Chapter – IV
CORE OF THE CRISIS : FATA
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The Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA) is a semi-autonomous tribal region in the northwest of Pakistan, lying between Afghanistan to the west and north, and the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to the east and Balochistan to the south. The FATA comprises seven agencies (tribal districts) and six frontier regions. The territory is almost exclusively inhabited by Pashtun tribes, who also live in the neighbouring Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Afghanistan and are Muslim by faith. The territory is governed through the Frontier Crimes Regulations.

MAP 7: FATA

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The term Af-Pak region was coined and defined by Richard Holbrooke, the Obama Administration’s Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan in March 2008, he said that, “We often call the problem Af-Pak, as in Afghanistan-Pakistan. He is not just an effort to save eight syllables. It is an attempt to indicate and imprint in our DNA the fact that there is one theater of war, straddling an ill-defined border, the Durand Line, and that on the western side of that border, NATO and other forces are able to operate. On the eastern side, it’s the sovereign territory of Pakistan. But it is on the eastern side of this ill-defined border that the international terrorist movement is located”. The usage of this term was stopped in year 2010, however the theatre of operations can be best defined by Af-Pak as this is where the concentration of international effort has been. The geographical contours of this region would be entire Afghanistan, and on western side of Durand line, the areas comprising of Kyber Pakhtunwala, Frontier Agency Tribal Area, Northern areas of Baluchistan including the town Quetta Taliban is mainly Pashtun dominated movement and they dominate both sides of Durand line, which imposes severe restriction on international forces to carry out pursuit and concerted operations as it would challenge the sovereignty of Pakistan.

The seven Tribal Areas lie in a north-to-south strip that is adjacent to the west side of the six Frontier Regions. The areas within each of those two regions are geographically arranged in a sequences from north to south. The geographical arrangement of the seven Tribal Areas in order from north to south is : Bajaur, Mohamand, Khyber, Orakzai, Kurram, North Waziristan, South Waziristan, the
geographical arrangement of the six Frontier Regions in order from north to south is: Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, Lakki Morwat, Tark, Dera Ismail Khan.\textsuperscript{90}

\textbf{Historical Perspective of FATA:-}

FATA features in history as a corridor of early invasions and route for trade between Central Asia and the Indian sub-continent. Although, records of all invaders are not available, some known ones include Alexander (323 BC), Turks (445-550 AD), Arab (568-900 AD), Changez Khan and his successors (1220-1365 AD), Taimur and his successors (1380-1504 AD) and Babur (1526 AD). After the end of the Moghul era, in 1739 AD, Nadir Shah obtained the possession of trans-Indus territory followed by Ahmad Shah Abdali who established the first Afghan monarchy (1747-118) covering these areas too. Thereafter, rise of the Sikh rulers (1818 – 1849 AD) with their annexation of Peshawar in 1832 installed them as new rulers of NW India but they also possessed very little influence on the trans-Indus tract and left the tribesmen to manage their own affair.\textsuperscript{91}

Later, although the British annexed Peshawar (From Sikhs) in 1849, they could not administer the areas due to interference by Amir of Afghanistan until the Durand Agreement was signed in 1893 which defined the boundary beyond which the Amir’s influence was not to be extend. However, knowing the traits of the tribesmen, British too

\textsuperscript{90} The Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA), http://www.fata.gov.pk.

\textsuperscript{91} Kakar M. Hassan, A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan 1865-1901, (Leiden, Boston : Brill, 2006, pp.90-95
never extended their writ to tribal areas and circumvented the problem of tribal incursion (into settled areas) by providing some utility services and stipends to selected influential personals and employed three methods of concern i.e., fines, blockades and expeditions. British also established military garrisons all along the Durand Line and raised Frontier Crops (comprising tribesmen) for protection of L of C, manning the border and maintaining of law and order. During their rule, they enforced certain restrictions (on tribesmen) to including their visits to settled area between sunrise and sunset, purchase of property in settled areas with special sanction etc.

On independence, Pak renewed all the (British) treaties (with all tribal areas including FATA) and conferred the “continuity status” with legal cover given in government of India Act 1935 and incorporated them after independence in all the Constitution (1956, 1962 and 1973). Successive governments did not take adequate measures (specially with development) to integrate them into the national mainstream, except for certain changes like doing – area with restrictions on tribesman visits (to settled areas) and purchase of property in settled areas.

FATA came into limelight with the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan when CIA decided to turn Afghanistan into a Vietnam of USSR. The influx of Afghan refugees, spread of militant culture and rise of Taliban altered the ethnic balance (with “mujahideens” from other Muslim countries, particularly Arab, arriving in the region), brought weapon proliferation and an inflow of narcotic trade to the region. After the USSR left Afghanistan, the region, on Pak initiative,
continued to act as a launch–pad for Pak-based mujahideens fighting the pro-Russia / Northern Alliance-led Kabul-based government till such time Taliban captured the capital city. The FATA tribesmen, who by now got used to gun culture and easy money, extended their hospitality to the foreign fighters (including Al-Qaeda) who started setting-down in the tribal belt after Afghanistan came under Taliban rule.

**Geography / Terrain:**

Lying between Hindu Kush and Southwestern chain of Suleiman Mountains, FATA, a narrow belt of 27,220 sq km/ consists of one of the most rugged and inhospitable terrains of the world. The area (even on the Afghanistan side) is backward and under-developed, lacking basic communications infrastructure. The entire area is interspersed with a no of mountain ranges and rivers which coupled with poor network makes approx 4200 sq km of area inaccessible or politically “No Go Areas” which (prior to 9/11) were beyond the administration control of the Pak government. These area include Arange/Barang in Najaur Agency, Khwezai/BerzaIn Mohmand Agency, Tirah Valley in Khyber Agency, Madda Khel in NWA and Shawal in SWA.

Geographically, FATA can be divided into three regions i.e. Northern, Central and Southern Region. The Northern Region lying between Swat R and Kabul R is mostly mountains with deep gorges and temperate climatic conditions which, though, limit the agriculture, allow a variety of cash crops include fruits, seeds etc. The Central Region comprising Khyber, Kurram and Orakzai Agencies and FR of Peshawar, Kohat and Bannu has snow-clad Safed Koh Mountains in
the North and fertile Khanki, Mastura and Bara R valleys in the South. The Southern Region comprising both the Waziristan Agencies (NWA and SWA) and FRs of DI Khan, tank, Bannu and Lakki Marwat have igneous rock formed Waziristan Hills where a no of important minerals are available in commercial quantities. From military pt of view the area lends itself to low-intensity conflict in the form of shipping and ambushes and favours, predominantly, small-scale infantry ops. Owing to lack of laterals and difficulty in inter-valley ops moves is unidirectional and characterized by lack of mutual sp and flexibility with heavy logistical requirements. Peshawar, being an imp communication centre is critical for maintaining the government’s writ. The Axes Chitral Mardan Nowshera and Peshawar-Koht-Bannu-Razmak-Wan a – Zhob from the backbone of the communication system and act as feeders to all offshoots leading to the seven Agencies. Apart from this, Rd Peshawar-Khyber assumes important because it is a lifeline for move of logistics for Coalition Forces deployed in Afghanistan.

Demography:

The Pashtuns or Pakhtun or Pathans, inhabitants of FATA, are ethno-linguistic groups of people who also occupy PATA, settled areas of NWFP, Northern and Western Baluchistan and as well as Eastern

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92 John F. Murphy, Sword of Islam : Muslim Extremism From the Arab conquest to the Attack on America, (Prometheans Books, New York, 2002, pp. 80-95.
and Southern Afghanistan. Possessing a distinct socio-cultural set-up and having enjoyed an independent status throughout, these tribesmen take pride in their legacy of struggle, adversity and war. A hardy race, divided into approx 60 clans /tribes/sub-tribes, these people who have been brought-up in an atmosphere of hereditary blood feuds are known to be expert rights in the right of self preservation where every boy learns to handle a rifle at an early age is quick to take advantage of any sigh of hesitation, indecision or weakness. Having resisted numerous invasions, these tribesmen are known to be great warriors and their strength lies in guerilla warfare coupled with unlimited patience in its execution.

The tribesmen who are guided more by their social structure, conventions, codes and traditions (Pakhtunwali) would live-by the same as long as there is an enabling environment and there is no conflict with Islam, in which case the riwaj (Customary Law) is upheld. Although riwaj is generally upheld, the tribal psyche and their gullible nature allow them to be manipulated in the name of religion and tribe.

Known to be implacable enemies and staunchest friends, the internal dynamics of the tribes play a very imp role. Considering themselves as free people, the tribesman propagate their right to possess a weapon and possession of the latest weapon is considered a status symbol. Also, due to lack of development, smuggling (called as Tijarat in local parlance), even of narcotics, is considered legitimate. The tribesmen present a unified response (to any outside force) only if the tribal status and, to some extent, religion is threatened.
System of Governance:

Administrative System. FATA is administrated by Governor NWFP, as a representative of Pak President, and by Political Agent (PA, Governor’s rep) in each Agency. The role of PA can be better described as half-ambassador and half –governor wherein he administers the Agency with a necessary mixture of tact, patience, wit and sympathy. He is the kingpin of the Agency and his duties encompass the role of Magistrate, Police Chief, Dir Health & Education and Chief Engineer, all-in-one. He is assisted by one or two Asst. Political Agents (APA), Tehsildar, naib Tehsildar and Moharra (officials). The other imp (tribal) administrative institutions which play important role are Jirga System, Nikkat System, Malliki System, Khassadari System etc. In the tribal areas of the ERs, the role of PA is played by District Coordinated Officer or DCO.93

Judicial System:

Enjoying special constitutional status which excluded the FATA from HC/SC Jurisdiction, the tribal judicial system hinges on the troika of Jirga System PA and FCR 1901. In all the disputes (criminal/civilian and even in the case of FCR), the Riwaj (Customary Law) and Sharia (Islamic Law) form the basis for arbitration. With Frontier Corps, Frontier Constabulary, Khassadars and Levies as law-enforcement agencies of the civilian administration, the Administration generally does not interfere in the offences occurring between tribes except

where State interest is involved, in which case the interference is direct (use of force) or indirect i.e. through Maliks/Khassadars or by invoking tribal/territorial responsibility clause of FCR.

**Tribal Socio-Political System:**

The tribal socio-political set-up rests on two basic pillars of power i.e., Maliks (tribal elders) and Mullahs (Religious Teacher) with Riwaj (Customary Law) and Quam (Tribe) as binding factor and Jirga (Tribal Council) along with Pakhtunwali providing legal cover. This well-coordinated and tailored socio-political system not only negotiable/resolves the tribal disputes/issues but also provide an interface between the Government and Tribes, besides shaping the tribes’ actions/perceptions.  

**Socio-Economic Profile:**

FATA, the least development area of Pak, with agriculture and livestock as main livelihood has approx 7% of land under cultivation. The region with approx 1500 primary schools, 180 middle schools, 120 high schools and the eight colleges has an overall literacy rate of 17.4% with female literacy rate low as 3%. Likewise, in health sector, the average population per dispensary held is 2,893 person while the average population person doctor stands at 14,949 person. 

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transport infrastructure found is rudimentary with roads per sq km as low as 0.16% which leaves almost one-third of area inaccessible.

MAP 8 Literacy Rate of Tribal Areas

Advent of Military And Major Players:

FATA gained province with Pak allowing this area to be used for training, recruitment and launch of Mujahideens infiltrating into Afghanistan to wage “Jehad” against USSR (occupation) and later against pro-USSR /Northern Alliance-led regime in Kabul. It is estimated that approx $66 bn worth weaponry reached this area during the period 1978 -92 which comes to approx $0.13 bn per person. The economic problems, unemployment, inaccessibility, literacy rate and presence of foreigners (followers of Wahabi Islam) fuelled the militancy and later the phenomena of Taliban, with militants, the tribesmen, religio-political leadership, Pak Government and US being the major players.

The seven agencies of the FATA are Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Orakzai, Kurram, North Waziristan and South Waziristan. Bajaur, with
Khar as its capital is the northernmost agency. To the north and east, Bajaur borders the NWFP districts of Dir and Malakand – two areas where the apex leadership of Al-Qaeda prime is likely hiding. There are three main tribes in Bajaur: the Utman Khel, Tarkalanri and Mamund. The Pakistani army is currently engaged in a major operation against Taliban elements in Bajaur, which also has experienced a number of airstrikes by U.S. UAVs, at least one of which was reportedly targeting Ayman Al-Zawahiri, Al-Qaeda’s number two.

In Mohmand agency, the key tribes are the Mohmand, Musa Khel, Daud Khel, Mero Khel, tarak Zai, Safi, Utman Khel and Hamim Zais. Al-Zawahiri is married to a native of this agency and is thought to visit the agency frequently. Mohmand made the headlines on 11 June 2008 when a U.S. airstrike struck a Frontier Crops outpost and killed 11 Pakistani troops including a mid-level officer.

Khyber agency contains the crucial Khyber Pass, one of the most important roads across the Afghan-Pakistan frontier. It is the main artery connecting Peshawar to Kabul and passes thorough the border town of Torkham. Because of this artery, Khyber is the most developed agency in the tribal belt. It is inhabited by four tribes – the Afridi, Shinwari, Mullagori and Shimani. Until fairly recently, the insurgent Pakistani Taliban had not been a problem in Khyber, but there are now at least three Taliban factions challenging the writ of the central government.

Orakzai is the only FATA agency that does not border Afghanistan. It is sandwiched between Khyber and Kurram agencies.
and NWFP’s Peshawar, Nowshera, Kohat and Hangu districts. Its capita, Darra Adma Khel, is the site of a well-known and illegal regional arms bazaar. The Orakzai tribes consist of two major groups: the original Orakzai and the migrant Hamsaya. The security situation in Orakzai is not as bad as it is in other parts of the FATA, but there are still issues with the Taliban in Orakzai, and some sectarian strife has spilled over from neighboring Kurram agency.96

Kurram is the second largest tribal region in the FATA. The agency has a significant Shiite population and has been the scene of fierce sectarian clashes. The agency also has a significant jihadist presence. It is home to number of tribes: the Turi, Bangash, Parachamkani, Massozai, Aliherzai, Zaimusht, Mangal, Kharotai, Ghalgi and Hazara.

North Waziristan is inhabited by the Utmanzai Wazirs, Daurs and other smaller tribes such as the Gurbaz, Kharsins, Saidgis and Malakshi Mehsuds. In the days of the British, tribesmen from this area rallied around Mirzali Khan, who was later given the title of the Faquir of Ipi. Under him, jihad was declared against the British, and his huge lashkar (force) remained at was with the British until Pakistan gained independence in 1947. In late 2005, elements of the Pakistani Taliban declared the establishment of an Islamic emirate in North Waziristan, which is the headquarters of pro-Islamabad Afghan Taliban commander Jalauddin Haqqani, whose house was hit by missiles fired


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from US Predators on 09 Sep., 2008 and a large number of his relatives were killed.

The Southern most agency of the tribal belt is South Waziristan, in which the two main tribes are the Messuds and Wazirs. South Waziristan was the first part of the FATA to be target of the Pakistani military operations that began in 2004. The Pakistani government has tried to undermined the power of the most prominent Pakistani Taliban leader, Baitullah Mehsud, and his Waziristan-based Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan through rival Taliban warlord Maulvi Nazir, who is pro-central government. Mehsud, also directly linked to Al-Qaeda, is known to have a large number of foreign fighters in South Waziristan, especially Uzbeks. Islamabad attempted to restore order through a number of deals with militants in the agency-all of which have fallen apart. Security forces are now facing stiff resistance from militants.

**Militants Groups in FATA:**

The group is headed by Jaluluddin Haqqani who has been responsible for the setting up madrasas and military training camps in the border areas between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Their activities in the region, which began in 1978, continue till date and have the support of Al-Qaeda, and other militant organizations. Due to advancing age and health problems, Jalaluddin Haqqani has passed the mantle of leadership to its his son Sirajuddin Haqqani (alias Khalifaji), who operates out of North Waziristan in Pakistan. He carries a five million dollar US bounty on his head. The group has links with foreign fighters, Pakistani Taliban (TTP) and Afghan Taliban. It operates on professional lines and has its own think tank and a
political wing. The notable members of this group are Moulvi Gul Ramzan, resident of Miranshah, Moulvi Naeem, resident of Bannu and Moulvi Muhammad Saleem, resident of Waziristan and also includes many experienced guerilla fighters who hail from central Asia and the Middle East. The militant wing is overseen by two other sons of Jalaluddin Haqqani- Nasirudiin Haqqani and Badaruddin Haqqani who also supervise the operations in Kashmir. This group is vehemently anti-Shia and anti-Northern Alliance of Afghanistan. The fighters in this group number approximately 15,000.\textsuperscript{97}

**Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan:**

This group was formed by Baitullah Mehsud, a leading militant in Waziristan, Pakistan. He formed the TTP from an alliance of about five militant groups in December 2007. He is thought to have commanded 5,000 fighters and to have been behind many attacks in Pakistan including the assassination of Benazir Bhutto which he has denied. The group archived international notoriety as mentions of Faisal Shahzad, the man who attempted to explode a car bomb in the New York city’s Times Square in May 2010, and Human Khalil Balawai, the Jordanian doctor, who killed seven CIA agents in a suicide mission in Afghanistan in January 2010.

According to the Pakistani security officials, Baithullah Mehsud, his wife and body guards were killed on 5\textsuperscript{th} August, 2009 in a US drone attack in the Zangar area of South Waziristan. He was succeeded by his fellow tribesman Hakimullah Mehsud. The areas where the group

\textsuperscript{97} Rabasa, Angel; Steven Boraz; Peter Chalk (2007). Ungoverned territories: understanding and reducing terrorism risks. RAND. p. 49. ISBN 0-8330-4152-5
is active are North and South Waziristan, Kurrum, Karzai, Mehmand, Khyber and Bajaur tribal agencies. This is the only militant group which has representations in all provinces of a Pakistan which includes Punjab, Sindh, Khyber, Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan. They recruit locals from these provinces and have their headquarters in place called Makeen in South Waziristan. The prominent commanders of this group based in Pakistan are:

1. Commander Hakimullah Mehsud. Ke took over as the head of the TTP of the death after Baitullah Mehsud.
3. Commander Haji Aftab Khan of Air Ali Moulvi Abdullah : He is responsible for providing sanctuary to foreign fighters and looking after their needs.
5. The Commanders located in other districts of the Khyber pakhtunkhwa province are:
   6. Commander Rahanullah, incharge of Khyber and Kurram agencies
   8. Commander Umar Khalid of Mehmand Agency.
   9. Haji Faqir Muhammad of Bajaur agency.

These commanders have also appointed deputies in their areas of control. For example, Umar Khalid of Mohmand agency, has appointed Qari Shakeel, Sangin Qandahari, Yar Syed, Ikramullah, Daray Khah, Wajhiullah, Shahzada, Bilal, Bukhari and commander Mausum as his deputies.
Similarly, Maulvi Faqir Muhammad of Bajaur agency has appointed, Mulla Syed Muhammad, maulvi Umar, Mahsud Salar, Commander Shina, Inayat-ur-Rehman and Commander Abdullah as deputies. Despite their differences, the Taliban commander, Tariq of Darra Adam khel and Commander Qari Hussein of Khurram agency are considered associates of the TTP. The Taliban groups in Sindh, Baluchistan and Swat have also sworn their allegiances to the TTP.\textsuperscript{98}

**The Taliban of North Waziristan:**

This groups in the year 2007 and 2008 was a part of the TTP which at that time was headed by Baitullah Mehsud. They separated in 2008, but returned to the TTP fold in 2009. The amir (head of the group) is Hafiz Gul Bahadur of the Khel Wazir tribe\textsuperscript{99}. His deputy is Maulvi Nazeer who operates in South Waziristan. The Group has the protection of Mufti Nur, a notable person of the area. Some of the well-know commanders of this groups are, Moulvi Elam Khan of the Khushhail Wazir tribe, Commander Mir Ali Safiullah of the Kabul Khel Wazir tribe, Commander Shewah, Commander Azad Khan (in charge Miran Shah), Commander Abu Shoaib. Gul Bahadur, the Amir, is also the Commander of the Dutta Khel district. In South Waziristan, Gul Bahadur’s close supporter is Maulvi nazir Haqqani of TTP which makes his the third most force in the area. Moulvi nazir is not friendly to fighters from Central Asia and in the year 2007, with the support of the Pakistan army, expelled the Uzbek Commander Tahir Yaldashov from the area. Gul Bahadur supported him in that mission. In 2008,

\textsuperscript{98} Ibid

\textsuperscript{99} Ibid
another group headed by Moulvi Qari Zainuddin Mehsud appeared on the scene with 500 fighters. This group was formed in opposition to Hakimullah Meshud of the TTP by the Pakistani Intelligence who wished to see the TTP influence reduced if not totally eliminated from the area.

**The Mehdi Millitia and Haidari Taliban:**

Both these groups consist of militants of the Shia sect. The Commanders of this group are Hussein Ali Shah and Abid Hussein. They operate the Kurrum agency against the TTP as well as group called Tehrik-i-Taliban Islami. Both groups have a combined strength of 8,000 to 10,000 soldiers. They are supported by Iran and the Northern Alliance of Afghanistan. There is a sizable population in the Kurram agency who support these groups. Also, a number of commanders from the Northern Alliance of Afghanistan are present here who have taken part in fights with TTP and Qari Hussein.

**Lashkar-e-Islam:**

This is an important militant group known as the Khyber agency. It is headed by a local man of the Afridi tribe named Haji Mangal Bagh. It started off as a vigilance group, prosecuting local criminals and in the population. Later, however, it adopted the Taliban practices whereby people were punished for not attending prayer services; not closing shops at prayer time and committing unsocial acts. It oppose ‘Ansar ul Islam, a local rival group, and it is estimated that approximately 600 people have been killed to date in skirmishes.

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between the two groups. Lashkar-e-Islam has around 5,000 fighters of whom 1500 are considered battle hardened. The Peshawar city in Pakistan and its outlying areas are the Lashkar’s strongholds.

**Ansar ul Islam and Amar Bil-Marooif Wahni-an-al-Munkir:**

These two groups are prominent in the Khyber agency. The leader of the Bil-Marooif group, Haji Namdar Khan, was killed on August 13, 2009. They blamed the killing on Commander Hakimullah Mehsud of the TTP. Namdar was a supporter of the Afghan Taliban and opposed the TTP

**Tehrik-e-Nifad-e-Shariat Muhammadi (TNSM) - (Malakand Division):**

This group has prominence in the Malakand Division and the Swat valley. It is headed by Moulvi Fazlullah who was targeted by the Pakistan army during its operations in the Swat valley.\(^{101}\) Fazlullah escaped to Afghanistan where he lives under the patronage of the Karzai Government and some warlords. They made some forays across the border into Pakistan to harass the Pakistani armed forces. The Pakistani Government has lodged protests with NATO and the Afghan Government on several occasions, asking them to restrain the group.\(^{102}\)

**The Kashmiri Group:**

Besides the groups mentioned above, there are others who are promoting Talibanization in the tribal belt of Pakistan as well as other parts of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. These are: Lashkar-e-

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\(^{101}\) Ibid

\(^{102}\) Ibid
Tayaba (perpetrators of the Mumbai attack), Lashkar –e-Jahangvi, Sipah Sahaba, Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, Jaish-e-Muhammad and Harkat-al-Mujahideen-al-Islami who besides taking part in the Kashmir liberation activities, are also responsible for speaking sectarianism in Pakistan. These groups moved into the tribal belt after Pakistan imposed restrictions on their movements. The fighters are originally from the Punjab and Kashmir, and also have links with the Haqqani group and the TTP. The leader of Harkat-al-Mujahideen Islami, is Qazi Saifullah Akhtar and the head of Jaish Muhammad is Maulana Masud Azhar who operates in Punjab, Kashmir as well as in the Kurram and Orakzai agencies of the KP province. Their target is the Shia population who they harass with the support of the Haqqanis and the TTP. The Jihadis from the Punjab have also moved into Afghanistan supported by the Haqqani network. The infusion of funds from foreign sources, mainly Saudi Arabia, has served to promote fundamentalism in Pakistan. The strategy of these various militants groups is to ensure that they have a role in Afghanistan, post-US withdrawal.

Groups of Taliban Forces in FATA:

There was a time when the Taliban were known exclusively as an Afghan entity. But after capturing a wide swath of Afghan territory (prior 9/11), their real agenda became clear to their naïve supporters, in Pakistan and Afghanistan. They found out that ‘Taliban’ in fact, was a way of life built around an extremist interpretation of the Quran. The Taliban believed that anyone who differed with them was an apostate and therefore deserved to die. That was why when the majority of the Muhahideen fighters returned to Pakistan after the Soviet withdrew,
they preached a version of Islam in which the followers of the Shia sect were declared as non-believers. The Shias were targeted indiscriminately and their places of worship destroyed. In reaction to the atrocities committed, two Shia militant groups emerged in the region, where previously there were none. These groups have support of the Pakistani Intelligence who uses them against the TTP\textsuperscript{103}.

The fact is that religious intolerance reared it head during the eleven year rule of General Zia ul Haq, who did great disservice to Pakistan by creating these militant organizations, purportedly to fight in Afghanistan and Kashmir, but in reality, he used Islam as a tool to consolidate his own dictatorial rule. Taliban as such is very much the product of the machinations of a wily, power hungry General, who put his own interests before that of the nation. It is an irony, that the same Taliban has now chosen to bite the hand that fed it, and his turned against its mentor-the Pakistani army. By a conservative estimate, the number of commanders, fighters and workers in the various Taliban outfits operating in the seven tribal agencies of Pakistan are in excess of 60,000. This number does not include the Taliban fighters in the Pashtun belt of Baluchistan and in urban Sind. If these were included then their number on the Pakistan side of the border would total approximately 70,000. Numerically, the largest concentration of the Taliban forces is in South Waziristan where four prominent groups have the highest numbers of well-trained fighters. It is believed that there are approximately 35,000 to 50,000 fighters based in South

\textsuperscript{103} Fair, C. Christine; Nicholas Howenstein; J. Alenxader Thier (December 2006). "Troubles on the Pakistan-Afghanistan Border". United States Institute of Peace.
Waziristan alone. Besides these fighters, there are over 300 suicide bombers at the beck and call of the Hakimullah Mehsud (TTP) and Sirajuddin Haqqani. A numerical breakdown of the fighters in South Waziristan is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Number of Fighters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hakimullah Mehsud (TTP)</td>
<td>20,000 to 30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maulvi Nazir Group</td>
<td>12,000 to 15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tahir Uldashov (Uzbek)</td>
<td>3,000 to 4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdullah Mehsud</td>
<td>500 to 700</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

North Waziristan is also stronghold of fighters, but numerically, these are less than South Waziristan. The number of Taliban fighters based here are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Number of Fighters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hafiz Gul Bahadur group</td>
<td>8,000 to 10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hakimullah Mehsud (TTP)</td>
<td>5,000 to 8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siraj Haqqani and associates</td>
<td>12,000 to 15,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Siraj Haqqani and Hkimullah Mehsud have a close alliance with each other and also conduct joint training of their fighters. In fact these two commanders have been primarily involved, in the attacks on the US and NATO forces in Afghanistan.\(^{104}\)

**The Orakzai Tribal Agency:**

This is the region where the Shia and the Sunni militants are at war with each other. These factions have supporters in all three neighbouring countries; Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan. That is why

\(^{104}\) Ibid
the largest number of killings has been recorded here. The two largest groups in this region are:

Hakimullah Mehsud (TTP) 6,000 to 8,000 fighters
Hussein Ali Shah and Abid Hussein 5,000 to 7,000 fighters (Shia)

**Kurram Agency:**

In this agency, Qari Hussien is a ruthless and violent commander. He also control a substantial number of suicide bombers. He is a supporter of the TTP and is closely associated with the Taliban in the Darra Adam Khel area which is headed by Commander Tariq. While all these groups depend on each others’ support, Hakimullah Mehsud of the TTP is the only Commander who operated single-handely in the Kurrum, Orakzai and the Khyber agencies.

**The Khyber Agency:**

Close to the city of Peshawar in Pakistan, is the Tarin Khyber agency, where like the Kurram agency, the militant groups number more than three. Here also, the adherents of the TTP group headed by Hakimullah Mehsud, is growing. Their anti-Pakistan Government and anti-Pakistan army activities have become progressively violent. The prominent groups in the area and their commanders are:

Rahmanullah (TTP) 1,000 to 1,200 Fighters
Mangal Bagh (Lashkar-e-Islam) 2,000 to 3,000 Fighters
Ansar ul Islam (Commander not Known) 1,000 to 1,500 Fighters
Amar Bil Maroof (Commander not Know) 300 to 500 Fighters
Attack on the NATO supply columns out of Pakistan have been carried out mainly by Hakimullah Mehsud’s TTP group, supported at times by Lashkar-e-Islam.

**Mohmand Agency:**

Agitation began in this region, after the army operation in June 2007 against the residents of Lal Masjid (red mosque) located in Islamabad. Religious extremists including women who were students at the madrasa, located inside the mosque complex, had become vigilant against prostitution and gambling. When appeals to desist and vacate the mosque failed, the Government under General Pervez Musharraf used military force, as a result of which a large number of occupation including women and the head of the madrasa were killed. The military action against the mosque resulted in nationwide protests as well as by the militant group in the area led by Commander Umar Khalid a member of the TTP. The number of fighters under estimated is at 5000.

**Bajaur Agency:**

This is the part of South Waziristan, where the Pakistan army carried out an operation against the Taliban towards the end of 2008, in which approximately 1,500 Taliban fighters were killed. Also 950 fighters were arrested which included a large number of foreign fighters. The Pakistan army lost 74 soldiers killed in action and 270 injured. In the process, approximately 200,000 to 300,000 people were uprooted from their homes.
The composition of the Taliban and other militant forces in the Bajaur agency is as follows:

- Maulana Faqir Muhammad (TTP) 4,000 to 5,000 fighters
- Commander Zia ur Rahman (Lashkar Islam) 1,500 to 2,000 fighters
- Zarqavi Group (Arab fighters) 700 to 1,000 fighters
- Al Zawahiri Group (Arab fighters) 600 to 900 fighters

Besides the seven tribal agencies, there are the semi-tribal areas where there is a large concentration of Taliban fighters. The Swat valley was cleansed of the Taliban militants by the Pakistan army, towards the end of 2008. Before the army action there were approximately 11,000 Taliban fighters based in Swat valley. The large number of Taliban fighters is a proof of the fact that after 2002, they have organized themselves into a lethal force, in the tribal areas of Pakistan. The Pakistani Taliban were trained by the Al-Qaeda Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Afghan Taliban and other Jihadi movements, in modern warfare, and have become familiar with latest military equipment in use by the NATO forces. They are a match for any conventional army as attested by the determined resistance they have put up against the Pakistan army over the last six years.

Chapter Vth would concentrate on various Stakeholders in the crisis.

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