

## War on terror resulted in political awareness in FATA

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### Abstract

*Some unknown hijackers' crashed airplanes in US state office building and World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 (latif, 2001). In response to terrible and heinous attack the United States made alliance with international forces to execute Osama bin Laden, Al Qaeda and their facilitators for this alleged attack. Coalition forces launched worldwide counterinsurgency campaign against Al Qaeda and its affiliated organizations. The war on terror started from Afghanistan on October 07, 2001 (word, 2002) and left pernicious repercussions on the sovereignty of Pakistan in different cases. So far Pakistan has played front line role in the war on terror. Due to the drone strikes and surgical operations, Pakistan's national sovereignty has been foiled several times. War on terror greatly affected tribal areas. Pak army and law enforcement agencies conducted 32 military operations against local and foreigner militants in tribal belt near the border of Afghanistan and hilly terrains in north-east of Khyber Pakhtunkhuwa province. Prior to these military operations Tribal territory had have weak infra-structure lack of Political awareness and social issues. After these operations terrorist attacks and drone strikes testified their problems. Hence, destruction and devastation became the destiny of Tribal populace. The prolong absence of political activities and many other issues compelled the youth to organize political groups in different shapes.*

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### Introduction:

The Pashtun community makes up about 18.2 percent of Pakistan's total population with overwhelming majority in KPK 90%, Baluchistan 37%, Sind 15% and Gilgit Baltistan 35%. The Tribal region have a very important geo-graphical positioning. It shares border with Baluchistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhuwa, Gilgit Baltistan and neighboring country Afghanistan. The area comprises on seven districts which are Bajour, Mahmand, North Waziristan, Orakzai, South Waziristan, Kurram and Khyber. The term of Azad Qabail also uses for the people of Tribal region. The area of FATA was most volatile of Pakistan. Once US President Bill Clinton referred it as "the most dangerous place on earth" (Shah, 2012) After US-Afghan War General (R) Pervaiz Musharaf deployed Pak Army against fleeing jihadi elements of Afghanistan in Tribal areas in the very beginning of 2003. The region considered as rear bases for militant organizations. Pak army conducted dozens of military operations in South Wazistan North Waziristan and as well as other tribal areas including Swat. Though these military operations proved useful against insurgents but also caused great destruction of infra-structure in tribal areas. Besides of the social, economical and political grievances thousands of terrorists, civilians and soldiers were killed during these operations, drone strikes and terrorist attacks. Tribesmen raised their echoes against destruction of infra-structure, property and the humiliation of civil rights on different forms. Religious leaders and social activists made several attempts to highlight their issues on national forums, but their efforts prove all in vain. In this tense and awkward situation youth of the Tribal Areas arranged different political groups for achieving their constitutional rights like "Mehsood Tahaf'fuz Tehreek, FATA youth Jirga, Qabailee Khor, Pakhtun Khwa Ulasi Tehreek and Pashtoon Tahufuz Movement" for filling the political vacuum and highlighting the issues of war affected territory on different forums. Newly emerging

political youth of Tribal areas decided to tackle these challenges by adopting peaceful and constitutional manners. This paper is an attempt to examine that how political groups are emerging for the purpose of awareness in FATA. How State authorities dealt with their issues after the war on terror? What would be the future move of newly emerging politics in Tribal districts? Have State authorities undermined that using state power against emerging nationalist groups may cause a big insurgency in the entire tribal districts?

### **Political Awareness in FATA**

Political awareness is an understanding of these ‘powers’ and an ability to navigate them, and therefore get things done. Political awareness is more about the internal environment. Since long, the Tribal districts have been deprived of basic infra-structure, socio-political opportunities and human rights due to absence of proper set up of government. After the inception of war on terror the fleeing elements of different countries used the area as a sanctuary. Therefore, instability, intense poverty, arms culture and lawlessness became the destiny of this specific region. Political parties paid no heed on FATA for developing political awareness. Only some political gatherings were held in this region by JUI, ANP and PMLN. In these circumstances “All Bajour Political Parties Alliance” continuously carried its task for spreading political awareness in FATA, but the rest of the region remained deprived of political activities. “FATA is an integral part of Pakistan, and tribal people are equal citizens of Pakistan. However, there is a political and leadership vacuum in the tribal belt which is a bad omen for the future. The post United States withdrawal era will be more disastrous and dangerous if the FATA political vacuum were not filled by new State leadership after holding free, fair and transparent elections in the tribal region” (Ali, 2014). The government of Pakistan People’s Party took comprehensive steps to introduce FATA reforms that have changed the course of history of tribal areas. People of FATA appreciated this effort and positively participated in the general election of 2008 despite of receiving threats from terrorist groups. As a result of extension of political parties Act 2002 to FATA. The first party base election in FATA was held on May 11, 2013. Many parties took part in this contest on 12 constituencies of National assembly. At least 350 candidates participated in this election out of which 277 were independent and 79 belonged to different political parties. These were the first ever solid measures taken by The Federal Government of Pakistan. Election stimulated the youth of tribal areas. They came up with new political approach or with the aim of constitutional rights. FATA had 12 seats in National assembly till the election of 2018. “The National assembly unanimously approved the 26th constitution amendment bill seeking an increase in number of seats for the erstwhile federally administered tribal areas in the NA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly” (Khatak, 13 may 2019). The elections will be held on newly approved seats very soon. Elected members of FATA could raise their issues on political forums. Hamyun Wazir, who participated in 2013 general elections, stated that “During the election campaign in different areas I observed that how people were happy with this election. Every day was like Eid Day. I felt the thrust among the people for their contestants and the other political activities. The situation of FATA would have been much different if such another reforms had been introduced on time by federal government” (Wazir, 2014).

A strange thing which was observed in the general election 2008 was that the women of tribal society also casted their votes in different constituencies of Tribal Areas. Mrs. Badam Zari participated as a contestant in 2008’s general election, but opponent candidate inflicted defeat on her. Mrs. Aisha Gulalai elected on women’s reserves seat. In the election of 2013, the youngest Aisha Gulalai contested on Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf’s ticket and once again elected as MNA.

The “Qabailee Khor (Tribal Sister)” movement strives for the rights of tribal women hit by years of war and insurgency and aims to enable them to participate in decision making in tribal territory. The Qabailee Khor forum comprises more than twenty five women from all seven districts of FATA. The head of Qabailee Khor Mrs. Nousheen Jamal once stated that “We are focusing on two vital areas educating tribal women and creating political awareness among them about their constitutional rights” (Ahel, 2017)

The young generation and internally displaced persons (IDPs) and temporary displaced persons (TDPs) of South Waziristan organized a group named “Mehsood Tahafuz Movement” in 2014. The movement conducted its first ever protest for civil rights after war on terror in Tank city of the Khyber PakhtunKhuwa on November 15, 2016. Protesters chanted slogans against extrajudicial killing and showed annoyance over different issues. They demanded for the release of prisoners and payment of indemnity to those people whose houses and properties got wrecked in Drone strikes, terrorist attacks and as well as military operations. They also demanded for truth and reconciliation commission and abrogation of the Act of frontier crimes regulations (FCR). The killing of dozens Tribal laborers in Karachi and internal Sind especially the extra judicial killing of an aspiring young Naeqebullah Mehsood by notorious police officer Rao Anwaar in Karachi on January 13, 2018 shocked the whole Pashtun community in general and Tribal society in particular. Naeqebullah’s murder case stimulated racial sentiments among the Tribal society against the role of the Police officer. They were suspicious that State elements and other racial groups are killing their people in all over the country with pre plan agenda. But they had to choose one way out of two: the first one was through armed movement and the second was through legal, Political and constitutional efforts. Ultimately they adopted the later one. Their participation in general election 2018 is vivid evident of their positive political will. A big portion of Pashtun youth and human rights workers greatly impressed of this approach. They warmly participated in political activities. Now they are preparing for newly approved constituencies election for KPK assembly. “Newly established political groups have grown rapidly into mass movements. they now embraces pashtuns over a large swathe of Pakistani territory” (ahmed, april 4,2018) In January 25, 2018 the political workers of FATA arranged long march from provincial capital Peshawar to federal capital Islamabad with the prime objective of building pressure on authorities in Naeqebullah Mehsood’s murder case or justice for Naeqebullah. However political workers from FATA conferred their demands to State Authorities for settling the issues of FATA’s deprived people. These demands are as follow;

1. The government must ensure the arrest and execution of Rao Anwar in Naeqebullah Mehsood’s murder case.
2. To make sure the release of disappeared persons in case of innocence, if they are guilty in criminal acts then must be brought to the civil courts for legal proceedings.
3. Unnecessary pickets must be minimized from Tribal Districts, especially the way from Mehran shah to Peshawar.
4. Government of Pakistan should take necessary initiatives to provide constitutional rights to FATA by affiliating with Khyber PakhtunKhuwa or as a separate province.
5. The territory of South and North Waziristan must be done clear of the Land Mines.

All these demands were genuine and state constitution had the solution of all conferred demands. Meanwhile, some elements produced confusion between State and Tribal people through propagations and allegations. Despite of all, the Military leadership wisely came with positive approach and showed soft corner for annoyed youth of FATA. “They are our children though they are in anger, but we shall listen to them and some of their demands are valid and

constitutional, all valid demands are being solved in the light of law and constitution” (Butt, 2018) “we must change old policies of last four decades by whom we are facing only destruction” (BBC, COAS statement, 2018)

A group of the youth belong to all spheres of life organized “FATA Youth Jirga” headed by prominent journalist Mr. Saleem Safi. The Jirga held a meeting with the Director General ISPR under the inspiring leadership of Mr. Safi. Jirga discussed their issues and grievances with military official. DG ISPR, Mr. Asif Ghafoor assured on Jirga members that Chief of Army Staff seriously working on the grievances of tribal community of Pakistan.

In this regard Chief of Army Staff also held meeting with retired Pashtun military officers, who had served in Pak Army. After this meeting COAS decided to solve all issues through peaceful ways. Later on, he paid due attention on FATA’s people, especially on internally displaced persons, prisoners, development sector and cleaning the area of land mines. “We are working on three conferred demands, they (Tribal politicians) handed over a list of 7200 missing persons, out of these 4000 cases have been resolved and 3200 cases are under process. We have minimized military check posts in South and North Waziristan” (BBC, Dg ISPR says, 2018). Though elected MNAs from FATA stated that, they presented 6 demands to Government of Pakistan not three. But the state authorities paid no heed on any one of these conferred demands. Even they didn’t act upon the first demand to punish Rao Anwaar, the killer of young guy Naqeebullah Mehsood. Still they are struggling peacefully under the state constitution for civil rights as a citizen of the country. Members of National Assembly Mr. Ali Muhammad Khan and Mr. Muhsin Khan also vowed to continue their peaceful struggle for attaining civil rights under the constitution of Pakistan. If they deliver well the future move of these political groups may be bright otherwise, they will lost the trust of tribal people.

Prime Minister Imran khan made criticism over anti institutions policies one of the FATA originated political group. But he endorsed on the genuineness of some of its demands. He stressed that his government will deal with these demands in the light of state constitution.

### **Foreign backed political activities**

It is stated that some elements are working on foreign agenda with aiming at destabilizing the rout of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The military establishment of Pakistan continuously repeats its claim over the suspected political activities of some newly emerged politicians and groups. They have the opinion that nationalists of FATA are working on foreign agenda and backed by foreign powers. “Following a separatist agenda disguised as a movement of rights” (cannon, 2018). Their web pages are being handled from Kabul and Mumbai. They also issued some pictures of those Afghan citizens who were protesting in Kabul in favor of one of the emerging political groups. They have the opinion that US media especially VOA and Indian media are giving extra coverage to anti state elements in FATA and Baluchistan.

### **Conclusion**

The conclusion of the whole discussion is that we have encouraged “Martial traditions” of Pakhtuns sending them into Indian occupied Kashmir in the late of October 1947, a decision which proved to be a disastrous, then again they were pushed into the Afghan war in the 1980’s” (Ahmed, april 04,2018). After the horrible incident of 9/11, Pakistan assisted the NATO coalition led by United States of America to fight against Al Qaeda, Taliban and other Jihadi groups. Security forces launched several operations in FATA and Malakand Division of KPK against the fleeing Jihadi groups of Afghanistan. The United States also carried out Drone strikes in tribal territory of Pakistan which immensely proved detrimental for tribal people. Their properties and businesses were wrecked. Thousands of their beloved were killed during this war,

terrorist attacks and drone strikes. Their close relatives were put into prisons; they waited a lot for their beloved and the assistance of government but all in vain. No one raised their issues on any forum. They were treated like suspects in all over the country. Responsible authorities didn't change their behavior; finally the youth were compelled to raise echoes against injustice and oppression. Despite of all, they are using nonviolent and unarmed methods to agitate their grievances. It is also an amazing fact that some political groups are gaining huge support and pulling large crowds to their protests and meetings and demanding for justice and fair play as loyal citizens of Islamic Republic of Pakistan. On the other hand harsh language is being used by both the sides for hiding their dust under the carpet. This kind of behavior may cause a big tragedy. We have already used these kinds of tactics against Bengalis the result of our irresponsible policies is before us. The youth of FATA is peacefully struggling for their legal rights. They never broke a single urn; state power must not be used against peaceful protesters. The constitution of Pakistan also gives the right of peaceful struggle to its citizens for attaining civil rights. Their demands must be resolved through the state constitution. The emergence of political groups in Tribal Areas is an indication that tribal populace has fed up of extremism and militancy. Now they are adhering to nonviolent and unarmed means to protest their grievances in the setting political and administrative system of Pakistan. Being a third world country and having been indulged in war on terror it is under tremendous political, economic, social and regional pressure. The war wreaked the entire Tribal territory which left uncountable emblems of destruction on the faces of tribal people. Since the US led war against militancy after 9/11, Pakistan is the only country that is regaining its stability and maintaining its center of gravity. Now it is the time to settle internal affairs and to facilitate those who faced destruction because of the wrong decisions. But the burning issues cannot be resolved until the presence of the US led forces in the region. US media and think tanks have suddenly started to present Pashtuns as an aggrieved helpless minority in Pakistan. Who are somehow dependent upon newly emerging political wings to regain their confidence and rights? At the end, I would say that Patience is the golden key for running state machinery; we must deal our citizens with patience and peaceful manner. Despite of all, some unarmed hardliners groups have been emerged on the political arena of Ex Federally Administered Tribal Areas. But they are resisting politically still the ball is in the coat of our civil and military leadership and they are well aware of the situation that where they have to show soft corner and where they have to use force. Anyhow the use of force would be detrimental for the solidarity of the country. State authorities must assist the people of FATA in strengthening political institutions.

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