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Peace Building and Resilience Strategies for Cultural Rejuvenation: An Integrated Approach for Countering Religious Violent Extremism in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Pakistan's drift into violent religious extremism incurred massive losses to human and material resources because of terrorist incidents and counter terrorism efforts. The measures taken by the government have produced mixed results with a whole new array of fallouts that require an in-depth analysis that allows for objective evaluation and efficacy of the measures taken. The study employs a mixed method approach, exploratory research with survey method, which aims to explore fallouts of counter violent religious extremism efforts in study areas comprising of Wana, Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), along with analyzing, evaluating and proposing both long-term and short-term peacebuilding and resilience strategies that will complement the rejuvenation of the ignored culture of tolerance and also in developing counter violent religious extremism policies. The findings reveal that an integrated approach comprising of various peacebuilding and resilience strategies encompassing various factors like economic, social, cultural and administrative efforts can lead to a rejuvenation of culture of peace, tolerance and coexistence in these study areas. The research suggests that to enhance cultural rejuvenation the areas need to be developed more in all fields, as the study reveals that there is a direct link between the level of development and violent extremism.

INTRODUCTION

The political and socio-cultural landscape of Pakistan has mainly been shaped by the blood stained, religiously charged, communalized historical experiences and memories of the struggling years leading up to the partition of the Sub-Continent in 1947¹. The state has inherited major fault lines deeply dividing the society on religious/sectarian lines. The opposition between the liberal and orthodox religious communities and the divisions within these groups has been hampering the course of political, economic and social development in Pakistan.

Pakistan's geopolitical and geostrategic compulsions coupled with domestic socio-economic and political factors further aggravated the issue of religious violent extremism². Although creation of Pakistan was a complex process of competing visions but ideas of the democratic principles of equality, inclusiveness and federalism were unanimously accepted. These ideas were soon contested and presented as "western" and "un-Islamic" in their outlook and spirit by the extremist ideologies and agendas that started plaguing the foundations of the country itself³.

The threat of extremism has been considered as the greatest of all threats facing the nation by various military heads and political leaders⁴ i.e., PM Imran Khan, Chief of Army Staff Gen. Bajwa etc. Especially since 1980s, unfortunately peripheral regions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Province emerged as hotspots of violent religious outfits owing to a variety of factors and events. But among all factors that placed KP and the adjacent former Tribal Areas two factors played a pivotal role in making the region a breeding ground for terrorist activities and a safe haven for violent religious outfits. The first is historical factor and is rooted in the preaching of Syed Ahmed Bareilvi and Shah Ismail Shaheed, religious scholars and leaders of the 19th century India. Syed Ahmed Shaheed's jihad against the Sikhs at Balakot (presently a district of KP) was launched in 1830's and Pashtun tribesmen constituted Shah's army. The Jihad Movement by Syed Ahmed Shaheed has become an important episode of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and he became a role model for his Muslim followers to fight against the non-Muslim rule and laying down their lives for the cause of Islam. Thus, Peshawar and its adjacent tribal areas became historical and very much revered places for mostly jihadist factions⁵. There was another nationalist violent movement in this region during 1940s known as Faqir of Ippi against federation of Pakistan. Faqir of Ippi started this Pakhtunistan Movement under Afghanistan and Indian sponsorship and started the guerilla warfare against the government but could not succeed and his resistance ended during 1950s.

The second factor includes the 1970s oil crisis, the 1979 Iranian Revolution as well as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Petrodollars have given the Saudi kingdom the necessary resources to finance Wahhabi imperialism, the Iranian revolution has politicized Shia Muslims (who are seen as a threat by the Sunni), and the Afghan war has resulted in the creation of militarized Islam, supported and funded by the USA and Saudi Arabia. And since the hotspot of all these maneuvers and strategic moves turned out to be the Pashtun belt owing to socio-cultural and geopolitical compulsions, the Pashtuns had to bear the brunt in the form of various military operations carried out as a consequence of War on Terror starting in 2001 and Pakistan's stern resolution to wipe out the terrorist outfits from its land.

As policy response, a series of military operations were launched namely, Operation Rah-e-Rasst, Rah-e-Najat in 2009 and Zarb-e-Azb in 2014, anti-terrorist laws and National Action Plan in 2015, this resulted in increased vulnerability in terms of internal displacement of population, missing persons,

and victims and witnesses of bloody battles in tribal areas of former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and KP districts⁶.

Pakistan was hit hard and witnessed some of the worst human tragedies of the century as terrorist groups retaliated by targeting urban centers, indiscriminate targeting of population centers and a horrible spat of suicide attacks⁷. The country, has incurred great human tragedies since its inception. For example, the refugee crisis of 1947, following independence that resulted in a mass exodus of some seven million refugees⁸. The state has since then experienced the problem of internally displaced persons many a times following clashes between rival militant and sectarian groups, military operations against militants in parts of the then Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) and against insurgents in Baluchistan from 2009⁹.

The resettlement process has started while operations at various levels are either underway or at the final stage. These populations of KP i.e., Swat, Waziristan and former FATA regions are now at a crucial stage of rehabilitation and reintegration. This allows for a timely analysis, evaluation, peace building and resilience strategies¹⁰.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature review reveals many untouched aspects and gaps within the studies conducted so far, according to Qureshi soon after the creation of Pakistan, Afghan regime in power started questioning the validity of Durand line and raised the issue of Pashtun rights. Pashtun population centers and tribal areas within Pakistan became crucial in the future security calculations and policies¹¹.

Barth describes the political construction of Pashtun society in the Swat valley of Pakistan before state development¹². As indicated by Barth, landownership is essential for separating Pashtun from non-Pashtun. Caron in his work discusses societal and ideological roots of the ethno-nationalism of Pashtun population particularly in Afghanistan region¹³.

Rasheed provides a detailed insight into the America, Pakistan, and Afghan trio with Central Asia, India, Iran, and United States as additional actors complicating the picture¹⁴. The book has very little to offer on specifically Pashtun culture or Pashtun society but it does shed light on Pakistan's Afghanistan policy.

To quote just one, Kaura writes in her analysis "Pakistan's firm belief about the intertwined nature of the Afghan and Indian threats, and the ability of Afghanistan, whether on its own or with India's support, to undermine the Pakistani state, has been a constant theme in Pakistan's military discourse"¹⁵. Jalal analysis of the impacts and influence of Syed Ahmed Bravelvi's movement against Sikhs in an attempt to create an Islamic state and Khilafat are particularly important. Here geopolitics manifested itself in the form of selection of Pashtun belt for Syed's ambitions and motives since it bordered Afghanistan¹⁶.

On the issue of representation of Pashtuns, the works of Yousuf¹⁷, Tarzi and Lamb¹⁸, Afsar, Samples and Wood¹⁹, Beattie²⁰, Behuria²¹, Caroe²², Coughlin²³, Elphinstone²⁴, Kilcullen²⁵, Nichols²⁶, Oliver²⁷, Wylly²⁸ are very relevant among others. Tainter and MacGregor²⁹ have also given a detailed explanation of the Pashtun society and culture and posit that in general the Pashtun society is characterized by bravery, hospitality, lust for power, and honor. The deep rooted traditions are followed zealously and the Pashtuns jealously guard their family, tribal, and broader cultural traditions and values. Farooq³⁰ has elaborated the colonial and postcolonial biased representations of Pashtuns owing to their anti-British role in the pre-partition era and the role of Soviet war and Taliban movement in the recent past while Tarzi and Lamb have analyzed the common stereotypes associated with Pashtuns and their impact/influence on the policy makers. Waterman has analyzed the process of violent extremism that plagued the Pashtun society³¹. Waterman has included various factors responsible for the militarization/radicalization of the Pakistani, particular Pashtun society³².

Kfir has summed up the beginning of military operations both covert and overt in Afghanistan and how Pakistan's strategic, geopolitical, and security compulsions led it to indoctrinate the Pashtuns and thoroughly Islamize the Pashtun belts and Afghan refugee³³.

Shah has analyzed America's 16 years presence in Afghanistan and its struggle to counter violent extremism³⁴. Crisis Group report analyzes the military operations and the cost of military conflict for the Pashtun society³⁵. Peace Direct report discusses in detail the havoc wreaked on Pakistani state as the country ranked consistently in the top five countries in the Global Terrorism Index³⁶.

Fleschenberg and Yousufzai and Javaid have also analyzed in detail various military operations including the most important Zarb-e-Azb. According to the authors Operation Zarb-e-Azb is part of a larger and continued line comprising over 600 smaller and larger post 2004 military operations in and around the Pashtun belt³⁷.

Lang and Knudsen have taken up the issues and challenges faced by humanitarian agencies in playing their role in conflict zones which may help to develop similar feasible counter violent extremism tactics that can be practiced in Pakistan³⁸.

Yusuf has elaborately discussed the root cause of manmade disasters leading to mass exoduses in case of third world countries in general and in case of Pakistan in particular³⁹.

Cavalcante has briefly discussed the issue of internal displacement in Pakistan. According to him, Pakistan cannot avert such tragedies until and unless it sticks to long term planning of uprooting extremism from its roots⁴⁰. Ahmed and Khan have thoroughly examined the underlying causes of terrorism; and according to them, terrorism spreads in societies where there are no ample opportunities available for upward socio-economic mobility⁴¹.

In this connection, Aleemi, Chaudhary, Qureshi and Anwar conducted a study to analyze the psychological impacts on IDPs of Waziristan and how the nearby communities were affected by these psychological disorders⁴².

RESEARCH DESIGN AND ANALYSIS APPROACH

This study by applying exploratory research draws upon literature, online sources, in-depth interviews and survey to explore the data pertaining to factors and underlying causes of violent religious extremism ranging from political, psychological, socio cultural and economic.

Exploratory research is taken as, highly interactive and open-ended in nature and is quiet flexible, it encompasses observation, interviews, focused groups, surveys as primary method while online sources, literature research and case study methods as secondary research methods⁴³.

The study employed mixed method approach and exploratory research with survey method i.e., general masses interviews, in depth interviews and discussions with law enforcing officials and tribal elders to explore peace building and resilience strategies for cultural rejuvenation to counter violent extremism.

Population of the Study



Figure i- Marked Areas: Under Focus in Survey

Three areas of KP were selected: Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan and Wana as marked in the figure. These areas were selected as they had been badly hit by violent religious extremism. Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan are relatively settled areas of the province as compared to Wana which is a tribal area that has been merged in KP.

Sampling

Due to the nature of the population, convenient sampling technique was employed to approach the general masses for semi-structured interviews. In this way, 121 questionnaires were got filled.

Snow-ball sampling technique was used to approach nine elders (three from each area) and Assistant Commissioners of three areas were also selected.

Instrumentation

A semi-structured interview comprising of 25 questions was prepared.

Data Collection

Data was collected from general masses (121 participants) through a semi-structured questionnaire. Further, three Assistant Commissioners and nine elders of the areas were approached and in-depth interviews were conducted.

Data Analysis

The collected data was transcribed with the help of Word 2016 version. The data was further put into Nvivo 12 version to infer themes and categories to explain the findings of the study.

ANALYSIS OF FACTORS FOR PEACE BUILDING IN KP

Economic Factors

The issue of economic deprivation and unemployment makes societies vulnerable, crimes and poverty hence becomes the breeding ground for criminals. The issue of economic deprivation and unemployment as major cause of the regions drift into violent extremism. Respondents with experience working in former FATA and the local educated notables clearly mentioned that due to lack of alternate, legal means of economy, the regions bordering Afghanistan have relied on smuggling, cross border trafficking of goods, and drug trafficking. As there is the strong and undeniable link between drug-trafficking and terror networks.

Terrorists and insurgents took advantage of this situation by the psychological hijacking of the people of the area by offering them monetary benefits and religious sentiments attached with jihad such as being rewarded with heaven

in the hereafter and to utilize them as their proxy machinery against local people and government⁴⁴. The frequent displacement of people in the wake of military operations to clear the areas from violent extremists is also a reason behind economic⁴⁵.

Sharp changes in economic trends due to counterinsurgency operations, halting of business and social life resulted in lack of trust among the people and also caused future uncertainty.

Psychological Factors

Frequent and consecutive terrorist activities in KP/FATA had a deep psychological impact on the public narrative. In-depth interviews revealed that fear of being hunted, targeted, and killed have provoked aggression and blind response of the people for self-defense and safety. Unplanned response often results in extreme disarray and violence. Demant et al. argues that radical convictions of radical conduct may be ineffective because often people who have a radical ideology do not engage in extremist activities or movements these convictions will prove to be futile in countering radicalization in such cases⁴⁶. In short, there is more room for improvement and psychological counseling of the victims through awareness campaigns, recreation activities and festivals.

Stereotyping

The British colonizers stereotyped the Pashtuns as savages, untamable, mysterious entity that understands the language of force and violence alone. The literature and the film and T.V productions, from movies to advertisings and to comics, all portray Pashtuns as either very brave or foolish, innocent or uncivilized, hospital and brutal. This stereotyping is a double edge sword it affects the minds of young Pashtuns, their self-perception, and casts them in a certain mold.

Religious Factors

FATA/KP has borne the brunt of violent religious narratives and beliefs due to various factors ranging from international to domestic. Since the region was geographically contiguous and culturally similar to the troubled state of Afghanistan, it naturally became the center- point of anti USSR campaigns backed by the U.S and allies during turbulent years of Cold War. To settle the scores with USSR, religious narratives and leaders with extreme violent orientations were encouraged and allowed to penetrate so as to garner support for anti USSR campaigns in the Afghanistan with a religious fervor. Furthermore, sectarianism and religious extremism has also remained rampant in the area that leads to non-cooperation and meager chances of cultural rejuvenation.

Socio-Cultural Factors

The male centric social structure and dominance, historic conventions, and the obsession with Namos (Chastity of women) manifested through the overemphasis on “Pardah” adds to the undermining of women’s status in the Pashtun society⁴⁸. The patriarchal structure of society grants men the unrivaled position in various circles of life including familial and societal.⁴⁹ Furthermore, concept of detachment of females from their parents after marriage confines ways of socio-cultural, political and economic participation in society for women⁵⁰. Attachment of honor of families with females and brutal behavior in some cases such as marriage of choice, etc., is another hurdle towards ending extremism and violence.

Ethnic Attitudes/ National Integration:

One of the major themes that surfaced during the interviews with respondents from Pashtun tribal back ground was the negative ethnic attitude that pervades and plagues the Pakistani society. Pashtuns, as discussed above, have been thoroughly stereotyped and people treat them according to these existing/constructed molds.

Non-State Actors’ Role in Violent Extremism in KP/FATA

Non-State actors include NGOs, social media channels, and the narco-terror outfits. NGOs mainly supported and funded by European and American aid provide humanitarian services to the victims of violent extremism or military operations. Their role helps in mitigating the humanitarian challenges and peace process in the region. But the connection of these NGOs with the local population, the understanding of the local cultures, and coordination among various other agencies working on the same issue is lacking. Respondents pointed out to the importance of context based strategies, and the awareness and understanding of the local cultural norms and values in enhancing and improving the role of such agencies very crucial. The respondents in this regard emphasized on integrating locals and members of the tribal Jirga while preparing need based aid programs and policies.

Proof of foreign hands in unrest in KP/FATA has long been provided⁵¹, which is enough to pave way for public support for law enforcement agencies. Foiling anti-state elements by disclosing and clawing down their plans is not possible without public cooperation. As due to economic lagging, frequent displacement to IDP’s camps, social unrest and dynamic religious sectarianism has added fuel to the fire. Due to uncertain future and feelings of being deprived people are trapped by the foreign terrorists’ forces. Then such trapped human capital is used against state and law enforcement institutions.

Internet and Role of Social Media

The boom in the social media sector in Pakistan is quiet stunning. Pakistan has taken a number of initiatives in this regard where people can address their grievances online without having to wait in long queues. Respondents from

FATA especially mentioned the example of citizen portals and the ICT City Apps. These Apps have been developed for the provision of online civic services, as to protect citizens from long queues and long waiting times in government offices. This app provides 43 different services including, e-policing, emergency services, domiciles, identity cards, passports land-based, arms licenses, vehicle registration, token tax payments, birth and death certificates and other facilities. The respondents lamented that despite the merger, people of FATA, a few hundred miles drive away from Islamabad cannot avail such services as most of the region has no internet access. The respondents termed it “digital injustice” and emphasized the provision of equal media and internet facilities for the people of the region.

Cultural Centers and Literary Circles

The Pashtun society, through ages and owing to various other factors, is deeply attached to its cultural code and societal norms. Narratives, developments and processes detrimental or opposed to these cultural codes is resisted and looked upon with suspicion. While on the other hand the stereotyping of the Pashtun culture is also problematic and hinders development process. To counter these cultural and identity issues and sensitivities, and to develop a culture of cooperation, peace and progress, trust deficit between these societies and the center must be mitigated. Respondents mentioned that development schemes and introduction of reforms and education is detested by various sections because of the underlying suspicion and perception that such measures are aimed at eliminating the Pashtun culture and identity. The respondents from former FATA region suggested that cultural centers and activity centers at community levels should be introduced where local poets, folklore, traditions, and emerging writers in Pashtun and comparative literatures should be encouraged and projected.

Hijacked Economy

The Pashtun belt is extremely affected due to insurgency by non-state actors exploiting the region for personal interests. Military operations conducted to clearing areas from such peace shattering entities and high rate of violent extremism in the region caused displacement of local residents who had either migrated to other regions of the country or were placed at camps set up for temporarily displaced persons (TDPs).

Under such a situation, economic development was slowed down and the people have to make extra efforts to earn livelihood. This state of affairs, amid multiple problems and discomfort, provided non-state actors, smugglers, insurgents a breeding ground to attract such people to use them against the state and law-enforcement agencies⁵². Supporting evidence regarding this fact has been provided by Pakistan to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) against Indian intrusion to be curbed in time i.e., in 2014, 2018, 2019 etc.

Respondents from the former FATA especially mentioned the lack of infrastructure and access to national markets. The region owing to lack of infrastructure, and access to government facilities for agricultural

development, has become a notorious drug haven. By focusing on infrastructure and opening up the hitherto inaccessible valleys, the region's fate can be changed from an economy based on smuggling and narcotics to productive agricultural lands.

Exploitation of Illiterate People

Public of the sharply underdeveloped terrain i.e., Southern KP in particular, due to hard earning situation has a low literacy rate which is recorded at 17%⁵³. Continuous turmoil in the region lessened opportunities for learning and education resulting in less or fabricated awareness. Pashtunwali Code followers staunchly follow the orders of their chieftains and religious scholars to earn a better place in heaven in the life hereafter without understanding what is right or wrong? Such a situation aggravates the exploitation of illiterate people when poverty adds fuel to the fire.⁵⁴

Religious Card

Underdevelopment of these remote areas led to the blind following of religious scholars. Afghan war and ideology of jihad has brought serious impacts for Pashtun society in Pakistan as most of the tribes are exercising the same narrative as it was forty years before as well⁵⁵. Misinterpretation of religious knowledge under madrassah system has further aggravated violence and extremism in the society. Blind religious sensitiveness has cost the state heavily.

The oversimplified messages of radicals, frequently established through a misinterpretation of religious teachings, have been astoundingly efficient in drawing support from among certain sections of the Pakistani society. Such messages i.e., religious sentiments exploited for killing someone, launching riots to challenge writ of the state etc., should be addressed accordingly and in time. However, this ought not to be accomplished through a state-driven, top-down approach but by employing a more inclusive approach. Survey results show that inflexibility in religious thoughts, revamping of religious structures and public reluctance in accepting change due to unmentioned fears is a core issue behind hurdles in the way to cultural rejuvenation.

During the interviews, many respondents urged the need to revamp, and restructure religious institutions and the discourse they are producing. These institutions and their radical violent discourses are the major part of the huge mess created and left unattended by the U.S and its allies. These institutions should be reformed and reoriented with same zest they were created and supported during the Cold War era to promote violent resistance against the USSR under the garb of jihad or holy war against communist infidels.

Social Inequalities

Unattended grievances of Pashtuns particularly during and after proxy wars in the zone have reduced the public trust in the government⁵⁶. Financial disparity turned into a solid reason for the rise in strict fanaticism and fundamentalism

in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Financial hardship and destitution beneath the national average/ratio has given a chance to the fanatics and radicals in undermining the administration's strategies for de-radicalization and development⁵⁷. The administration has very meager resources at its disposal and is mostly not trusted by the people because of the political instability and the consequent reorientation and reformulation of policies and priorities.

Analysis of Government Role for Peace Building in KP/FATA

Although the National Action Plan has provided the basic foundational basis for improving conditions of law and order in FATA, but the policy, has an overtly militaristic outlook and the roles assigned to civilian tier have shown very slow implementation process. But the importance of NAP cannot be undermined.

Pakistan's National Assembly passed the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) Reforms Bill on 24 May 2019, merging FATA. Previously, the central government had legitimately regulated FATA under the pre-partition laws, specially the 1901 Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR), that denied local people of their rights and exposed them to cruel discipline⁵⁸. Uncouth and severe administration, along with the use of force in counter terrorism actions in KP/ FATA against sanctuaries for 'jihadist' intermediaries, made those regions powerless against militancy and strife⁵⁹.

Under the 1901 Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR), the political agent, a senior-most government civil servant in all seven tribal agencies in former FATA, used to have un-checked powers and authority over legal, financial, administrative and all other matters⁶⁰. Article 247 of the Constitution of Pakistan gave the President attentiveness to "make guidelines" regarding FATA's "tranquility and acceptable administration", which denied legal executive purview and impeded national lawmaking body's position. The FATA Reforms Bill, fundamentally the 31st Amendment to the Constitution, annulled this arrangement, the then President Mamnoon Hussain abolished the FCR.

FATA's merger with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa followed long periods of military actions against Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) aggressors⁶¹. Military raids broke TTP's hold over greater part of the tribal belt and dislodged many occupants, obliterated homes, and demolished jobs⁶². Security in those territories was improved though stayed delicate⁶³. The merger, nullification of Article 247 and augmentation of legal oversight created new chances to make FATA genuinely a part of Pakistan, ending its status as a 'no go area'⁶⁴. Former President Hussain, revoked the 1901 FCR and at the same time declared the FATA Interim Governance Regulation 2018⁶⁵.

Tehreek-I-Insaf, which under Imran Khan's leadership came to power in July 2018, has for quite some time been a solid supporter of FATA's mainstreaming. It would now be able to complete that plan, and by doing so there will be decreased militancy, a reduction in strife dangers, which will help in wining local hearts and minds.

So, on the larger account, wide efforts have been conducted to bring peace in KP terrain after the merger of FATA agencies. Public satisfaction index has been increased which in turn has reduced violent extremism according to UNDP Violent Extremism Index⁶⁶.

Analysis of Violent Extremism before and after merger of FATA with KP

Historically, FATA was created by the British government as a buffer zone to stop Russian expansionist policy. Therefore, in 1895 the famous longest border of 2240 km, Durand Line was demarcated by Mortimer Kramer Durand with king of Afghanistan Amir Abdur Rehman. Before Durand line, the FATA area was a part of Afghanistan and many invaders such as, Alexander the Great, Taimoor, Seljuks and finally the British Empire saw their defeat here in FATA⁶⁷. But interestingly, no one has ever succeeded to capture this area because of two main reasons. Firstly, the area is divided among clans and sub clans and this is an integral part of the Pashtunwali code to defend their honor for safeguarding their land, property, guest and women. Historically, when the British realized after three Anglo-Afghan wars that the area is very hard to be controlled, they considered the areas as no go area, and after that, they tried their best to take local Mullahs to their side and finally they succeeded. Secondly, the British supported the local landlords and Maliks and gave them titles, lands and values.

The political agent was considered the ultimate king of each agency. The political agent was in position to allow people like Maliks to create disturbance within the society. Mullahs have played the same role not to educate their women because, according to them, it was against Islam and Pashtunwali. These two techniques put a wedge in the tribal people; and the divide and rule policy increased the power of local Maliks and Mullahs in the society. Religious extremism is more dangerous in FATA and not ending because history has revealed many examples from time to time. While after 9/11, it became a safe haven for terrorism. Terrorism can be explained as the unlawful use of force or violence against individuals or property as to coerce governments or societies to achieve political, religious or ideological objectives. While in 2008 the tribal belt became the Tehreek Taliban Pakistan's (TTP) center. They then started attacking local Maliks (about 600 were killed), holy shrines, security forces convoys and public mosques⁶⁸. On 16 December 2014 the Army Public School (APS) attack took place and as a result National Action Plan was framed and among the 20 points, out of which one contained the reforms and development of FATA⁶⁹. On 31st May 2018 the President of Pakistan signed the FATA merger bill.

Table No. i shows analysis of violent extremism in KP/FATA for peace building by focusing on pre- and post-merger FATA to KP circumstances. According to analysis, it is observed that status of violent extremism before FATA merger was more severely disturbed than after the merger of FATA which paved way for the betterment of the region and provision of options for public participation in employment opportunities, infrastructural projects and rehabilitation projects launched by the federal government and Pakistan army. The merger helped in containing extremism.

Table i Analysis of Violent Extremism in KP/FATA for Peace Building Opportunities

Cases under study	Before KP and FATA merger	After KP and FATA merger	Resilience and Peace-Building opportunities
Political	Exercising FCR	Fata reforms bill	Flexibility to more amendments as per need of the residents and administration
Religious	Blind following of religious clerics and misinterpreted religious teachings	Increased literacy open opportunities to understand religious teachings in a better way and check on religious clerics	Creating religious harmony by joint religious conferences and joint protocol for assistance to avoid religious clashes
Economic	1- Economic opportunities were available to specific sector. 2- Issue of smuggling and illegal trade. 3- Frequent displacements due to military operations curbed economic opportunities for people	1-Rehabilitation of IDPs in their ancestral region 2- Better check on illegal trade 3-Job and business opportunities to general masses under administrative check	1-Developemnt of harmonious relations by increasing economic opportunities for general masses 2-Decreasing public and government trust deficit
Socio-Cultural	Staunch following of Pashtunwali Code	Along Pashtunwali Code, flexibility is shown towards social progress and cultural development	Provision of opportunities for the public to participate in trade and business i.e., festivals, trade galas etc.

Findings

Due to the military operations carried out against militant extremists in the area and the ongoing development projects such as building schools, hospitals, colleges, universities, sports grounds, tournaments, festivals, employments etc., has improved the situation in the respective area.

Additionally, the role and influence of Malik's and Mullah's is on the decline in these areas.

It was also noted that the settled areas of Dera Ismail Khan and Bannu are now showing less religious extremist tendencies as compared to Wana (tribal area), the reason seems to be the level of development that has taken place in Dera Ismail Khan and Bannu. So therefore, there is a direct link between economic prosperity, development and employment opportunities leading to lessening of violent extremism and cultural rejuvenation.

In these three areas, demographic changes have occurred due to, firstly, military operations due to the internal displacement of people from one area to another especially from the tribal areas to the settled ones, leading to economic social, cultural and other related problems/issues.

Some of the local respondents gave very negative remarks regarding military operations in their respective areas but supported and appreciated all the developmental programs carried out by military in their areas.

Even though these areas now show a trend towards a reduction in extremism but there still remains a tendency that even a single incident may ignite or flare up a situation that may lead to revival of extremist tendencies as there still exist pockets of extremist elements.

Another worrying note is that with the withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan, the bordering areas of Pakistan including the ones under study may again become vulnerable to the threat of revival of violent extremism. Even though border fencing has been done in most of the border areas, considering this fact internal factors are more important and can be managed in an efficient manner rather than managing the external factors which are beyond one's control.

There is a need of consciously planned and professionally designed interventions at social, cultural, and academic levels to minimize the stereotyping of Pashtun culture and identity.

CONCLUSION

Research reveals that economic, psychological, religious and socio-cultural aspects are core towards peace building. While non-state actors are found contributing to the promotion of violent extremism by exploiting the population and hijacking the economy through terror activities. The analysis shows a positive role of government in reinforcing peace building in the KP

against violent extremism. Analysis of military operations and merger of FATA within KP is measured in practical scale to understand its implications.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the former analysis, following are few viable recommendations.

Long-Term

- a. The government needs to change the policies of “iron and blood” and resorting to violence and military operations. It should focus on ensuring sustainably developed economic system, for which areas of focus can be highlighted under pre-investment study for the targeted areas, in the Newly Merged Districts to win trust of general masses
- b. All the policies and initiatives must be in accordance with local needs and demands. Local voices must be heard and context based policy initiatives should be introduced.
- c. Situation at Pak-Afghan border is deplorable. Many respondents lamented the inhuman treatment faced by the Pashtuns on both sides in the hands of security personnel. The exit and entry points should be regulated.
- d. Local tribal chieftains need to be taken on board by the local governments to increase functional worth of the government in FATA/KP; this may help end/reduce anger among the people. This requires upgrading and transforming local Jirga system, inclusion of educated, peace loving influential members into the council of elders with some perks and privileges as incentives will certainly ensure local cooperation and optimal policy outputs.
- e. Military operations should be avoided at all costs. Targeted, strictly contained and precisely limited operations based on thoroughly worked out intelligence reports should be preferred.
- f. Formation of committees at educational and professional institutes to spread awareness about the harms and irrationality of racial and ethnic entities.
- g. Likewise print and electronic media should also sensitize and made aware of the harms of ethnic stereotyping and its projection. Content prejudicial to cultural identities and ethnic harmony should not be allowed.
- h. Development of functional and rehabilitated educational institutions i.e., as done by Pakistan army in the North Waziristan region by creating an educational complex and seed park, and increase in number of schools and technical/vocational colleges in the tribal region for uniform development.
- i. Community based increment on sports opportunities i.e., as recently volley ball, football and cricket matches were organized by the Pakistan army and national players in the region of FATA and Waziristan, and development of sports grounds may divert youth’s frustration and anger towards positive activities. Addressing grievances with rewards and solutions may create positive environment in the long run.
- j. Development of harmonious relations by increasing economic opportunities for general masses in the business sector.
- k. Complete de-weaponization, de-radicalization and social incorporation through state role at the grass root level are important for peacebuilding.

Short-Term

- a. The strategy of the government should include individuals in a common volunteer army for countering militancy.
- b. Peace building in KP/FATA requires cultivating political process through straightforward decisions; the significance of Grand Jirgas (discussion councils).
- c. Rehabilitation centers in each violence-hit district should be created with a focus on psychological rehabilitation i.e., eradication of anti-state thoughts, feelings of being marginalized and drug abuse by addressing public needs to assimilate for constructive contributions.
- d. Decreasing public and government trust deficit by establishing direct reliable relation via Open *Kutchehries* by government officials, incorporating civil society in decision making by the help of representatives.
- e. Active measures should be taken to refrain regrouping of insurgent groups.
- f. Mines (IEDs) eradication from the region is necessary which is hitting general masses and armed forces personnel equally.

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