakistan. The writer is thankful to him to extend his cooperation and support in preparation of this research paper “Talibanisation of Pakistan.”
Administrative Structure of NWFP

In British India, the area that is now Pakistan’s NWFP was first administered by a chief commissioner as part of Punjab province. In 1901, NWFP was granted the status of a separate province and divided into Settled Areas (“Districts”) and Tribal Areas (“Agencies”). Under the Governor General of India, the NWFP governor supervised the administration of both settled and tribal areas. Pakistan retained this system of administration, with the NWFP governor administering FATA as the agent first of the governor general and then the president.

The British policy towards the tribal belt was based on a mix of persuasion, pressure and armed intervention. To ensure control, London stationed troops in what is now FATA but also granted these areas a semi-autonomous status in return for tribal acquiescence to colonial rule. This special status was codified in treaties that required maliks (tribal elders) to keep the border passes open for trade and strategic purposes in return for allowances and subsidies they could distribute among their tribes. The Indian Independence Act of 3 June 1947 abrogated the special treaties. Pakistan opted not to base troops in the region after the maliks of Khyber, Kurram and South and North Waziristan Agencies signed an Instrument of Accession with Governor General Mohammad Ali Jinnah in return for continued allowances and subsidies. The government also retained the region’s semi-autonomous status, with the governor general assuming direct administrative jurisdiction.

a) FATA

The Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan lie to the northwest of NWFP and border Afghanistan. Although a part of Pakistan, the writ of the government is weak and in name only. The British colonial power which had conquered wide swathes of territories in Asia and Africa could not subdue the “Wild West,” regions, straddling a thin wedge between India and Afghanistan Hence they gave them autonomy and kept them as a buffer between British India and Russia.

FATA comprises seven Agencies of Mohmand, Khyber, Kurram, Orakzai, Bajaur, North Waziristan and South Waziristan and six Frontier Regions (FRs), including the Malakand Agency. The region stretches nearly 230 km from Bajaur Agency to South Waziristan. According to a 1998 national census, it has a population of nearly 5.7 million, but presently expected to be about 7 million. Of the size of Belgium, it is approx 27,220 sq kms porous border with Afghanistan. FATA is the most poor region of Pakistan where majority of the population lives in rural areas. According to a WHO report of 2001 nearly 50 per cent of tribesmen are living in abject poverty, 75 per cent have no access to clean drinking water. Problems of infant and maternal mortality are severe. The population growth rate is 3.9 per cent as compared to nationally cited figures of 1.9 per cent

The literacy rate is 17 per cent against the national average of 40 per cent while female literacy is less than one percent. Nearly 66 per cent of households live below the poverty line. The tribal people were given universal adult franchise in 1997 but political parties are still outlawed from functioning. Landholdings are small; cultivation of cereal crops is there with poor irrigation and infrastructure. Besides, the limited resources are degraded by past and post 9/11 inflow of refugees from Afghanistan.

The Federal government directly administers FATA. The Afghan war led to an influx of refugees and some of the Al-Qaeda elements seeking haven in the tribal belt. The
installation of the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) government has not contributed much to the socio-economic development of the NWFP province.

b) FATA Agencies

- FATA, 27,220 square kilometres in size, shares a 600-km. border with Afghanistan.\(^{38}\) With a predominantly Pashtun population of 3.17 million,\(^{39}\) according to the 1998 census, it has seven administrative agencies: Bajaur, the smallest in size, 1290 sq. km., with a population of around 595,000, borders on Afghanistan’s Kunar province. Tarkani and Utmankhel are its two main tribes.

- **Khyber Agency**, 2576 sq. km. in area, draws its name from the historic Khyber Pass, which links NWFP and Afghanistan’s Nangarhar province. The Afridis and the Shinwaris are the major tribes; the population is about 547,000.

- **Kurram Agency**, 2576 sq. km. in area, with a population of around 450,000, is inhabited by the Turi and Bangash tribes and borders Afghanistan’s Nangarhar province in the north west and Paktia province in the south west.

- **Mohmand Agency**, 2296 sq. km. in area, gets its name from the majority Mohmand tribe. The population is some 334,000. Bajaur agency is to the north; the Malakand division of NWFP to the east. Peshawar, NWFP’s capital, is to the south east and Afghanistan to the west.

- **Orakzai**, 1538 sq. km. in area, the only FATA agency that does not share a border with Afghanistan, derives its name from the majority Orakzai tribe and has a population of 225,000. Kurram agency lies to the west, Khyber agency to the north, Kohat district to the south and Peshawar district to the east.

- **South Waziristan**, the largest of the agencies, 6,620 sq. km. in area, has a population of around 430,000. The two main Pashtun tribes are the Wazirs and Mehsuds. North Waziristan Agency and Dera Ismail Khan district are to its north and east respectively, while Balochistan is to the south and Afghanistan to the west.

- **North Waziristan**, the second largest agency, 4707 sq. km. in area, has a population of about 361,000. The two main tribes are the Wazirs and Dawars. South and North Waziristan Agencies border Afghanistan’s Paktika and Khost provinces.

### FIDAYEEN (SUICIDE SQUAD) ATTACKS IN PAKISTAN\(^{13}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>INCIDENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>March 17</td>
<td>Five persons were killed and more than 40 injured, including the High Commissioner of Sri Lanka to Pakistan, in a grenade attack on a church in Islamabad.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>May 8</td>
<td>Nine French nationals and five Pakistanis, including a suspected suicide bomber, are killed and 34 more injured in a bomb explosion inside a bus opposite Sheraton Hotel, Karachi.</td>
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<td>2003</td>
<td>July 4</td>
<td>53 persons are killed and 57 others injured as three armed terrorists, including a suspected suicide bomber, attack a Shiite Muslim mosque in Quetta, capital of the Southwestern Baluchistan province, during the Friday prayers.</td>
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\(^{13}\) Compiled by Shahbaz Saeed, Research Fellow at Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad, Pakistan.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 25</td>
<td>14 persons were killed and 46 others injured during a second assassination attempt on President Pervez Musharraf in the Jhanda Chichi area of Rawalpindi. The President narrowly escaped the suicide assassination attempt when his motorcade was hit by two explosive laden vehicles. Both the suicide bombers were also believed to have been killed in the incident.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>February 28</td>
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<td>May 7</td>
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<td>May 31</td>
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<td>October 1</td>
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<td>October 10</td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>March 19</td>
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<td>April 28</td>
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<td>May 27</td>
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<td>May 30</td>
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<td>2006</td>
<td>February 9</td>
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<td>March 2</td>
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<td>April 11</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
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<td>June 2</td>
<td>At least five soldiers and two suicide bombers were killed and seven soldiers sustained injuries when a car laden with explosives rammed into a military vehicle in the Bakakhel area of Bannu in NWFP. The army convoy was reportedly proceeding from Mirali in North Waziristan to its base camp in the Bannu district when the attack occurred.</td>
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<td>June 26</td>
<td>Six security force personnel are killed when a suicide bomber rammed his explosives-laden car at Aisha checkpoint, 10 kilometers east of Miranshah in North Waziristan.</td>
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<td>November 8</td>
<td>A suicide bomber blew himself up at an army training centre at Dargai in the North West Frontier Province, killing 42 and injuring 39 recruits of the Punjab Regiment Centre and their instructor.</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 17</td>
<td>A suicide bomber killed himself and injured two police personnel when he targeted a police van in Peshawar in the North West Frontier Province. The bomber, identified as Nadeem Khan, blew himself up near the police patrol van parked beside a temporary police post at the Bara intersection on the Ring Road at around 7:15am.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td><strong>January 22</strong> A suicide bomber rammed his explosives-laden car into a military convoy near Mirali in North Waziristan, killing four security force (SF) personnel and a woman, and injuring 23 persons, including 20 soldiers. The incident occurred at the Khajori checkpoint, about two kilometers east of Mirali town, when a joint convoy of the army and paramilitary force was heading from the Bannu Garrison to Miranshah, administrative headquarters of North Waziristan. Eye-witnesses said that three military vehicles and a passenger coach were also damaged in the first attack since the Government and Taliban-backed militants signed a peace agreement on September 5, 2006. Army and paramilitary troops had vacated the Khajori checkpoint as per condition of the truce and it is now managed by members of the Khasaddar force (a local force).</td>
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<td><strong>January 26</strong> A suicide bomber blew himself up outside Hotel Marriott in the capital Islamabad, killing a guard, Tariq Mehmmod, and wounding five persons. The unidentified man detonated explosives strapped to his body after the security guard tried to stop him from entering the hotel through a side entrance. &quot;It was a suicide attack. The suicide attacker and a guard were killed,&quot; Interior Minister Aftab Sherpao said. He termed the bombing a failed attempt to kill people frequenting an upscale hotel. The suicide bombing occurred hours before a Republic Day function at the hotel hosted by India's High Commission. The function, however, went ahead after the explosion.</td>
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<td><strong>January 27</strong> 15 people, including six police officials, were killed and 60 others injured in a suicide attack targeting a Muharram procession near Qasim Ali Khan Mosque in the Dilgaran area of Qissa Khawani Bazaar in Peshawar, capital of North Western Frontier Province (NWFP). Peshawar Police Commissioner Mallik Muhammad Saad, a Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP), three other police personnel and a Nazim (local official) were among those killed in the blast. Superintendent of Peshawar Police Zaibullah said that an unidentified bomber detonated explosives strapped to his body when police stopped him from entering the procession, which was to be taken out from Qasim Ali Khan Mosque.</td>
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<td>January 29</td>
<td>A suicide bomber killed three people, including two police personnel, at Dera Ismail Khan in the North West Frontier Province. Assistant Superintendent of Police, Captain Hamad, said that the suicide bomber, wearing a black shawl, blew himself up as policeman Abdul Halim was searching him. He said that Naseer, a civilian working at a nearby petrol pump, was also killed, and seven other people were injured. “The suicide bomber was a young boy. He initially refused to be searched, and when police began searching him, he blew himself up, killing a policeman, a civilian and himself,” said another police officer Aslam Khattak.</td>
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<td>February 3</td>
<td>A suicide bomber drove his explosives-laden jeep into a military convoy, killing two soldiers and injuring seven others in the Barakhel area of Tank district in North West Frontier Province (NWFP). The convoy of four vehicles was headed from Dera Ismail Khan. Tank city Deputy Superintendent of Police Muhammad Khan disclosed that &quot;It was a suicide attack.&quot; A suspected militant blew himself up while planting a bomb outside a video and music shop in southern Lakki Marwat district of NWFP. The blast damaged a dozen nearby shops in the town, a settled area near Bannu district.</td>
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<td>February 6</td>
<td>A suicide attacker blew himself up in the car park of Islamabad airport, killing himself and injuring 10 people, mostly security force personnel. Police officials said that the attacker arrived at the airport close to 8:50 pm in a taxi with two other people and was stopped for checking by Airport Security Force officials who asked for his identification. The man opened fire at the guards and then ran towards the VIP lounge of the airport forcing the security officials to return fire, which led to an explosion. A police official told that the explosion damaged several cars.</td>
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<td>February 17</td>
<td>At least 17 people, including a senior civil judge, were killed and 30 persons injured in a suicide bombing in the District Courts compound of Quetta, capital of Balochistan province. The blast occurred inside the courtroom of Senior Civil Judge Abdul Wahid Durrani at 11:05am (PST). &quot;It was a suicide bombing which is evident from the recovery of the heads of two persons. One of them entered the courtroom and blew himself up,” said Tariq Masood Khosa, Balochistan’s Inspector General of Police. “In the past, we have had to grapple with sectarian and nationalistic violence. This seems to be a blend of both as for the first time innocent civilians and government offices were targeted,” he told reporters after the blast. Eyewitnesses said the bomber was a bearded man aged around 20. Seven of the dead were reported to be lawyers.</td>
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<td>April 28</td>
<td>31 people, including five police personnel, were killed and Federal Interior Minister Sherpao and his young son Sikandar Sherpao Khan were among several people wounded in a suicide attack, moments after the minister finished a speech at a public rally in his hometownCharsadda in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP). The head of the suicide bomber, who had a brown beard and was aged between 30 and 35 years, was found at the site of the blast near Station Koroona in Charsadda, and “he looks like an Afghan,” NWFP Inspector General of Police Sharif Virk told reporters.</td>
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<td>May 15</td>
<td>Twenty-five people were killed and at least 35 others wounded when a</td>
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<td>suicide bomber blew himself up on the ground floor of the Marhaba</td>
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<td>Hotel in Peshawar, capital of the North West Frontier Province. Most</td>
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<td>of those killed were Afghans, including the restaurant's owner</td>
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<td>Sadruddin and his two sons, two women and a five year-old child. The</td>
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<td>attack occurred at approximately 12:50 pm as the restaurant was</td>
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<td>crowded with customers for lunch. Witnesses and police said that</td>
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<td>restaurant owner Sadruddin was an Uzbek of Afghan origin and he was</td>
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<td>a supporter of former Uzbek warlord Abdur Rashid Dostum.</td>
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