

FATA: THE STRATEGIC DEPTH OF PAKISTAN

Dr A. Z. Hilali

Abstract

Since the eve of 9/11, Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) have become strategically vital region in the world and also for the security and defence of Pakistan. The area is landlocked and an important junction of South, Southwest and Central Asia and chessboard of great power politics. The war on terror and the US and NATO actions against the Taliban militants and al-Qaeda network have changed the fabric of FATA region. This situation has created challenging circumstances for the security and stability of Pakistan. Moreover, the US has given free hand to India in Afghanistan which is a serious matter to Pakistan's security concerns. However, the war seems to be "bleeding wound" for Pakistan because it is hurting more as compared to gains. So, the best strategy for Islamabad is disengagement from the war because it will protect FATA which is real strategic depth for the country's defence rather than Kabul and it will also strengthen internal stability and guarantee territorial integrity.

Introduction

In counter-insurgency, the population is not only the field of battle but also the prize.

– David C Gompert¹

Since 2001, the global War on Terror has dominated Pakistan's foreign policy and the country's elites have adopted zero tolerance national security strategy to eliminate the culture of Talibanization and Al-Qaeda network. The policy makers perceive that to fight against extremism is an important task because the situation not only invoked fears of an uncertain future of Pakistan but also injects urgency for Pakistan's state and society. For all these reasons, Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), situated in Pakistan's north western part (now called Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and previously known as North West Frontier

Province –NWFP), and border region between Afghanistan and Pakistan has become the spotlight of global politics. With the end of the Cold War and after the incident of 9/11 (2001), FATA has changed the US strategic dimensions. The violence in the region becomes contentious issue because the US declared “FATA, the most dangerous place in the battle against terrorism”² and has been of a paramount importance in the contemporary international politics. The US administration assumes that Pakistan’s tribal areas had become a safe haven for al-Qaeda and Taliban militants and the area is a sanctuary for several insurgent groups operating both inside Pakistan and Afghanistan.³

After the 9/11, US and Pakistan entered into opportunistic partnership with disparate objectives. The US made Pakistan one of its lesser allies in order to have access to its air, land and naval bases so as to expand the scope of its policy to contain terrorism in the border region of Afghanistan and Pakistan. On the other hand, Pakistan shake hand with the US in order to achieve three fundamental objectives: first to receive US military assistance to enhance position vis-à-vis India; second, to obtain diplomatic support for the protection of nuclear assets; and third, to receive massive US economic assistance to accelerate the growth of economic development. One believes that the US takes advantages of Pakistan’s strategic and economic weaknesses and uses its sensitive facilities in the war on terror, and Pakistan as a weak country sacrifices its national interests because the elites have failed to protect the country’s territorial integrity and FATA region, which is a natural border or barrier for the defence and security of Pakistan, has become the victim of great power politics. It seems that the tribal belt which is the buffer zone between Pakistan and Afghanistan has become the bleeding wound to Pakistan and challenges the national solidarity of the country. The situation further turns into worst position when the US escalates joint war with North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Afghanistan and FATA region across the Pakistani border and expands its military operations with modern military instruments, throughout the tribal areas, including robotic drones which continue killing innocent civilians and local insurgent leaders at very high rates and undermine the security of Pakistan in multiple ways.⁴ It is also

perceived that as long as Pakistan's alignment with the US continues, it will damage one of the impoverished countries in the region and will amidst a flood of bad news rather than relief and potential gains.

The Geopolitics of FATA

FATA has its specific tribal, geographical, socio-economic and religious characteristics but the region is a small landlocked tribal belt in the heart of South Asia and is sandwiched between northwest to southwest of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan and located around shred area of Oxus and Jumna which endowed its potential geographical importance and equally has historic value for the region.⁵ It is entirely surrounded by boundaries created as a result of British and Russian imperial policies. The Durand Line established in 1893 under the British empire border policy of "masterly inactivity" which essentially used the tribesmen as a buffer between British India's northern frontier and the Russian empire southward from Central Asia and were concerned that Afghanistan, the only geographic buffer between British India and Russia, did not have a defined boundary.⁶

After the partition of British India (1947), Pakistan also used Durand Line to prevent Soviet expansion and were no way successful to control the Afghan government from political exploitation. The region emerged as a kind of "tribal no man's land" over generations and areas were controlled through the loose political autonomy. The demarcation of boundary line has caused much dissatisfaction among some of the Afghan elites which eventually gave rise to political tensions between the two countries. In fact, the line was created as a result of formal agreement between Amir Abdur Rahman and Sir Mortimer Durand in 1893 and called the "Durand Line Agreement", which is one of the well defined boundaries in the world and also one of the longest borders stretching to 2430 km between Pakistan and Afghanistan. There was a consensus among the successive Afghan governments and Afghan elders who approved and recognized the demarcation of boundary and gained political and economic benefits from the British Indian government.⁷ However, after the creation of Pakistan, the Afghan

ruling elites with the inducement of Indian National Congress leadership were not prepared to accept the Durand Line and transmitted a fabricated interpretation about internationally legitimate boundary between Pakistan and Afghanistan for their paramount concern and vested interests.⁸ Interestingly, the people of FATA and their tribal elders (Khans, Malik, Sardars and Chiefs) never reacted against the demarcation of Durand Line because successive governments in Pakistan accommodated the feelings and wishes of tribal people and ultimately has shown satisfaction with the settlement. Moreover, from the historical discourse, it can be clearly observed that during the demarcation of Durand Line, the British empire pretended to take into considerations the historical background, natural topography and local considerations. So, the decision of the parties concerned was not arbitrary because no authority or group objected to the boundary settlement.

Strategically, FATA is located at the crossroads of global power interests as described by the renowned historian Arnold J. Toynbee that the region is the “cross-roads” of civilizations.⁹ The area has also attracted a succession of invaders ranging from Alexander the Great, to the former Soviet Union in the twentieth century because of its strategic location and it is a reality that the area is also one of the most sensitive zones in Pakistan and indeed in South Asia.¹⁰ The area spreads around 27220 square kilometers¹¹ which is approximately three percent of the total area of Pakistan and more than one-third of the area is covered by barreled Hindu Kush Mountains. So, FATA population is over 3.5 million and some 1.5 million refugees from Afghanistan have been settled in the region and the area continues to be the focal point of global attention in the event of the US invasion of Afghanistan. In addition, the British empire established administrative structure of tribal areas and divided tribal area from north to south into seven different administrative zones such as Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Orakzai, Kurram, North Waziristan and South Waziristan which lie in a north-to-south strip that is adjacent to the west side of the six Frontier Regions in order from north to south i.e Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Tank, Dera Ismael Khan (D.I.Khan). All agencies except Orakzai share border with Afghanistan and each has

a dominant tribe and economic base and physical characteristics that distinguishes it from the other regions.

The location of the region is becoming more volatile because of a number of border passes between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Its seven routes are well-known which run through its territory, i.e., Malakand, Khyber, Gandab route through Mohmand territory, Khyber and Kohat route through Parachinar, Bangash or Paiwar route through Kurram, Gomal, Tochi routes through Waziristan and in the south there is the famous Bolan route to Quetta in Balochistan province. These passes are corridors of invasion and commerce between the Indus plains and Central Asia. Moreover, there are many key passages through the mountainous Pakistan border, which include two from Paktika Province into Pakistan's Waziristan region: one at Angoor Ada, a village that straddles both sides of the border east of Shkin, and further south, the Gumal River crossing valley, which cuts through the Sulaiman Range and the Charkai River passage south of Khowst, Afghanistan, at Pakistan's Ghulam Khan village into North Waziristan. One of the busiest Pakistan border crossing is at Wesh, just northwest of Chaman, Pakistan, connecting Kandahar and Spin Boldak in Afghanistan to Quetta in Pakistan, is a flat, dry area, though this route involves Pakistan's Khojal Pass at 2,707 m (8,881 ft) just 14 km from the border.

Salient Features of Tribal Society

The Pakhtuns are the most highly segmentary ethnic group in Pakistan and always avoid subjugation and integration with the other communities of the country. Each tribe has a large number of clans or *khels*, descending from the others. So, Pakhtuns engage in social, political and economic activities within their own concentric rings and this engagement normally prevents each government or authority to gain control over the tribes.¹² This is one of the fundamental reasons that no foreign entity including Alexander, the British and the Soviets have been able to reconcile the Pakhtuns to external rule.¹³ Historically, during the nineteenth century the British Indian empire failed to subject the Pakhtuns to state authority.¹⁴ Even the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979) also failed to subjugate the Pakhtuns, although they used brutal genocidal

tactics and killed 1.5 million people and drove approximately 7.4 million into exile which include 4.2 million in Pakistan and 3.2 million in Iran.¹⁵

FATA area is dominated by Pakhtoon tribes and basically has tribal or feudal structure. The region is still in the midst of the most critical transformation in the modern history but autonomous structures of local authority have long been existed parallel to the federal government. The federal structure continues to deal with local tribal chiefs through the Political Agents instead of establishing contacts with the people at grass-root levels. The region is inhabited by diverse tribes and its traditional institutions and social culture are based on the freedom (autonomy) of tribes which block the federal government access to the local authority. In fact, the tribal region has its own distinction and never strictly follows modern law and liberty but they permit the federal government to organize its political power and exercise its restricted authority.¹⁶ Moreover, the tribal belt is highly complicated and ethnically divided into tribal cleavages and linguistic and religious differences. The society is a mosaic of different Pakhtun tribes and all are traditional, primitive and religious. So, the tribal society is highly fragmented and factionalized and described as a living museum of martial races. There is a clear distinction between those who inhabit plains and those who live in mountains. In general, an inhabitant of highland lives in the rural area east of the plateau of Afghanistan and west of the plains of Pakistan. There are a countless number of tribes in the region but the more popular are Yusufzais in Malakand and Bajaur Agency; Mohmands in Mohmand Agency; Afridis and Shinwaris in Khyber Agency, Peshawar and Kohat; Orakzais in Orakzai Agency; Turis and Bangash in Kurram Agency; Khattaks in east and southeast of Kohat; Wazirs in North Waziristan Agency; and Mahsuds in South Waziristan Agency.¹⁷ These tribes are the backbone of the tribal belt and their culture is deeply associated with Arabs and Afghan societies and expressed in its social institutions. In general, they have common socio-cultural values but by nature they are hard, rigid and undisciplined.¹⁸

The Pakhtun prefer to be guided by a tribal code of behavior (Pakhtunwali) rather than by laws made by modern states for

running their domestic affairs. According to Shahid Javed Burki, the traditional code existed even before Islam entered the area; they have added some aspects of the Islamic laws (Sharia), which are not contradictory to their social values. Pakhtuns practiced social code for centuries and many of its features are in abhorrence to accept outside interference in their internal affairs, an equal amount of reluctance to be governed by a central authority that operates from a distant place and confidence in the ability of local leaders to provide protection to their communities and to provide an environment in which they can live according to their own laws and customs.¹⁹ In general, the tribes operate through their *maliks* or some are determined by the individual tribes themselves and other channels i.e., official *maliks* who are normally selected by the concerned Political Agent of agency and they are responsible for governance in their respective areas. The number of *maliks* varies on agency to agency bases inside FATA and the total strength is around 3616, in which only 1,600 *maliks* belong to North Waziristan and the rest are associated to other tribal agencies in which more than 630 tribal *maliks* have been killed in FATA by the Taliban militants.²⁰

Paradoxically, FATA Pakhtoons have enormous socio-cultural values and Pakhtoonwali or Nang-i-Pakhtoon (way or code of the Pakhtoons) still guides the “lives” of the tribal people. Each tribe has its own customs and traditions and remarkably rich with hospitality which is based on finest virtues and a sacred duty to honour the person. They have supreme values consisted of bravery for honourable life, freedom, courage and revenge. They also have several unwritten laws and traditions whose prime objectives are mediation or protection (*Nanawati*), retaliation (*Badal*) and hospitality (*Mailmastia*). So, *Nanawati* is like asylum and it must be given to all fugitives and even to the worst enemies if they come as supplicants. According to *mailmastia*, the host is responsible for hospitality and protection of the guest or guests. The *badal* is basically the responsibility of wiping out insult with insult: i.e. “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth”.²¹ In the same way, honour is the main cause of feuds and vendettas which may last for generations. It is interesting to note that Pakhtoons are religiously conservative although *Pukhtoonwali* and religion have no commonality. There is a loose definition of Islamic traditions mixed

with tribal customs normally dominated by interpretations by local mullahs (religious leaders) who belong to different sects or fictions of Islam. Sunni sect is predominant in the region but the inhabitants are further divided between the Deobandi and Barelvi schools of jurisprudence. However, there is also a small and well-organized Shia minority in different parts of the province, particularly in Parachinar (Kurram Agency) which is the victim of worst sectarianism in the region. Moreover, tribal love with religion is undisputed because it serves as the central binding force of integration among the diverse tribes.²² This emotional attachment is also one of the core reasons to prevent the growth of a strong state system or sense of unified national identity. So, there is no central authority in the tribal area capable to achieve predominance over the traditional values. In the same way, the socio-cultural power in the autonomous periphery of tribal areas is in the hands of *khans*, *maliks*, *mullahs* and *tribal chiefs* because they have deeper influence than the state authority. Furthermore, the state has only a limited capability to compete for influence in the tribal belt. In general, the local traditional institutions have more power and they exercise complete authority over the individuals in their respective jurisdictions. In addition, the tribal social order is not strictly hierarchical like the modern state system. Social influence based on blood relationship and interpersonal interactions are more effective force to control the tribes than coercion and threat of power. Thus, tribes always oppose foreign domination and have shown their anger in the recent past and it seems that an external threat is the only source of integration among the diverse and disunited tribes.²³

The Role of Religious Clerics (Mullahs)

In general, religious oligarchy have no political authority in Pakhtun society and only *maliks* are perceived to be dominant in policy making or decision making and mullahs are out of the circle of tribal gathering or *Jirga*. They are economically dependent on the maliks who are responsible for looking-after their house hold and security of the mosques. But after the Afghan war compared (1979-1988), the social influence of mullah has increased as compare to maliks, khans or tribal elders. In this context, the incident of Iranian Revolution (1979) fueled in more and ultimately mullahs of the rural

areas with some political weight received tremendous importance. On the other hand, the social upheaval undermined the existing tribal structures and Pakistan's security establishment feared that the Soviets would exploit the Pakhtunistan issue (separate homeland for the Pakhtuns of Pakistan and Afghanistan) for the territorial control and access to the hot waters of Persian Gulf and provide unlimited privileges and access to the settled areas.

After the emergence of militant's culture, the influence of mullahs has increased and the mullah is perceived to be no more an isolated character in tribal society because his power has changed the socio-cultural fabric of FATA. The officially sponsored maliks and jirga both have lost their power and confidence. Initially, the mosque was prohibited to be used for political purpose but after the event of 9/11, the status of maliks has declined and mullah emerged as a supreme commander who has the leading position in the political and social activities. So, in the present circumstances, the status of maliks has collapsed and the personality of mullahs has dominated the Pakhtun society and maliks seen to be subordinate to the religious clergy. The tribal leaders who used to conduct political meetings in the *hujra* as a counterweight to the mosque are no more in existence. Mullah has received prestigious position and the traditional role of the mosque has changed and now it has dual function, working as *hujra* and religious ceremony. Before the Afghan war, jirga was normally held in the open place but after the culture of jihad, jirga meetings were used to be held inside madrassas and addressed by mullahs. In the traditional system, mullahs have no option to sustain because of lack of financial means but gradually they become financially sound and got access to financial sources.

In fact, the state policy is responsible to legitimize religious clergy in the society because ruling elites used religion as a tool for "survival of the fittest" and ultimately mullahs emerged as arbitrators between the tribes and the state and became an alternative leadership. So, Pakhtun society socially has been reshaped around the culture of religion and they have replaced all the traditional values and have been able to change the power structure of society.²⁴ According to Shuja Nawaz, mullahs capitalized on the local anger and used general lawlessness to challenge the writ of the

government and state legitimacy and became an alternative moral authority.²⁵ Thus, the Taliban of Pakistan have taken advantage of the judicial gap and prevailing injustice in different parts (Bajaur, Malakand, Swat and Waziristan) of the society and have established substitute centers for administrative and judicial justice to settle the disputes, displacing the tribal jirgas and the elders. Moreover, the Taliban leadership have successfully built power bases within the society, particularly among the new young tribals and also have established link with criminals and subversive segments of the society. As a result, a huge amount has been used to establish “official” *mujahideen* groups and after the end of the Afghan war these groups mutated out of state control.²⁶ Moreover, the same *mujahideens* were also used jointly by Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) when the Taliban phenomena was created in 1994 for the safe passage and access to energy rich Central Asia through Afghanistan. Pakistan trained madrassa (religious school) students in the second term of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto’s government (1993-1996). However, after the incident of 9/11 (2001), these radical militants are playing in the hands of Al-Qaeda and working as a “proxy army” against the United States and the state of Pakistan and have created lawlessness across the FATA and in the settled areas of the country. They have killed more than 600 maliks²⁷ since 2007 and are regularly targeting military, police stations and educational institutions.

Pakhtun Identity as a Race and Religion

It is a historical fact that Pakhtuns had never shown religious aggression in their history but after the Afghan war, they have become hostage to the strict Taliban religious interpretation. In general, Pakhtuns are secular or nationalist having deep affiliation with their language and culture but the Afghan jihad has changed the socio-cultural fabric of the Pakhtun society. This situation has also influenced the political culture of the province where leaders of the main parties have been Pakhtuns and ultimately their centre of gravity has shifted to the Pakhtun areas. All major religious parties with the exception of Jamat-i Islami are dominated by Pashtuns, and has some form of Sunni (Wahabist) orientation. Moreover, the resistance based its legitimacy on various forms of politicized Islam

and ethnicity is low on the overall political agenda. The fact is that Taliban militants' leadership is overwhelmingly Pakhtun and are religiously rigid and inflexible from the perspective of common people. Furthermore, Pakhtun nationalist leadership has failed to comprehend the changing environment of politics and has also failed to marginalize the situation.

In fact, the Afghan war radicalized Pakhtun society and its social fabric is further shredded by the returning commanders and militants who set themselves up in many cases as warlords outside the authority of the tribal elders. The immediate outcome is anarchy as militant groups, warlords and social criminals fight over the carcass of Afghanistan.²⁸ Furthermore, the religious dimension of this situation brings to the limelight as the militants seem to be a dominant factor in the contemporary war on terror and the ethnic factor is no more valid to build support and help from common people. In this regard, hundreds of foreign volunteers are harbored as "guests" in different areas of FATA the refusal of the local people has made the situation critical because the people claim that Pakhtun traditions and customs are the main hurdle to handover guests to others. According to the philosophy of Pakhtunwali, Pakhtun can die but never consider to handover guest to their enemy. For the protection of Pakhtun traditions, tribal people have fought against the federal security forces in the North Waziristan Agency (NWA) but have not compromised on their traditions.²⁹ In fact, A Pakhtun perceives that once hospitality is granted, to give it up under any pressure would present a wrong picture about Pakhtuns and that they have no respect for their own values and have lost their freedom of action as well. On the other hand, Taliban imagines that to fight with Pakistani forces makes them better Muslims and to justify their jihad against the American proxy forces who are killing their brothers and colleagues. In this regard, a small numbers of common people seems to be sympathizers with the militants just because of US military actions in FATA. However, majority of the people believe that the security establishment of Pakistan is involved in the war on terror to gain economic and military assistance from the United States.

History of Insurgency in FATA

Tribal Pakhtuns are warlike, brave and stoic people and revolt or retaliation is a common phenomenon in tribal society. Many jihadi organizations and religious leaders similar to the Taliban have arisen in that area who challenge the ruling authorities either they are residing in Pakistan or Afghanistan. Historically, Taliban leaders such as Mullah of Hadda provoked the Pakhtuns in 1897 against the British empire with the help of mysticism, and parlor tricks and believed to have turned the British bullets into water.³⁰ Fakir of Ipi known as “Haji Sahib”, also struggled against the British (1930-1940) and the Pakistani forces (1949-1960) on a frustrating chase around the north western region for the liberation of Pakhtuns. In the contemporary era, Mullah Mohammad Omar, Mirza Ali Khan and many other are fighting against the NATO troops and US forces in FATA and Afghanistan because they perceived that foreign forces are against the enforcement of Islamic Shari’a in Afghanistan and should pull out as soon as possible.

The radical state policy of militancy in Pakistan initiated in the early 1980s, when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan (1979) and the US used FATA region as a “cat’s paw” and established largest sanctuaries for Afghan rebels (*mujahideen*) and trained thousands of volunteers to fight against the Soviet Union. The US and Saudi Arabia also supported to establish religious *madrassas* in the border areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan, poured \$7.2 billion against the Soviets to stop the flood of communism, and among them million dollars were funded and paid by Osama bin Laden.³¹ Thus, ultimately socio-cultural structure of the society changed and the conservative politico-religious leadership including local mullahs known as “ulemas” has taken strict control over the common population. So, the Afghan compared jihad and Taliban regime in Afghanistan got free hand as compare to previous jihadi movements in the region and relatively they have got a lasting impact on the tribal structure and existing system. Although the jihad against communism was not the only factor which severely influenced the tribal culture but equally other factors such as chronic poverty, illiteracy and unemployment also become cause to fuel in tribal society. Another bankrupt western elites approach played an

important role to provoke tribal people i.e., misunderstanding about tribal culture and values. So, socio-economic factors developed the culture of violence and Taliban used these weaknesses as a trump card against the west and today insurgency in FATA and Afghanistan has grown steadily in intensity and lethality.³² Moreover, the western analyst has facile observation that FATA is “ungoverned” territory and there is an absence of western state structure of governance. Even in the presence of modern state system the people of the region are living under the local codes and domestic form of mechanism. Thus, the area is popular as a lawless land of endless feuds and bloodshed where human poverty, socio-economic backwardness, maternal and infant-mortality percentage are worst in the world.³³ Furthermore, the political and strategic developments in Afghanistan have grave impact on the other parts of the world including Pakistan.

According to National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) Al-Qaida with uninterrupted funding from Saudi Arabia has not only rebuilt its command and control structure in FATA but has also continued involvement to recruit and train operatives to infiltrate the national security of the United States and the free world.³⁴ The US security establishment perceived that since the US invasion in Afghanistan from October 2001 thousands of Taliban militants and their senior leaders have found safe sanctuary in FATA at the centre of the border and also along the province of Baluchistan to the west and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to the east and south.³⁵ During 2002, unaccountable Afghan Taliban arrived in Pakistan and radicalized the border area of Pakistan-Afghanistan and ultimately all seven agencies of FATA came under the strict grip of “Talibanization” and they consolidated their control in Waziristan. It was also reported that different Taliban groups such as Mullah Nazir (Ahmadzai Wazirs leader) and Mullah Omar (Uzbek religious leader) were fighting in FATA for their control in the region because approximately 90 to 95 percent of the 1,000 to 2,000 Uzbek militants are living in the area.³⁶ The *New York Times* has mentioned that the Taliban militants have taken sanctuary in FATA with an almost impregnable strength for command and control, fundraising, recruiting, training and courage for launching military operations against foreign forces.”³⁷ Thus, the tribal areas (de facto zone) have

become the centre of extremist activities and the land is used for murder, arson, and intimidation to avert the situation. In this regard, the dangerous situation emerged during 2006, when the ideology of Taliban expanded to the main urban areas of Pakistan and the common people assumed that Taliban are uncheckable and have got free-hand from the government to expand Talibanization to the other parts of the country.³⁸ In the same way, during the year of 2007, the culture of Talibanization spread outward from the FATA across northern parts of Pakistan which is normally Pakhtun dominated areas and they have targeted video stores, girls' schools/colleges, police stations, and people from civil-society and have also destroyed the public sector infrastructure because these were perceived as immoral.³⁹

However, the growing militancy and violence in the border region of FATA is under the grip of extremists, Sunni militants from central and southern Punjab and al-Qaeda is getting benefit from these insurgents.⁴⁰ The US administration perceives that FATA is the heart of the crisis and it is critical to the strategic victory of the NATO operation in Afghanistan and the political integrity of Pakistan and the success of US in Afghanistan is prerequisite or dependable on Pakistan. Ironically, the FATA's current misery is the product of the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan (1979) and the tragic incident of the 9/11 subsequently left the region in severe maul and in a disastrous position. So, in the contemporary time, the region is one of the flashpoints in the world and is also one of the most war-torn, frayed and dangerous areas. After serving as a chessboard for superpower politics, the area remains a battlefield because of the conflicting interests of different interests of regional and global powers. Since the 19th century, the region of FATA is under the grip of new "Great Game"⁴¹ because the imperial empire of the time has made it more contentious area than ever and presently, the region reflects chronic instability because of unleashed activities of non-state actors who penetrate state and society of the country.

Pak-Afghan Syndrome

The Durand line which was created between British India and Afghanistan with consensus in 1893 by the British team led by

Sir Mortimer Durand and the Afghan rulers helped to define the geographical features of the area rather than tribal identity. The demarcation did not divide the homeland of the Pukhtun tribes as exploited by some of the separatists or nationalist elements. This was not an imaginary boundary and never looked upon with contempt and resentment by majority of Pakhtuns or tribal elders of the both sides (Afghanistan and Pakistan) of the line. Afghan government since 1947 backed by New Delhi and Moscow called “unenforced and unenforceable”⁴² border for their vested interests. As a practical matter, the line has given identity to the Afghan state or nation rather than places the position of dispute with the Persian, Russian and British Indian empires. There are chances to deprive of legitimacy if someone believes to be an arbitrary and capricious boundary. During the colonial period, Kabul treated the Durand Line or border areas with India as a kind of Afghan Appalachia (measures of the region’s status), while the British empire on the other side controlled the tribal areas.⁴³

Afghanistan was not always a unitary state within its present boundaries like many other nation-states. The country is located over the Iranian plateau but Tehran gave up its claims to Herat in the 1857 Treaty of Paris,⁴⁴ under which the British empire agreed to arbitrate all conflicts between Iran and Afghanistan. Its southern and eastern borders are also demarcated with the consensus between Afghan rulers and Russia (1885 and 1895), British India (1893), and Persia (1905). The expert on Afghan history claimed that “the borders of Afghanistan have been drawn according to the desire of global order of the time and it certainly affects many other nation-states including Afghanistan but has given opportunity to strengthen the statehood.”⁴⁵ The identity of the divided communities did not suffer and most of the tribal people use better opportunities as compare to united aspirations. However, the division of communities was exploited after the partition of British India (1947) by Afghan ruling elites and the “boundary line became a political football”⁴⁶ and a major source of tension between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Ironically, Afghanistan opposed Pakistan’s entry into the United Nations in 1947 and Afghan Loya Jirga (Grand Assembly)

declared Durand Line invalid in 1949 without legal understanding and logical acumen that the treaty obligation of British India with respect to international law remained binding upon its successor states. Thus, the issue of Durand Line and “Pakhtunistan was more exploited by President Mohammad Daoud Khan (1973-1978) with the backing of Moscow and New Delhi but failed to threaten the solidarity of Pakistan.⁴⁷ Moreover, Pakhtuns side, Pakistan refused to cooperate with the “policy of suicidal” because they perceived that fragmentation of the country will contribute to nothing but destruction of the two states i.e., Pakistan and Afghanistan. Furthermore, any other border policy position would be a political suicide for Kabul because the country will suffer in its political and diplomatic support from the west because they almost accepted it as a valid international boundary in the world.⁴⁸ On the other hand, Islamabad is prone to see the sinister hand of India behind all Pakistani misfortunes and is convinced that it has funded and backed some political groups as a countermeasure to Pakistan’s diplomatic and moral support to some groups for the freedom of Kashmir. It is also perceived that the Indians have no humanitarian objectives in Afghanistan and they may boast about their putative pumping of funds into Baluchistan.⁴⁹ Both India and Pakistan are in competition to take lead in Afghanistan and New Delhi has taken vigorous attempts to limit Pakistan’s influence in the country and wants to bleed Pakistan in FATA and Baluchistan with the design to relieve pressure in Kashmir.⁵⁰ So, it is well acknowledged that the Indians have mucked around in FATA and Baluchistan with the diplomatic support and backing of US to deal firmly with cross-border militancy in Kashmir. However, Pakistan security establishment’s paranoia has legitimate concerns about Afghanistan and has feared that US might choose India over Pakistan to deal with the activities of Taliban and Al-Qaida in the region.⁵¹

Washington-Kabul-New Delhi Axis and Pakistan’s Reservations

Afghanistan has a long and tumultuous history of outside powers using its rugged terrain as a chessboard for the “Great Game” which has been revisited in Afghanistan but this time US backed New Delhi-Kabul are the most active players in the region. In the contemporary time, US-led “War on Terror” has created a

challenging situation for Pakistan because external involvement in the domestic affairs of the country has created an alarming situation particularly in the border areas of Pakistan. On the other side, the United States post Cold War priorities have created difficult situation for Pakistan and “the country is no longer a regional equal of India” because US perceives India an emerging regional great power and “Pakistan’s insistence on a bilateral calculus vis-à-vis India makes no sense anymore and is a patent obstacle to progress.”⁵²

According to Ashley Tellis, Pakistan has to recognize that it simply cannot match India through whatever strategies it chooses. The sensible thing, then, is for Pakistan to reach the best possible accommodation with India.⁵³ Moreover, the US in the wake of September 11 (2001) has marginalized Pakistan’s role in Afghanistan and has conveniently legalized Indian presence in Afghanistan. In the prevailing circumstances, India’s relief organizations and private security contractors patronized by Indian government would have a strong role in all economic and strategic projects. India has invested around \$1.2 billion in Afghanistan’s developmental projects and works in collaboration with the notorious Blackwater’s subsidiary United States Training Centre (USTC).⁵⁴ India has increased diplomatic presence and opened four consulates (Herat, Jalalabad, Kandhar, and Mazar-e-Sharif) close to Pakistan border regions and has a role in fomenting trouble in Pakistan’s tribal areas. India’s intelligence network is fully operational in Afghanistan and Pakistan’s security establishment perceives that it has an agenda of subverting Pakistan’s stability to provoke insurgency in FATA and Balochistan and somehow laying its hands on Pakistan’s nuclear assets.⁵⁵ Michele Flournoy (US Under Secretary of Defence) “appreciated India’s contributions for Afghanistan”⁵⁶ without even recalling Pakistan’s endless suffering in the war on terror. The news has also appeared that the US official has asserted for strong Indian military presence and has shown willingness to provide modern weapons to India to be used in maritime operations.⁵⁷ The US has accepted the special role of India in the strife-torn country as Richard Holbrooke (Special Envoy for Afghanistan) has clearly stated that the “US support for India is undiminished which has a central role in Afghanistan. The US

believes that India can play a very positive role in the search of stability in the region.”⁵⁸ He further argued that “Afghanistan is not a zero sum game between New Delhi and Islamabad. Pakistan is not going to take over Afghanistan, nor is the Taliban.”⁵⁹

Apart from the changing nature of US decision makers and law-makers, the political observers recognized Islamabad’s worries about India’s growing activities in Afghanistan which can jeopardize Pakistan’s legitimate vital interests. Shah Mahmood Qureshi (Pakistan’s Foreign Minister) when publicly questioned during a visit to the United States said that India “have to justify its interest” in Kabul. He argued that India’s “level of engagement [in Kabul] has to be commensurate with [the fact that] they do not share a border with Afghanistan, whereas Pakistan has the longest border...If there is no massive reconstruction [in Afghanistan], if there are not long queues in Delhi waiting for visa to travel to Kabul, why do you have such a large [Indian] presence in Afghanistan? At times, it concerns to Pakistan.”⁶⁰ In the same way, General Stanley McChrystal (former US commander in Afghanistan), also mentioned in his report to US President Barack Obama that India is “exacerbating regional tensions” via its activities in Afghanistan. He anticipated that Pakistan would take “counter-measures.”⁶¹ The western media has also emphasized that the US must care about Pakistan’s legitimate interests in Afghanistan because there will be no solution of Afghanistan if the West will not address the concerns, then no option will be left for the paranoia of Pakistan military and the intelligence services to continue to be fed for the protection of country’s interest.⁶² According to Christine Fair, there is a need not to dismiss the importance of Pakistani perceptions with regards to Afghanistan just because of exaggeration of Pakistani elite but there is a truth of real nature of the threat which Pakistan is facing from both India and Afghanistan.⁶³ During the Cold War, Islamabad sought to bring Afghanistan into their sphere of influence to extend Pakistan’s “strategic depth” and to protect her security interest vis-à-vis India. It also became evident that anarchy in Afghanistan was antithetical to a policy of strategic depth as well as potentially destabilizing to Pakistan. According to M. K. Bhadrakumar, “India is playing its decisive role in crushing the Taliban insurgency, without military

deployment in Afghanistan, which is extremely concerning for Pakistani military establishment.”⁶⁴ No wonder, Indian presence in Afghanistan is perceived in Islamabad as a great anxiety because India is co-opting the Northern Alliance “warlords” to fight against Taliban and Pakistan is sensitive to its concerns and is supporting southern Pakhtuns to counter Indian presence in Afghanistan. In this regard, Pakistan expects the US administration to be serious to its concerns vis-a-vis India but Washington does not want to annoy New Delhi and regard India as a friendly power in Afghanistan.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, in the prevailing situation, there are dim chances of Kabul-Islamabad equilibrium and in the same way, Islamabad-New Delhi accommodation is a sine-qua-non for controlling transnational terrorism which, without the solution of Kashmir dispute and peace of the region, will be jeopardized and the region will never find real peace as the people have desired.

Myth of Strategic Depth about Kabul:

In the literature of security studies the term “strategic depth” is basically considered “non-military strategy” and is associated with small and weak states which are situated around the hostile environment and have narrow geographical shape to counter the adversaries, attack. The term is normally used by security establishment of the concerned countries to achieve the military objectives through diplomatic means and this is one of the political purposes of the war. So, its objectives are for buying time for strong defence against rival and over a period of time, attacker should not disturb or halt the country’s industrial and logistic lines.

Historically, Pakistan’s security has come under grave threat because the country is flanked by India in the east and Afghanistan in the west and ultimately the legacy of imperial policy makes its relations with her neighbours far from friendly. In fact, it was the fault of security planners who harshly formulated the defence policy to protect north western border on the foot-steps of the British and that policy strategically has proven vulnerable. British Indian empire was acting as the guardian of the Khyber Pass against Russian expansion through the buffer zone of Afghanistan but after the emergence of Pakistan, the country’s elites seemed to be locked in a

perennial conflict with Kabul and the result was nothing more than the loses. In reality, Pakistan's security elites ignored the ground realities that the country was no more under the colonial structure and "its strategic importance towards Southwest Asia was commanding"⁶⁶ and cordial relations with Afghanistan were the need of the hour. According to C. L. Sulzberger, the "geographically absurdity" has given immense strategic and geopolitical value to Pakistan and it is a potential asset for the defence of free world.⁶⁷ Thus, in the changing scenario the security establishment of the country paid no attention to the new geopolitical realities and imprecisely developed inappropriate defence policy for Pakistan which served the purposes of great powers rather than the country. On the other hand, the friction intensified between Afghanistan and Pakistan after the partition of British India and later Cold War politics, military alliances, propaganda wars and complex political, economic and ideological factors created more distinct differences between the two countries and prevented them from reaching a mutual understanding. During the Cold War era, Afghanistan came under the severe influence of former Soviet Union. India and consequently, New Delhi-Moscow nexus became one of the main irritants in establishing cordial relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. As a result of Afghan-Pakistan antagonisms (1947-1990), the Kabul government clearly sided with New Delhi and Moscow and their close political and military associations were concerned for Islamabad. At that time, Pakistan faced two front threats to its territorial security and became a sandwich between hostile India and unfriendly Afghanistan and this critical security situation was never faced by any country of the world. In fact, India found Afghanistan as a strategic asset against Pakistan and perceived that in future war with Pakistan, Kabul would be able to open the second front against Pakistan and the country would not be able to use tribesmen against India. In that situation, New Delhi successfully used anti-Pakistan sentiment in Afghanistan, most notably in the Dari (Persian) speaking belt (western and northern provinces of Afghanistan) to destabilize Pakistan. In this context, Dari speaking Afghan community and their elites have deep shared close socio-cultural relations with Iran and Central Asia and have cordial ties with India who has ethno-religious differences with the

majority of Sunni Pakhtuns who are dominant in Afghanistan's eastern and southern provinces and are closer to Pakistan.

Thus, the country's security establishment is determined to protect borders through the British colonial strategy and less engaged with Afghanistan in a defensive capacity in order to resolve disputes. So, the defence planners followed the British concept of "strategic depth" which they prepared to contain Russian advancement to India and Islamabad elites adopted to counter India in Afghanistan. On the other hand, Pakistan's policy makers perceived that geographically the country is relatively small between east to west distance, especially in the middle and the British strategic policy will be productive to secure the country. According to Michael Scheuer (former chief of CIA), policy makers of Pakistan believe that India's expensive, extensive and growing Afghan presence is a direct and even existential strategic threat to Pakistan and after the incident of 9/11 (2001), this area of limitless strategic depth has been transformed into a second military frontier with India.⁶⁸ Moreover, the growing Indian presence in Afghanistan is making the Pakistan army more worried because its policy of "strategic depth" is becoming shallower by each passing day.⁶⁹ Moreover, Pakistan's anxiety has been recognized by Washington when General David Petraeus, (Commander of Central Command in Afghanistan), in an interview expressed his understanding of "strategic depth" and mentioned that "Pakistan's strategic depth in Afghanistan is legitimate because the country is very narrow".⁷⁰ The defence experts and strategists also agreed that "for Pakistan "strategic depth" in Afghanistan is a dead-end street."⁷¹ The sensitivity of the issue can also be realized when General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani (Chief of the Army Staff) acknowledged to the Western quarters that "Pakistan wants strategic depth in Afghanistan but does not wish to control it"⁷² and this distress reflects Islamabad's rising concerns over Indian influence in Afghanistan.

On the other hand, India is pursuing long-term policy of "strategic encirclement" of Pakistan but in response to that Islamabad does not have effective counter diplomatic and security policy for its western border. By all means, Pakistan wants its influence in Afghanistan which seems to be strategic liability

because no other options are available to protect the vital interests of the country and the existing policy will remain an asset. However, the real motives behind Pakistan's commitment to Afghanistan are moral and ethical because majority of Southern Pakhtuns of Afghanistan share virtually all of the same values as the Pakistani side of Pakhtuns and Islamabad steadily strengthened the scale of its commitment through moral and diplomatic support to preserve the Pakhtuns superiority over others minorities. In addition, Pakistan cannot afford the destabilization of Pakhtun majority in Afghanistan which is actually working as security shield for Islamabad and is considered extended human deterrence against other regional actors. Moreover, Pakistan's policy makers must realize that the security of the country is much more important as compare to pursuing the old fashion policy which has entirely failed to achieve results. It will be in the interest of the country that security elites must review their policy towards Afghanistan and only pursue the level actually required and limit the political and strategic actions which should not increase high-risk for the security of Pakistan.

FATA as a Strategic Depth of Pakistan

FATA is an inseparable part of Pakistan and is a legitimate area of the country's territories. The region is neither a "no-fly zone nor a no man land" and belongs to Pakistan since the partition of British India. But the region begins to appear as a sandwich when the great power politics begins in Afghanistan, and then after the incident of 9/11 the situation was further complicated and the region has become a bone of contention in the world. It is for the first time in NATO's history (1949-1990) that its forces are used out of Atlantic periphery (Afghanistan) and the US justifies the military involvement in the border region of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The war on terror has converted FATA into a never ended war area as part of the worldwide anti-terrorism struggle and Islamabad seems to be more active to contain India's growing activities in Afghanistan and is helpless in safeguarding the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It is a pity that neither Washington nor most American political observers have really tried to fathom the depth of Pakistani feelings about drones attacks and

violation of its territorial integrity. In fact, protecting each and every part of Pakistan's land and securing borders has been the major preoccupation of the country's foreign policy but Islamabad's economic dependence and military vulnerability often compels to compromise on its national objectives. It is significant in this regard that the security of the entire country significantly depends on the protection of FATA which is the gateway of country's territorial integrity and governance. It is also clear that stability of Pakistan depends on peace in the tribal areas and continued disturbance will corrupt the rest of country. All this has happened because of the inappropriate policies of the security vanguard and never assessed ground realities. In reality, the strategic policy of Pakistan is an extension of the centuries old fortress mentality or fighting from fixed positions, which resulted in unprecedented outcomes in the Western borders. Thus, the defence policy with regards to Afghanistan had neither been consistent nor part of any comprehensive strategic plan. The planners did not refresh the colonial policies to secure the country and rarely used diplomatic and economic means to settle the matters. As a result the country suffered more as compare to gains. In this regard, the country's history has witnessed that "offensive-defence policy" erroneously has not given any advantage to the country rather enemies have taken more benefits from the weak corridors of the policy.

It is an undeniable truth that the tribal Pakhtuns have always supported Pakistan and have played an important role in the protection of Pakistan and have proved to be the backbone or iron shield to its security. During 1948 when Pakistan army was unable to send their troops to Kashmir because General Douglas Gracey (Army Chief of Pakistan) refused to send troops to the Kashmir front and also rejected to obey the order of Muhammad Ali Jinnah (Quaid-i-Azam), as a Governor General and justified his position by arguing that the Indian forces had occupying Kashmir represented the British Crown and he could not order the military to encounter with the Indian forces.⁷³ This situation ultimately helped India and Pakistan faced grave trouble because Indian forces had taken control of approximately two thirds of Kashmir area. At that critical time, the tribal "volunteers" (around 5000) came forward at the call of Pir of Wana, South Waziristan Pir Ghulam Dastagir and Malik Akhya

Jan and waged jihad under the organized Lashkar (Afridi, Mahsud and Waziri tribes) and launched operation against the Indian forces and despite all the drawbacks the Lashkars brushed aside the Dogra forces and captured thousand miles area which in the present day is called Pakistan-administered Azad Kashmir.⁷⁴ Furthermore, during the Indo-Pakistan wars (1965, 1971 and 1999), the tribal people backed Pakistan rather than India and Afghanistan. In the same way, after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979), FATA attained a paramount geo-strategic importance and the United States declared Pakistan a “frontline state” against Soviet aggression and the US-used tribal areas as a training camp and a channel to provide military assistance to the Afghan *mujahideen* to prevent the flood of communism.⁷⁵ At that time, US promoted the culture of Talibanisation in the tribal areas to teach a lesson to the Soviet Union and ultimately, the decade-long war brought a culture of guns and drugs and the economy of the tribal areas, which was already underdeveloped, suffered enormously.

In the current, there is a need that the country’s planners must review the security policy which basically did not help to protect every square inch of the country’s territory. According to Edward Luttwak, “effective defence policy will be free from external pressure and should be based on country’s security priorities.”⁷⁶ John Garnett also describes that “war is not only a military activity conducted by soldiers, but rather a social activity that involves entire nations.”⁷⁷ In this regard, the passions of people are necessary to endure the sacrifices inherent in war because people supply the blood and treasure required to prosecute war and without that no war can be won. Machiavelli once wrote to the prince that “if it is necessary to resort to certain brutalities, that must be carried out in the most energetic fashion and in the briefest possible time because the masses will not tolerate the prolonged application of brutality.”⁷⁸ As the war of terror begins its tenth year (2001-2010) and FATA is severely under the fires of US and NATO attacks, it is perceived that the war in FATA is worth fighting for only if it can be justified in terms of national interests. The present security establishment has failed to articulate any such justification and “the use of force on a large scale over a protracted period of time did not reduce the level of threat.”⁷⁹ If anything, the past decade shows the

continued attacks on FATA areas by the international forces, in fact, serves to exacerbate antagonism towards the West. On the other hand, by waging war against terrorism means playing into the hands of enemies. **Expending** scarce resources at a prodigious rate and sacrificing irreparable human and material sources gradually weakens the country's position.

Moreover, the contemporary war on terror has been imposed on the tribal people and the FATA becomes a "buffer" between Pakistan and Afghanistan and the debate is closely related to the controversy over whether the problem is primarily political and economic or military. In fact, the US adopted the incorrect strategy to precede the matter and assumed that the problem in FATA can only be resolved through military means. In reality, the United States military efforts basically provoke local people and create serious affects on the tribal region. Thus, the war in FATA is between an insurrection by indigenous trained man-power, and an invasion by the regular army such as NATO and the US forces. It is a war of snipers and ambushes, booby traps and pitched battles. The location of the fighting ranged from FATA to Afghanistan inhabited "gun basket" in the remote mountain areas. Thus, it is in the greatest interest of the US that they should not prolong war in FATA regions and as soon as they leave the area, they will be safe from their human cost and material losses.

Disengagement is the best solution:

Given the historical and conventional facts about the FATA, the best strategy for Pakistan to manage the ongoing war on terror is the disengagement because the war has created unbearable anarchy, provoked fiercer and more widespread resistance and disengagement will strengthen peace and stability. The crisis is not simple and required to be handled with careful and skillful planning because the country's economic and military dependence is miserable and on the other hand, India and Afghanistan are playing un-healthy role to destabilize Pakistan. In the present scenario, experts have an opinion that complete withdrawal of forces from the war torn areas will be suicidal because this attempt can create more harassment and insecurity for people.⁸⁰ It would primarily require an intense

political and diplomatic effort to prepare and conduct parallel negotiations with all the concerned quarters or stake-holders for stable peace in the area. All have much to lose or gain depending on exactly how the security establishment of Pakistan will cash the country's geopolitical situation and this would give Islamabad a great deal of leverage that could be used to advance Pakistan's national interest.

Pakistan cannot afford anarchy in the country in order to provide unprecedented facilities to the United States and NATO forces at the cost of country's vital interests. The elites of the country must chalk-out the strategy to manage the US pressure because the strategy of disengagement certainly requires bold, risk-taking statecraft of a high order, and much political competence in its execution. It would be soundly based on the most fundamental of realities that the war has expanded violence and it has also reduced the popularity of the civil government. The plain fact is that Pakistan cannot afford the US partnership which is undoubtedly dangerous and the stability of the country has already been threatened and each passing day experiences new cycles of resistance, repression and violence. According to Luttwak, a retreat is notoriously the most difficult of military operations to pull off successfully. It will be worst without well-calculated retreat because it will not only extricate a force from a difficult situation but also can turn the tide of battle by luring the enemy beyond the limits of its strength until it is over-stretched, unbalanced and ripe for defeat.⁸¹ So, Pakistan is badly engaged in the war and is paying irreversible cost and could be the cause of exhaust, political instability and only distance from war can protect the country's security and it will also reduce the level of hatred and regional nationalism.

Conclusion

The horrific incident of September 11 (2001), radically changed the pattern of international politics and as a consequence, the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) has also changed the dynamics of global politics and almost overnight, the remote and fiercely independent tribal societies have fallen into the world's spotlight because the US perceived that Al-Qaeda and the Taliban

are using tribal region as a safe-haven for training fighters to launch attacks against American and NATO troops in Afghanistan. So, the United States, which as an invincible and immortal state felt ominous fear and perceived that its national security has become under severe threat and has described FATA one of the dangerous zones in the world.

The US administration has introduced a new war strategy along the Afghanistan-Pakistan bordering region to handle Taliban militants and has stepped up its unmanned aerial (Drones) bombing campaign in the tribal areas of Pakistan to thwart Taliban insurgents. The US special operations commanders have also been updating plans for cross-border raids and have prepared to launch ground operations in FATA, in case if Islamabad hesitates to dismantle militant network. In fact, the US administration desires that Pakistan should confront Taliban, not with rhetoric and empty promises but with action and not by vacillating, half-hearted measures but through strong and consistent Pakistani military action wherever required and at whatever cost. The US media has propagated that Pakhtuns never negotiate from a position of strength, as such negotiations and “peace deals” are simply seen as a sign of weakness by the militants.

However, it has been observed by majority of Pakistanis that war has not only threatened the country’s stability but also its territorial integrity. There is no doubt that the people detest the extremists, do not want the name of their country and its illustrious founder associated with terrorists and suicide bombers and need more assertive military action if it is done with cautious regard for innocent people because they are not in favor of militant’s brutality as they feel that war has damaged the state and society. It has also been observed that war is not profitable for the country and the cost is irreparable.

In the realm of action, however, it has been perceived by the majority of Pakistani people that there is no end to war and as long as it continues, it will create more fear rather than opportunities. The common people have opined that FATA is the integral part of Pakistan and it is the natural border between Pakistan and

Afghanistan. The strategists and experts argue that US strategy will be the worst for the country and it will back-fire to our natural strength (FATA), which is the real “strategic depth” of Pakistan.

The country’s elites must remember that the fate of Pakistan will be decided on the chess-board of FATA and not in Kabul. Thus, there is a sound reason of disengagement from the war on terror as Machiavelli clearly advised to prince that never to be involved in the great power politics because the weaker always be the loser. More and more, the war has marginalized the influence of Islamabad vis-à-vis India and it seems to be that New Delhi and Washington are benefiting more as compared to Pakistan. It is also important to remember that anarchical Pakistan would be dangerous for the long-term state’s interests and only peace and stability can encourage/open up the possibilities for significant improvement.

Nevertheless, in the light of past experiences, engagement is associated with heavy cost and disengagement will strengthen the country’s position and it will also enhance the credibility of leadership and forces. According to Luttwak, “in engagement, the chances of survival will be much higher and it will evoke continuing hostility both for local and foreign troops and end will be remote desert rather ensure bright future.”⁸² So, there is no doubt that the strategy of disengagement would require much skill than the indefinite military operation. An anarchical Pakistan is a far greater danger and it will be better to move towards the logical end with the choice to avoid dangerous losses because development and prosperity will be the good option. The country elites must remember that the policies of the stronger ally will most likely prevail at expense of the weaker ally’s vital interests.

Author

Dr. A. Z. Hilali is a Professor of International Relations in the Department of Political Science at the University of Peshawar. Peshawar- Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa. Dr. Hilali can be approached to azahilali@yahoo.co.uk

Notes

¹ David C. Gompert has been Senior Advisor for National Security and Defense in the CPA-Iraq, Vice President for RAND's National Security Research Division, a senior official at the US National Security Council and State Department, and a corporate executive in the information industry.

² Molly Kinder, "Effective Aid in the Most Dangerous Place in the World for Americas," (Washington: Centre for Global Development, 2010), p. 1.

³ Lisa Curtis, "Denying Terrorists Safe Haven in Pakistan," (Washington: The Heritage Foundation, 2006), pp. 2-10.

⁴ Kevin Zeese, "The Longest Afghan War," *Daily Times* (October 10, 2010); see more details in Zahid Hussain, *The Scorpion's Tail: The Relentless Rise of Islamic Militants in Pakistan* (

⁵ Arnold J. Toynbee, *Between Oxus and Jumna* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 47.

⁶ Thomas H. Johnson and M. Chris Mason, "No Sign until the Burst of Fire: Understanding the Pakistan-Afghanistan Frontier," *International Security*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (Spring 2008), p. 52.

⁷ Lutfur Rehman, "Durand Line: A Pakistani Perspective," Perviaz Iqbal Cheema (ed.), *Pakistan and Changing Scenario: Regional and Global* (Islamabad: Institute of Policy Research Islamabad (IPRI), 2008), pp. 132-141.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

⁹ Akbar S. Ahmed, *Social and Economic Change in the Tribal Areas 1972-76* (Karachi: Oxford University Press), 1977, p.1.

¹⁰ Dr. Noor-ul Haq, Rashid Ahmed Khan and Maqsudul Hasan Nuri, "Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan," *IPRI - PAPER 10* (March 2005), pp. 5-23.

¹¹ Daniel S. Markey, *Securing Pakistan's Tribal Belt* (Washington: Council on Foreign Relations, 2008), p. 5.

¹² Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan* (2nd ed) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 415.

¹³ Thomas H. Johnson and M. Chris Mason, "No Sign until the Burst of Fire: Understanding the Pakistan-Afghanistan Frontier," *International Security*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (Spring 2008), p. 52.

¹⁴ See Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia* (New York: Kodansha America, 1992), pp. 16-43.

¹⁵ See A. Z. Hilali, "The Soviet Penetration into Afghanistan and the Marxist Coup," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (2005), pp. 674-682; and see also David B. Edwards, *Before Taliban: Genealogies*

of the *Afghan Jihad* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 18-43.

¹⁶ Syed.Iftikhar Hussain, *Some Major Pakhtoon Tribes Along The Pak-Afghan Border* (Islamabad: Area Study Centre, University of Peshawar, 2000), p. 163.

¹⁷ Major R.T.I. Ridgway, *Pathans* (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1910), p.1.

¹⁸ J. Spain, *The Way of the Pathan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 13-46; Olaf Caroe, *The Pathan 550 B.C-AD1957* (London: Macmillan 1958)and see also Khalid B. Sayeed, "Pathan Regionalism," *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, Vol. 63, No. 4 (Autumn 1964), pp. 478-506.

¹⁹ Shahid Javed Burki, "How to Develop the Afghan-Pak tribal Belts?," Unpublished paper, p. 8.

²⁰ See *Daily Times* (April 18, 2008); and also see *Dawn* (August 13, 2009).

²¹ Syed Bahadur Shah Zafar Kakakhel, *Pukhtana*, translation from Pashto by Syed Anwarul Haq Jeelani (Peshawar: University Book Agency, 1964), pp. 13-76; and see Olaf Caroe, *The Pathans 550 B.C.-A.D. 1957* (London: Macmillan & Co Ltd, 1958).

²² Richard Tapper, "Ethnic Identities and Social Categories in Iran and Afghanistan," in Elizabet Tonkin, Maryon McDonald and Malcom Chapman (ed.), *History and Ethnicity* (London: Rutledge, 1989), pp. 232-246.

²³ A. Z. Hilali, "The Soviet Penetration into Afghanistan and the Marxist Coup," p. 681.

²⁴ Shuja Nawaz, *FATA- A Most Dangerous Place* (Washington, DC: Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 2009), p. 27.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Shuja Nawaz, *FATA- A Most Dangerous Place*, p. 15.

²⁷ *Dawn* (March 9, 2009); and see *New York Times* (September 6, 2009).

²⁸ Thomas H. Johnson and M. Chris Mason, "No Sign Until the Buirst of Fire: Understanding the Pakistan-Afghanistan Frontier," *International Security*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (Spring 2008), p. 71.

²⁹ Mushtaq Yusufzai, "Tribal Elders Call for Raising FATA Force," *The News* (Rawalpindi), September 14, 2006.

³⁰ David B. Edwards, *Heroes of the Age: Moral Fault Lines on the Afghan Frontier* (Berkeley: Berkeley University of California Press, 1996), pp. 169-170.

³¹ See Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan and bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York: Penguin, 2004), and see also Thomas H. Johnson, "Financing Afghan Terrorism: Thugs, Drugs and Creative Movements of Money," in

Jeanne Giraldo and Harold A. Trinkunas (ed.), *Terrorism Financing and State Responses: A Comparative Perspective* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007), pp. 93-114.

³² William S. McCallister, "Strategic Design Considerations for Operations in Pakistan's Tribal Areas," *Small Wars Journal* (January 2008), p. 14-23.

³³ Thomas H. Johnson and M. Chris Mason, "No Sign Until the Buirst of Fire: Understanding the Pakistan-Afghanistan Frontier," *International Security*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (Spring 2008), p. 55.

³⁴ See Tom A. Peter, "National Intelligence Estimate: Al-Qaeda and a Threat to US Home land," *Christian Science Monitor* (July 19, 2007).

³⁵ Thomas H. Johnson and M. Chris Mason, "No Sign Until the Buirst of Fire: Understanding the Pakistan-Afghanistan Frontier," p. 42.

³⁶ Thomas H. Johnson, "No Sign Until the Buirst of Fire: Understanding the Pakistan-Afghanistan Frontier", p. 57.

³⁷ *The New York Times* (July 7, 2010).

³⁸ See *Dawn* (September 28, 2008), and also see Abbas Memkari, "Extremism and All Types of ups and Down", *Daily Urdu Jang* (April 1, 2007).

³⁹ *The Frontier Post* (August 3, 2009); and see also *The News* (February 5, 2009).

⁴⁰ Shuja Nawaz and Arnaud de Borchgrave, *FATA-A Most Dangerous Place* (Washington, NW: Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 2006), p. –

⁴¹ The term "The Great Game" is usually attributed to Arthur Conolly (1807–1842), an officer of the Secret Service of British East India Company's Sixth Bengal Light Cavalry. But the word was introduced into mainstream consciousness by British novelist Rudyard Kipling in his novel *Kim* (1901). The author first published his ideas serially in McClure's Magazine (1900-1901) as well as in Cassell's Magazine (1901) and book published by Macmillan & Co. Ltd (London) in October 1901.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 68; and see also Mujtaba Razvi, *The Frontiers of Pakistan* (Karachi: Pakistan Council of World Affairs, 1968),

⁴⁴ Herat was the city of Iran and birthplace of Shah Abbas of Safavi dynasty. Iran claimed Herat from Afghan rulers under Qajar dynasty in 1838 and 1852 and reclaimed on October, 25, 1956. However, under the French mediation Iran signed a peace treaty in Paris (March 4, 1857) waiving Iran's rights to Herat.

⁴⁵ Barnett R. Rubin, "Regional Issues in the Reconstruction of Afghanistan," *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Spring 2003), pp. 30-38.

⁴⁶ Thomas H. Johnson and M. Chris Mason, "No Sign until the Burst of Fire: Understanding the Pakistan-Afghanistan Frontier," pp. 43-48.

⁴⁷ Hafeez Malik, *Soviet-American Relations with Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan*

(New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), pp. 43-87.

⁴⁸ Thomas H. Johnson and M. Chris Mason, "No Sign Until the Buirst of Fire: Understanding the Pakistan-Afghanistan Frontier," p. 69.

⁴⁹ Sumit Ganguly, "What's The Problem With Pakistan," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. III, No. 2 (March 2009), pp. 9-24.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Shaun Gregory, "What's The Problem With Pakistan," *Foreign Affairs*, (March 2009), pp. 9-24.

⁵³ Ashley Tellis, "What's The Problem With Pakistan," *Foreign Affairs*, (March 2009), pp. 9-24.

⁵⁴ *The Nation* (8 July 2010), and also see *Los Angeles Times* (July 6, 2010).

⁵⁵ M. K. Bhadrakumar, "Pakistan warns India to 'back off'," *Asia Times* (October 10, 2009).

⁵⁶ See *The Times of India* (July 7, 2010), and also see *The Nation* (July 8, 2010).

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ See *The Hindu* (July 23, 2010).

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ See *Los Angeles Times* (6 March 2009).

⁶¹ See M. K. Bhadrakumar, "Pakistan warns India to 'back off'," (October 10, 2009).

⁶² David Miliband, "How to end the war in Afghanistan", *Daily Telegraph* (June 25, 2010).

⁶³ Christine Fair, "What's The Problem With Pakistan," *Foreign Affairs*, (March 2009), pp. 9-24.

⁶⁴ See M. K. Bhadrakumar, "Pakistan warns India to back off," *Asia Times* (October 10, 2009).

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Lord Bordwood, "Reflections on Pakistan in International Relations," *Pakistan Quarterly*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Spring 1955), p. 6.

⁶⁷ See C. L. Sulzberger, "Pakistan: A Geographical Absurdity," *The New York Times* (February 5, 1955).

⁶⁸ Ibid. See Michael Scheuer, "Will India, Pakistan come to blows over Afghanistan?," *The Diplomat* (August 31, 2010).

⁶⁹ Ibid. See also Michael Scheuer, "Will India, Pakistan come to blows over Afghanistan?,".

⁷⁰ *The Nation* (March 7, 2010).

⁷¹ *Dawn* (March 14, 2010).

⁷² *Dawn* (February 2, 2010).

⁷³ Ishtiaq Ahmad, "Did Jinnah Know about the Kashmir War," *Daily Times* (March 24, 2010).

⁷⁴ Maj Gen Akbar Khan, *Raiders in Kashmir* (Karachi: Pak Publishers Ltd, 1970), pp. 23-56.

⁷⁵ See A. Z. Hilali, "The Cost and Benefits of the Afghan War for Pakistan," *Contemporary South Asia*, Vol. II, No. 3 (2003), Pp. 329-310.

⁷⁶ Edward N. Luttwak, *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp. 18-89.

⁷⁷ John Garnett, *Problems of Modern Strategy* (New York: Praeger, 1970), pp. 15-55.

⁷⁸ Machiavelli, *The Art of War* (London: Macmillan, 1968), pp. 7-18.

⁷⁹ Andrew J. Bacevich, "Is Afghan War Still Worth Fighting?," *CS Monitor*, October 18, 2010.

⁸⁰ Shah Mehmood Qureshi (Foreign Minister of Pakistan) Speech at 45th Munich Security Conference 2009, See *Dawn* (February 10, 2009).

⁸¹ Edward N. Luttwak, "Iraq: The Logic of Disengagement," *Foreign Affairs* (January/February 2005), p. 31.

⁸² Edward N. Luttwak, "Iraq: The Logic of Disengagement," *Foreign Affairs* (January/February 2005), p. 36.