FATA’s Political Status

What are the consequences and options for Pakistan?

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Abstract

In this article the author shares her research from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan where she travelled and conducted interviews. The Constitution of Pakistan governs FATA through the colonial system established by the British in 1901, which is different from the rest of Pakistan’s governance structure. As a result the region became isolated and militants reigned free until military operations were conducted in the area. In order to prevent this from happening again the government has to integrate FATA with the rest of Pakistan. The author examines several alternatives available to the government of Pakistan to address FATA’s political status. Merging of the tribal areas with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is analyzed against a separate provincial status for FATA. In conclusion, the article ends with recommendations for Pakistan to address FATA’s governance challenge.

Introduction

The Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan are the epicenter of the “War on Terror.” The tumultuous region served as a base for the militants launching attacks within the country as well as against the governments, militaries, and civilians of the US, Afghanistan, and others. After the 9/11 attacks, Pakistan joined the US-led “War on Terror” and severed ties with the Taliban. In order to eliminate the threat of terrorism emanating from there, the military set foot in the region for the first time in 2002. Pakistan presently has 140,000 troops on the ground in FATA and military operations have been conducted in six of the seven agencies with the exception of North Waziristan.77

The military operations eliminated Taliban control, subdued the group’s fighting ability and set up the government’s writ in the tribal areas. To make FATA an integral part of Pakistan, the colonial governance system established by the British in 1901 needs to be replaced.

The root of the problem is that FATA has a special political status as a “tribal territory” and is different from the rest of Pakistan; basic governing bodies like the police, judiciary, and civic amenities do not exist in this area. Subsequently, economic development failed to reach FATA, thus keeping the area isolated and impoverished. The extremely low standards of education and development have left the people vulnerable to militants. FATA residents want the comforts and security that accompany conventional systems of governance. The absence of state governance has created a gap in the system and allowed militants to thrive in the region.

This article analyzes FATA’s status problem in depth, beginning with a description of its colonial governance system. Historical events that shaped FATA’s condition are explained and the paper ends with choices available to the government in order to bring FATA under the same governance.

structure as the rest of Pakistan. Options considered include: revival of the traditional tribal system of governance, implementation of President Zardari’s reforms in the tribal areas, a separate provincial status, and the merger of FATA with the already established province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In conclusion, a separate status will be recommended for FATA, making it the fifth province of Pakistan.

Governance of FATA

FATA is a group of administrative units in northwest Pakistan and consists of 7 agencies. These agencies are Khyber, Mohmand, Bajaur, Orakzai, Kurram, North Waziristan, and South Waziristan. The tribal areas are located in a narrow belt running along the Durand Line, the disputed de facto border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. FATA and Afghanistan share 1500 miles of this porous border in largely unmarked mountainous terrain.

The Tribal Areas and Afghanistan were a buffer zone between the British and the Russian Empires in the 19th century. The British could not enforce their writ upon the tribal area. Exhausted by repeated battles with the tribes, the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) was introduced in an effort to subdue them. The FCR was a special governing system for the tribal region only; civil and criminal laws were different than the ones enforced in the rest of British India. The Political Agents (PA) and the Maliki system were also developed to allow for greater colonial control and will be further discussed in succeeding paragraphs.

After Pakistan’s independence from India in 1947 it was cheaper for the government to stick with the British system than replace it with a new system. Some 30 instruments of accession were subsequently signed in 1948 granting the tribal areas a special administrative status. Under article 247 of the Constitution, the President of Pakistan is the chief executive for FATA who in turn administers it through the Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (formerly known as NWFP). The Governor has this special power due to the proximity of the tribal areas near Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This form of government was mutually agreed to at the explicit request of the tribes. The tribes pledged loyalty to Pakistan in return for maintaining their own identity, for securing the Western Border and not allowing any hostile agency to function within its territories. The tribes that inhabit the areas are fiercely independent and were peaceful until the fall of the Taliban in neighboring Afghanistan.

Frontier Crime Regulation

The FCR is based upon tribal customs (rivaj) and the Pashtun code of ethics known as Pashtunwali. The FCR relies upon the concept of “collective responsibility,” according to which an entire tribe or sub-tribe can be held accountable for the actions of a single wrongdoer. Since the FCR resulted in gross human rights violations it came to be known as the “black law.” This method of law

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enforcement has been criticized by some segments of the tribes and human rights organizations. The Pakistan Supreme Court has deemed it unconstitutional.

Maliks and Political Agents

Each agency in FATA is administered by a Political Agent. As provided in the Constitution, the Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa appoints Political Agents in FATA and they represent the Governor in their respective agencies. The tribes operate through their Maliks (tribal and village elders) who can be selected by the tribes themselves or selected by the Political Agent of each agency. Political Agents do not directly rule or administer, but they work with the Maliks to influence the tribes’ decisions and behavior. The Political Agents provide money, infrastructure support and other incentives to the Maliks in exchange for cooperation; they maintain law and order in their tribal region with the help of jirgas. They also have the power to enforce collective punishment through the FCR.

Jirga

A jirga holds the status of a court in the tribal areas of Pakistan. It consists of a tribal assembly of elders who make decisions by consensus. Since the parliament and the judiciary are not recognized in FATA, the authority lies with the jirga. It is similar to that of a city council meeting in the US, where important local matters are discussed among the leaders of the community. A jirga is selected by consensus and given an open decree; its decision is accepted by all parties. After hearing from the parties in dispute and examining the evidence, the jirga issues punishment. The jirga can grant a death sentence, stoning in case of adultery, or dismissal from the community.

The effects of foreign influence

FATA was heavily changed following US efforts to arm the Afghan mujahideen against the Soviet army in the 1980s. Operation Cyclone remains the longest and most expensive CIA covert operation to date. Military equipment, including anti-aircraft weapons such as Stinger missiles, and paramilitary officers from the Special Activities Division (SAD) were supplied to the Afghan mujahideen during the Soviet war in Afghanistan. Initially the funding began at $20 to $30 million dollars in 1980 and increased to $630 million dollars a year in 1987.81 This controversial covert operation was undertaken to draw the Soviets into a long and costly Vietnam like war.82 The US reached out to Pakistan’s fundamentalist dictator, Zia-ul-Haq, to garner support for the mission. Operation Cyclone relied heavily on Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) for funds and weapons distribution, providing military training and support to the Afghan mujahideen.

American aid to the region was quickly cut following the collapse of the Soviet Union.83 However, in Afghanistan, Jalaluddin Haqqani and Osama bin Laden still controlled a vast number of radical

83 Azeem Ibrahim, “US Aid to Pakistan,” Belfer Center - Harvard University, July 2009
freedom fighters. Afghanistan plunged into chaos. This created an opening which was filled by the Taliban, and eventually the al Qaeda terrorist organization. As the staging area for Operation Cyclone, FATA was left with a destroyed system, the world’s largest refugee population, radical Islam, drugs and weapons.84

The links to the deadly events of 9/11 were deeply rooted in the Soviet-Afghan war. The US now finds itself fighting against the very movement it helped arm, in a region that is still impaired by chaos three decades later. Few places in the world assumed as much importance for the US and its allies since 2001 as Pakistan's tribal areas. Pakistan joined the 'War on Terror' and immediately deployed 80,000 troops along the western border to capture or kill Taliban and al Qaeda militants fleeing from Afghanistan. The entry of coalition forces into Afghanistan led to the conflict spilling over into FATA. Drone strikes and Pakistan military operations in the tribal area followed suit and triggered 980,000 FATA residents to relocate to other parts of Pakistan. 85 The war took a heavy toll on the economy and terrorist violence became a daily part of life in Pakistan.

Radicalization and the origin of the Taliban movement

The Taliban movement developed and formed from Afghan orphans and refugees who abandoned their homes and fled to Pakistan after the Soviet invasion. Saudi donations led to a sudden increase in the number of madrassas during the Afghan jihad against the Soviets. A new kind of madrassa emerged in the Pakistan-Afghanistan region with teachings strictly focused on making war on infidels.86 Back then the Soviet Union was the enemy; today it is the United States. Many of the Taliban were educated in the Saudi-financed madrassas in Pakistan. Madrassas used the Islamic ideology as a way of creating an army of anti-communist guerilla fighters. Facing a bleak future, Afghani parents often resorted to sending their sons to madrassas. The promise of free education and food proved difficult to resist. The Taliban’s swift rise to power was the result of the disorder and civil war that ensued following the complete breakdown of law and order in Afghanistan after the Soviet retreat.87

Rise of the mullahs and the mujahideen commanders

Religion is a major part of FATA's identity today, but it had been subservient to tribal culture before 1980. The US, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia support for an anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan subsequently altered the governance structure in FATA. During this time, mujahideen commanders and mullahs (Islamic clerics) emerged to weaken the traditional governance model in the tribal areas. The military commanders who were at the forefront of the jihad against the Soviets became increasingly powerful because of their leadership skills and capability as fighters. The mullahs, who

84AFP, “Pakistan host to largest population of refugees: UN report,” Dawn News, June 20, 2011
were disregarded and mocked before the Soviet invasion, gained influence because of the religious motivation they provided for the war. The power of the commanders and mullahs grew stronger yet with the large sums of money channeled in by the US and Saudi Arabia through Pakistan. The Political Agents and the Maliks were no longer the sole power brokers in FATA.

**Spread of Afghan militants into FATA**

The situation in FATA took a turn for the worse when US and NATO forces invaded Afghanistan in October 2001. This led to the spillover of militancy from Afghanistan into FATA, with thousands of militants from the Afghan Taliban and the Arab al Qaeda rushing in. Foreign affiliates of these groups—including Uzbeks, Chechens, and Tajiks—also came to the tribal areas in order to establish bases to carry on their fight against the coalition forces in Afghanistan. The local tribes who believed in the cause provided support to the fighters, while local militants who were allied with the Afghan Taliban before 9/11 began to form local Taliban groups.

**Rise of militant influence in FATA**

For the first time in the history of the country, the Pakistan army set foot into FATA which changed the dynamics of the political administration in FATA once again. The military authorities started dealing directly with the militants and their tribal intermediary. The Political Agents was sidelined, thus losing their influence and credibility. In the process the tribes and their Maliks could not stand up against the armed and organized militants. Initially the tribes in FATA opted for peace deals with the government of Pakistan. One after another the peace deals failed and the militants beheaded around 300 Maliks while accusing them of collaborating with the Pakistani army and intelligence services.

After the invasion of Afghanistan, militancy and violence gradually found roots in FATA and started to spread towards urban areas. Pakistan deployed the largest number of troops in the world to fight the spread of terrorism, 140,000 in total. Compare this figure to 140,000 coalition forces in Afghanistan made up of troops from 48 countries. Attacks inside Pakistan dramatically increased as the army continued its operations against the Taliban in FATA. Over 30,000 Pakistanis have perished as a result of terrorist violence in the country. Even though militant groups from other parts of the country also participated in these attacks, FATA became the chief supplier of suicide bombers.

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89 Owais Ahmed Ghani, “The governance challenge in the tribal areas (FATA) and the North-West frontier province.” Jan 30, 2010.
In addition, the use of Predator drones and Hellfire missiles against selected militant leaders in FATA, in cooperation with the Pakistani forces, have led to increased anti-US sentiments in the country. The War on Terror came to be perceived by the common man as an American war. The credibility of Pakistan’s government came into question and the Taliban began running schools in which children as young as 9 were being conditioned to become suicide bombers. They were taught that “the Pakistan army is the ally of the Western capitalist world; they are the enemies of Islam.”

Lack of development in FATA

Militancy in FATA was fueled by several contributing factors. FATA is the least developed area of Pakistan. Illiteracy and poverty are severe; the literacy rate is estimated to be as low as 29 percent among men, and only 3 percent among women. The extremely low standards of education and development have left the people vulnerable to militants. Lack of infrastructure provides limited career opportunities. There is also an acute shortage of basic amenities like health care and drinking water. Catastrophic floods worsened the situation and caused an even further increase in the number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

Options available to address FATA’s governance challenge

There are several alternatives available to Pakistan regarding the political status of FATA. Residents of FATA have made demands to be converted into a fifth province of Pakistan. On the other hand some Government officials are considering expanding one of the four provinces of Pakistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, to absorb FATA as well. Maintenance of status quo has also been proposed but with some key changes such as abolishment of the FCR. A revival of the Political Agent and Malik system has even been mentioned.

These alternatives are evaluated using three criteria: political acceptability, enforcement and effectiveness. The policy alternatives will be measured against their acceptability, the degree to which Pakistan’s government is able to implement the policy, and the alternative’s ability to effectively tackle the economic problems in FATA, along with countering the spread of militancy and radicalization.

Maintenance of Status Quo: In the midst of the current political, economic, energy and security crisis, the government of Pakistan continues to neglect FATA. The status quo is an isolated FATA with a deteriorated and corrupt governing system where the maliks and political agents were sidelined by the militants first and then by the Pakistan military. In addition to sever poverty, the dismal state of infrastructure provides limited opportunities. The discouraging human development indicators show that the status quo is not a feasible option because it has alienated the local population and robbed the youth of an education and a future.

Enforcement of this option is without question since no new action will be required. The continued destabilization of the Pakistan government is what causes this policy alternative to be unacceptable.

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Status quo is not effective in dealing with FATA’s militancy, radicalization and economic troubles because it was this broken tribal system which originally allowed terrorists to flourish in the tribal areas.

**Implementation of President Zardari’s reforms in FATA:** In 2008 President Zardari announced political, administrative and judicial reforms to be introduced in FATA. The proposed reforms included setting up a FATA Tribunal with powers similar to those of the high court. The right to appeal cases regarding the FCR would be provided through the establishment of the court of appeals. This would limit the power of political agents to hold an entire tribe responsible for the actions of a single person. Under the reforms, funds provided to the political agents for use in the region would be reviewed by the Auditor General of Pakistan. The reforms also allow political parties to function in the region. Under the current system, development funds in FATA are utilized by the provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but the people of FATA have no representation in the provincial assembly. This deprives them of the right to hold their leaders accountable.

Implementation of these reforms will not alter FATA’s political status, which is the crux of the problem. Despite amending the FCR and allowing political parties to function in the tribal areas, these reforms provide no solution for the economic woes of FATA and continue to consider it a tribal territory of Pakistan. On the positive side, political acceptability of this option is better than the status quo; it gives the people something rather than nothing. Enforcement of this alternative would, however, prove complicated since FATA will remain a tribal territory with FCR but the people will have the right to appeal the ruling. The limited scope of these reforms would be less effective in addressing the problems in FATA in comparison to more comprehensive options.

**Revival of the political agents and maliks in the short term:** The harsh terrain and the population straddling the porous border with Afghanistan will require immense resources to establish an effective administrative and law enforcement system in FATA. While researching possible solutions to turmoil in the area, I interviewed the Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Owais Ahmed Ghani, at his office in Peshawar. Governor Ghani said that these resources will not be available soon. In his view, it is important to sustain the tribes in the short term through restoration of the traditional role of the political agent by strengthening their power and authority in their respective agency. He also emphasized the importance of reviving the malik system so that they can develop the tribes’ capacity to deliver collective and territorial responsibility.

The political agent and malik system worked before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan but even then it failed to bring any development to the region and FATA remained the least developed part of Pakistan. This alternative is not politically acceptable or effective because the tribal system of political agents and maliks did not prevent the rise of Islamic militancy in the region; the Taliban destroyed the system by taking their place. Al Qaeda and the Taliban must be removed from their position of power before peace can possibly flourish. Even if the maliks can one day be restored to power, they have not demonstrated the ability to develop the infrastructure and living conditions of FATA. Solving FATA’s lack of governance and its side effects will require measures above and beyond restoration of solutions which have been historically proven as inadequate. Enforcement of this policy will face an uphill battle due to a broad lack of faith in political agents and maliks. Many residents consider them corrupt relics of the tribal governing system.

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96 Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Owais Ahmed Ghani, interview by the author, July 20, 2010, Peshawar.
**Merger of FATA with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa:** Historically the administration of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA has remained interwoven with each other. Many people from FATA are already residing in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and they speak the same language, although the dialects differ. The Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is the president's agent in the tribal areas and political parties such as the Awami National Party (ANP) have already demanded FATA's merger with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. On the other hand, many political parties and tribal elders demand a separate province. “We will never support FATA’s merger with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa,” said Pakistan People’s Party’s Tribal Areas President Waris Khan.97

During an interview with Major General Tariq Khan of the Inspector General Frontier Corp (IGFC) at the Frontier Corp headquarters in Peshawar, he posed “if there were violent reactions to calling the province Paktunkhwa and Hazara wanted to separate then what do you think is going to happen if the FATA status changes through unilateral means and then it is forced to merge to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa? FATA is very proud of its tribal heritage, its unique independence and would go into a civil war situation if forced to give up these privileges without an autonomous standing i.e. separate provincial status.”

The social makeup of the people of FATA is considerably different from that of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; merging the two would be difficult and might lead to a civil war. FATA residents will oppose being ruled from Peshawar and the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is already stretched thin due to struggles with terrorism and limited resources. The added pressure of governing FATA is more than can reasonably be asked of the struggling neighbor. Residents of FATA also fear that integration with another province will lead to a bleak allocation of development funds for FATA based on the already weak financial position of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. While more funds are expected to be allocated to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the event of its expansion, no such plans have been announced as of yet. Currently, the Pakistan government is using US aid money to construct roads in FATA.98

Geographical proximity of the two areas does provide a reason to consider a merger. The united territory would provide easy access to all the tribal agencies currently dependent on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for their logistics and provisions. A merger could also make it easier to manage the tense rivalries between the tribes of the region. The Wazir and Mahsud tribes of South Waziristan are unlikely to form an alliance in the near term due to ongoing discord. Khyber agency is home to a vicious feud between the different sects of Sunni Islam. Orakzai and Kurram Agencies suffer from sectarian strife between Shias and Sunnis. Decisions made by the provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa might be more acceptable to all the tribes than the Governor of the new province of FATA, whom they might view as favoring one tribe over the other.

The political acceptability of this option is high amongst the political parties in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa who wish to establish a massive Pashtun province.99 If the tribal areas are merged with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa then a Pashtun majority province will be born. The current political

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administration of FATA is already tied to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa through the Governor who appoints the Political Agents in each tribal agency. In 2002 the Governor also set up the FATA Secretariat in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to oversee development planning in the tribal areas. Thus, enforcement of this option has the benefit of FATA already being linked to the administration in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The government can build upon those links which will be easier than establishing a government structure from scratch in the tribal areas. However, the effectiveness of this alternative as far as tackling FATA’s economic problems is uncertain. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has development issues of its own and maintains the lowest human development indicators in comparison to every province in Pakistan.

Adding an underdeveloped tribal territory to an already strained government may not yield optimum results. The religious party known as MMA (Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal) has been able to exercise significant influence in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and it was the leading party until 2008 when the secular ANP won. Efforts should be made to move FATA away from radicalization and militancy. By joining the tribal areas to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, there is a risk of adding to the existing disorder of the province.

**Separate provincial status for FATA:** In October 2010, elders from all seven tribal agencies attended a FATA convention in Peshawar and demanded a separate provincial status for FATA. In interviews conducted by the American Foundation and Terror Free Tomorrow, when asked how FATA should be governed, seventy percent of FATA residents said it should become a separate province of Pakistan. Pakistan is divided into four provinces, one capital territory, two self-governing autonomous regions and the Tribal Areas. A separate provincial status would make FATA the fifth province of Pakistan. FATA is a tribal society and roughly 3.17 million people of the area have the same language, culture and traditions. A smaller separate province of FATA will be more manageable than an even larger province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The government may encounter fewer roadblocks if they choose to start anew rather than attempting to merge tribes with the already established structure in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

If FATA is given a separate provincial status, then Southern Punjab, Hazara, and parts of Baluchistan will reason that they deserve a similar status as well. For example the non-Pashtun, Hazara population is a separate ethnic group with their own language in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. When the name of NWFP was changed to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in April 2010, riots and protests broke out because the Hazara population did not feel represented by the new name. Unlike FATA, however, these groups already belong to a province and have an established status. Any change in their status will have to be done through the instrument of the constitution and a 2/3rd majority in the parliament will have to ratify such a change.

Political acceptability of this option is excellent since the inhabitants of FATA have demanded a separate provincial status rather than a merger with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Added likelihood of success will come from the people having a sense of ownership in their new province rather than

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being forced into less popular situations. This option will be effective in countering the spread of militancy and radicalization because access to a government funded education would provide impoverished parents with more palliative option to radical madrassas. The real challenge of this alternative is going to be enforcement since any new government will have to start from the ground up. A concerted approach from the population and long term steady support from a stable central government will be essential to bring FATA into the fold.

In theory, funds will be allocated for education, infrastructure, and eventually new commerce. At the moment US funds are being used to undertake some development projects in FATA such as road construction. In 2010 the US pledged $750 million, spread over five years, to support infrastructure, health, education, job creation, and other economic projects in FATA.\textsuperscript{103} The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) also has many small projects to develop basic water infrastructure and power systems.\textsuperscript{104} The Pakistan government has an opportunity to expand upon these projects and ramp up their efforts to provide basic amenities to improve upon the quality of life in FATA. Not until basic infrastructure is in place to support growth and commerce will FATA have the ability to generate significant revenue through taxation.

**Recommendation**

The status quo is the dire state which needs to be addressed in FATA; as Governor Ghani said, militancy in the tribal area has exposed many weaknesses and shortcomings in the current political and administrative system. Implementation of President Zardari’s reforms will not address the political status of FATA and it will remain a tribal territory. By amending the FCR and allowing political parties to function in the tribal areas, short-term benefits may be produced. On the other hand, this policy will do little to improve upon the low human development indicators and increasing militancy and radicalization.

A merger with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would provide a preliminary economic base for FATA to develop on. However, the interests of influential religious parties in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are in direct conflict with those of many FATA residents. A vulnerable and largely illiterate population of FATA makes an easy target for extremism. For those reasons, a separate provincial status for FATA is recommended. Making FATA into a province of its own will allow the Pakistani government to start afresh in the region. A stable administration will have to be created in order to develop roads, courts and police stations.

Under Article 247 (6) of the Pakistan constitution, the President has the power to declare the entire or part of FATA as a non-tribal area provided that he determines the views of the tribes through a jirga.\textsuperscript{105} This article also allows the president to take any consequential action necessary after declaring FATA a non-tribal area. FATA residents desire progress, developmental projects, infrastructure and education. They demand that the constitution should be extended to the tribal


\textsuperscript{105} The Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, \url{http://www.pakistani.org/pakistan/constitution/} Accessed October 10, 2010)
Therefore the current instrument of governance, Loi Jirga (large Jirga), should be used to move forward until the region is up to par with the rest of the country.

The FCR has surpassed its useful life and should be abolished. An evolutionary approach should be taken in removal of the regulation since the goal will realistically take several years to achieve. A sudden change in FATA will lead to problems. For example, the FCR was abolished overnight in Swat and was immediately followed by anarchy in the Valley. Similarly, when the princely states of Swat, Dir, Chitral and Malakand were merged with mainstream Pakistan in 1969 without proper preparation, the resulting poor governance led to public dissatisfaction. The discord eventually progressed into a full-fledged insurgency. In order to avoid repeating those mistakes, a measured plan is required for FATA to ensure that the tribal population has time to adjust to each phase of the process.

Conclusion

The situation in Pakistan must be viewed as an opportunity to bring FATA under the constitution and at par with the rest of the country. A higher state presence will ensure the security and development of the region. Success of this option would lie largely in the hands of the people. A unified voice will go far in determining whether FATA is awarded provincial status or if it is merged with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Regardless of the choice, FATA residents are long overdue for equal status as Pakistani citizens. The cost of keeping FATA trapped in the past is becoming too high to bear.

About the Author

Sabina Khan graduated from the Monterey Institute of International Studies with a Master’s in Conflict Resolution. She is from South Waziristan and spent the summer of 2010 travelling through FATA up to the Torkham border with Afghanistan. For her research she interviewed the Pakistan military, local residents, and the Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Sabina is the daughter of the previous Inspector General of the Frontier Corps, Peshawar.

Appendix: Polling Data from FATA

The charts on the next page show that FATA residents reject Al Qaeda and the Taliban, as well as the religious political party, Jamaat-e-Islami. Former cricketer Imran Khan’s, secular political party, Tehreek-e-Insaf has the most support in the region (Source: New America Foundation and Terror Free Tomorrow107).

FATA Residents who Support/Oppose Pakistani Military Action against Al-Qaeda and Taliban in their Region

- 69% Support
- 24% Oppose

If you could vote for any, which would you vote for?

- PPP (9.3%)
- PML-N (10.1%)
- PML-Q (2.6%)
- MQM (2.1%)
- JUI (9.4%)
- ANP (7.5%)
- Jamaate-Islami (6.0%)
- Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (26.5%)
- Al-Qaeda (2%)
- Pakistani Taliban (0.0%)
- Other (Don't know, refused, independents, none, will not vote) (26.3%)