
**CHALLENGES TO REFORMS IN THE ERSTWHILE FATA REGION OF
PAKISTAN: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE AFGHAN FACTOR**

Saeed Khan

*Research Assistant/PhD Scholar, National Institute of Pakistan Studies (NIPS),
Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad
Email: saeedqau_1984@yahoo.com*

Dr. Manzoor Ali Veesrio

*Assistant Professor, National Institute of Pakistan Studies (NIPS),
Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad.
Email: maveesrio@qau.edu.pk*

Dr. Safi Ullah Khan Marwat

*Assistant Professor, Department of History & Pakistan Studies,
International Islamic University, Islamabad
Email: safiullah.khan@iiu.edu.pk*

ABSTRACT

Reforms process in the erstwhile FATA region is a work in progress that goes with a very slow pace. Successive Pakistani regimes have attempted different reform packages and development strategies but it did not substantially transform the region and its governance issues continued. There are some serious challenging factors that have been blocking the road to its reforms and normalization. The Afghan factor is one among these hindering factors. This study seeks to discuss the Afghan factor as a major barricade to the FATA region reforms and development. Afghanistan is an unstable state and FATA shares a long border with her. Due to geographical proximity with Afghanistan, the region has consistently been remained in a perpetual state of crises and conflicts and its development has always taken a back seat.

Keywords: Federally Administered Tribal Areas, Reforms, Challenges, Afghanistan, Instability, Proximity, Terrorism

INTRODUCTION

Afghanistan as a state has never been stabilized. It has always been prone to crises and conflicts that have its spell-over impacts on the neighbouring regions in general and the erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in particular. The FATA region shares a long border with Afghanistan. As a predatory neighbour, Afghanistan has been a fact of life for the FATA region throughout most of its history. The region has been consistently the victim of its geographical proximity with Afghanistan. Instability in Afghanistan has always been a major cause of the FATA region insecurity and underdevelopment. The story of the impact of Afghanistan on tribal region is as old as these areas itself (Mohmand, 2018). In this connection, the debate on FATA reforms and

the factors that have been impeding its stability and development will be incomplete without mentioning the Afghan factor.

The Indian Independence Act of 1947 abrogated all the treaties that knotted the different dominions and parts of the subcontinent with the British colonial masters (Spain, 1963). Hence, it left these regions independent and its people were then free to decide about their future destinies, either as part of Pakistan or India. For this purpose referendums were held in different parts of the subcontinent and the people were given the choice to choose between Pakistan and India as their mother state. In this process, the fate of tribal regions (hereafter FATA) was also decided when the tribesmen from these areas expressed their popular will to join Pakistan as their mother state (Ali, 1990). In this regard, about 30 instruments of accession were subsequently signed between the government of Pakistan and about 200 tribal *Maliks*, to further cement this understanding (Wazir, 2013). Since the assimilation of these areas into Pakistan in 1948, Afghanistan has adopted an antagonistic style and irredentist policy towards Pakistan in general and this region in particular. It has long rejected this annexation and keeps challenging the status of these areas. For this purpose successive Afghan governments have been trying hard to create unrest in the tribal regions and have left no stone unturned to halt its reformation and developments.

This article seeks to understand the impact of Afghan factor on the FATA region's reformation and stabilization process. The central question that guides the quest of this research is that; How the Afghan factor is playing its role in the destabilization of FATA region and blocking the road to its reformation? This paper argues that the Afghan factor is a major hindrance to the FATA region stability and development. It is so deeply rooted that it has not only historically impeded the development of the FATA region and its reformation process but it is likely to thwart the prospects of its development and normalization in the future as well.

INSTABILITY IN AFGHANISTAN AND ITS SPILL-OVEREFFECT ON FATA

It is a known fact that Afghanistan as a state has never been politically stable. Due to internal inherent governance weaknesses, power struggles among different groups and resulted chaos, and the changing dynamics at the international level Afghanistan has been prone to perpetual conflicts and crises. Thus, after years of crises and conflicts, today's Afghanistan is often associated with poor governance, instabilities, insecurities and uncertainties. Apart from other inherent

issues, the country is hosting some far flung areas which are beyond the reach of the central government control and where illegal groups have established their bases and enjoy freedom of movement and action (Ali, 1990). Successive central governments have badly failed to extend its writ in these areas. Hence, improving its governance and ensuring peace has been a major challenge before Kabul. The Afghan authorities, instead of taking the initiatives to tackle its internal governance problems, have always been blaming the others and especially Pakistan for causing instability in her dominions. However, Pakistani officials have always rejected these allegations and have termed it just an excuse on the part of Kabul to cover its own failures and weaknesses. The state of Afghanistan is facing a kind of perpetual governance crises and conflicts, which is not only affecting her but has created trans-border problems for all its neighbouring states in general and for Pakistan in particular. Such an unstable situation has largely damaged the security environment and stability of its neighbouring regions. In this connection, the FATA region presents a classic example of such spill-over effects of the instability in Afghanistan.

In this backdrop, the situation in FATA cannot be studied in isolation from Afghanistan. Certain geo-political, geostrategic, ethno-political and historical factors, linked between the two, have to be taken into consideration when one intends to understand the present state of affairs in the tribal regions of Pakistan. It shares long border with Afghanistan and that's why peace and conflict in one part is directly interlinked with conflict and peace on the other side of the border areas. The FATA region shares 600 km border with Afghanistan, commonly known as the Durand Line (Wazir, 2014). Except Orakzai Agency, which does not share direct border with Afghanistan, almost all the other six tribal agencies (now tribal districts) share direct border with Afghanistan (Shah, 2013). In geological order, Bajaur region shares its border with Kunar Province of Afghanistan, Mohmand with Kunar and Ningarhar, Kurram with Ningarhar, Paktia and Khost, North Waziristan with Khost and Paktika and South Waziristan region borders Paktika province of Afghanistan (FATA Research Centre, 2018).

Due to geographic proximity between the two, the impact of events in Afghanistan on the tribal regions of Pakistan is something natural and easily understandable. Throughout history, instability in neighbouring Afghanistan has consistently been poured into the FATA region. The Afghan war in 1979, the 9/11 incidents in 2001 and corresponding Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, successive waves of

militancy and resulted crises and instability in the FATA region clearly reflects this fact. As a result of these and other such events, the FATA region has become a multi-layered cake of militants and other outlaws (Rashid, 2012). FATA was perfectly at peace with itself before these events. Whatever we see in this region is a gradual spill-over effect of events in Afghanistan. Militancy in FATA is not home-grown but the direct result of instability in Afghanistan. It spread like a wild fire throughout the tribal areas and played havoc to the tribal society. It was on this account that the United States of America's Department of States 2007 Country Reports on Terrorism discovered twelve safe havens around the world which among others included the FATA region of Pakistan as a "Potential terrorist safe haven for the terrorist and other non-state actors" (Country Reports on Terrorism, 2007).

Thus, the Afghan factor is a natural cause to the FATA region's instability that has not only historically destabilized it and impeded the reforms process but will keep affecting the future development moves as well. Hence, unless and until the internal situation in Afghanistan is stabilized, instability and law and order issues in the tribal areas will continue. In this regard, Senator Farhatullah Babar has rightly stated that, "Peace and development will elude the tribal regions as long as peace and development eludes Afghanistan" (Hassan and Malik, 2017). Given the fact that Afghanistan is an unstable state and has always its spill-over on FATA, it may not be an overstatement to say that the reforms and development in FATA will highly depend on the stability and security situation in Afghanistan.

Since the Afghan soil is still experiencing successive waves of instabilities and uncertainties, therefore, the tribal region because of its geostrategic location cannot be decoupled from any future incidents and subsequent developments in Afghanistan. The disorganized American pulling out from Afghanistan and the abrupt takeover by the Taliban has created a new alarming situation. The surprising developments are generally anticipated to push the Afghan soil into a new pool of crises and instabilities. In the aftermath of the Taliban's takeover, the Afghan nation and state-building process has come to halt. The country is currently struggling for survival and the sustainability of the system. The country's economy is rapidly shrinking, as the foreign aid and grants, a major source of Kabul's funding, are significantly dried up. It is worth mentioning here that nearly 80 percent of the country's budget has been dependent on foreign aid (Shah, 2021). The loss of foreign aid can play a

vital role in deteriorating the situation and hampering socio-economic and political development.

In this backdrop, it is feared that any mishandlings can lead to unrest in the society and may intensify the chances of a civil war like situation, which will have its far-reaching impacts on the neighbouring regions. The unstable situation is also anticipated to be exploited by the militants and other likeminded groups for starting a new wave of militancy in Afghanistan and beyond its immediate borders. A report published by the United Nations in June 2021 stated that “More or less 500 al-Qaeda combatants were believed to be in Afghanistan and that they have maintained a close relationship with the fellow Islamist extremist groups in the neighbouring regions” (Evans, 2021). In all probabilities, the past experiences show that the FATA region, undoubtedly, would be among the most impacted regions. In case of chaos and instability in Afghanistan, the tribal region will have to remain in a state of flux and its reformation and development to take a back seat.

PAK-AFGHAN BORDER DISPUTES AND ITS IMPACTS ON FATA REFORMS

It is generally recognized that border regions have always been difficult to govern and often remain subject to conflicts and clashes between the states. As Alexander B. Murphy puts it, “Territorial conflicts have been among the major fallouts of the contemporary nation-states system, with the states advancing different kinds of justifications to claim the territory in conflict” (Murphy, 1990). This argumentation can be safely generalized, where almost all the border areas between and among states of the world face the problem of proper management and development, mainly because of its contentious nature. In this regard, the Pak-Afghan border line(Durand Line) presents a classic example. The Pak-Afghan border regions have always been caught up by disputes and competing claims. As a result, these regions are simply being caught in the cross-fire and its development has always taken a back seat (Hayat, 2009).

The Durand Line came into existence in 1893 through an agreement between the British Empire and the Afghan ruler, Amir Abdur Rehman (Shah, 2013). This agreement fundamentally divided the bordered regions between the two dominions and defined their spheres of influence with regard to these regions’ management. With the British withdrawal from the Indian-subcontinent, this border is now a dividing line between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Although the border line is a historical reality, however, successive Afghan governments have always been challenging its legitimacy, mostly for political reasons (Abbasi,

2014). The Afghan authorities keep saying that it was irrationally imposed by the British colonialists and it needs to be rearranged. Their position is that, “Pakistan was a new state rather than a successor state to British India, and all the past treaties with the British, concerned to the status of the border regions such as the 1893 Durand Agreement, the Anglo-Afghan Pact of 1905, the Treaty of Rawalpindi of 1919, and the Anglo-Afghan Treaty of 1921, were, therefore, null and void after their departure from the subcontinent” (Rubin and Siddique, 2006). Pakistan on its part has rejected such notions and states that it has inherited the border line as an international frontier and according to International law, “Treaties of an extinct state always pass on to the successive states” (Quddus, 1982). Pakistan’s state officials further assert that, “This law provides the foundation for inter-state relationships in the contemporary world. If the old historical accords between and among the states are to scrapped today the existing world order will collapse and result into chaos” (Quddus, 1982). Thus, while Islamabad thinks this issue is already resolved, the Afghan authorities, after passing of more than 72 years of the partition, are yet to recognize it a de-jure international border between the two states (Rakisit, 2018).

Since the FATA region is a bridge between the two states, it has always been facing the warmth of their hostilities. Given the irredentist policy of Islamabad and Kabul against each other and its impacts on FATA, analysts have asserted that these areas have simply been caught in the cross-fire (Aziz, 2010). Such a wrestling, between the two states, has historically hampered the development and peace in the tribal region and will continue to hunt the region in the future as well, as this hostility sees no ending. The Afghan authorities have stated that, “These areas are controversial and its status is unclear. These were hastily and inconceivably made part of the British Empire against their wishes” (Shah, 2013). That is why they have long tried to sustain the issue of legitimacy of the border regions open, unless and until her genuine concerns and reservations are addressed. Thus, they have always been opposing any development in these areas and have left no stone unturned to keep its status intact. According to Jeffery J. Roberts, “The FATA region’s transformation is always delayed because of the irredentist attitude of Kabul towards Islamabad. The issues from Kabul have largely compelled the Pakistani state to focus on the defense preparations, rather on the development of its tribal border regions. The efforts with regard to the tribal areas integration into the mainstream

could have proved effective long before, had Pakistan not been facing security threats from Afghanistan” (Roberts, 2003).

Recently, in an attempt to reform and integrate the FATA region into the national mainstream, Islamabad has merged it into the KP province. As the merger plan affects the competing territorial claims of Kabul, therefore it has provoked a strong opposition from her authorities. In this connection, the Afghan President Ashraf Ghani has already rejected the merger scheme and states that, “The merger decision by Pakistan is against the 1921 agreement between the British-India and the Afghan Kingdom, and that the Kabul should have been genuinely consulted before taking this step” (Rakisit, 2018). Since the merger of former tribal agencies is against the wishes of the Kabul, she will try hard to create hurdles in the way of its proper and smooth implementation. In this regard, analysts have warned that, “Kabul can use the proxy card, exploiting the anti-Pakistan militant organizations, to militarize the border regions like the past and to stall its reformation process” (Sufi, 2015). In view of such realities on ground, it may not be wrong to assume that the success and failure of reforming the FATA region will depend on Pak-Afghan future relations and the resolution of major issues between the two, which to this very moment seems unsolvable.

WEAK BORDER MANAGEMENT AND ILLEGAL TRANS-BORDER INFILTRATIONS

Michael Baud and Willem Van Schendel state that, “Borders are territorial demarcation on maps between the states. It may look simple on papers but in reality it is very difficult to extend a state’s control to its peripheral regions and to regulate the interaction of people living on both sides of border” (Baud and Schendel, 1997). This argumentation is mirrored in the Pak-Afghan border regions, where the authorities on both sides have badly failed to properly manage the people interaction and control the illegal border crossings. Since the border line between Pakistan and Afghanistan is contentious in nature that is why it is difficult to properly manage and remains porous. Both sides exercise only nominal control over it. Its porosity has made it convenient for illegal crossings and alleged activities on both sides of the border. Hence, how best to ensure an effective border management and control illicit trans-border infiltrations has always been a dilemma between Islamabad and Kabul.

Although, both states have realized the intensity of the problem and have expressed their desires that the illegal crossing must be curtailed, but due to mutual suspicion and mistrust they have rarely

reached a reasonable solution to solve this issue once and for all. Thus, it does not help in an effective border management and checking the cross-border infiltrations. Afrasiab Khattak, a senior member of Awami National Party, elaborates it as “Successful border management and overcoming the challenges of illegal crossings can only be achieved through cooperation between the two states, which to this very day is extremely lacking” (Hassan and Malik, 2017). Although, Pakistan has officially recognized the border line and has been trying to manage it efficiently, but the Afghan authorities have always been lacking the will to cooperate. Instead of cooperating over the issue, Kabul is playing its blame game and creating hurdles for Pakistan. In this connection, Rahimullah Yousafzai has rightly stated that “Apart from other complexities, involved in the management and guarding of the border line, the lack of cooperation from the Afghan government can be counted among the major hurdles” (Yousafzai, 2018).

History is evident of the Afghan authorities’ opposition to any kind of development at the border regions. This fact is clearly reflected in her state official’s statements. For example, the Afghan authorities have already warned that “Pakistan will face military reaction, if it ever tried to change the status and territorial setting of the border areas” (Khan, Islam and Amin, 2014). It is to be noted that the Afghan officials have already criticized the Pakistani military for constructing military check posts in its border areas near the Khost region, a district of Nangarhar province in Afghanistan (*Dawn*, May 5, 2013). Similarly, in a bid to restrict illegal crossings and to exercise better control along the border areas, Pakistan has long suggested fencing of the border to deal with the problem, but the Afghan authorities have rejected it. The logic behind rejecting the fencing proposal is that Kabul wants to keep the issue of the legitimacy of the border open. To them the border line is disputed and unless it is determined in accordance with international law the proposals of fencing or mining cannot see the light of the day. An Afghan official elaborates it as “It is obvious that if border was fenced the Line would put a stamp on its legality” (Zeb, 2006). They suspect and accuse Islamabad of legalizing the border by implementing the fencing scheme. As Professor Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah puts it “The Kabul sees this as a smart Pakistani move to change a controversial line into a normal international border under the pretext of stopping cross-border terrorism” (Shah, 2013). Another logic and reason given by the Afghan authorities against the fencing option is that, “It would merely divide families already split by the British-drawn frontier” (Zehra, 2007). They

further go on and state that “People needed to be brought closer rather than keeping them at a distance, which is what fencing would do” (Ahmad, 2007). Similarly, Islamabad has long forwarded the proposal of establishing security check posts to halt the illegal crossing across the border but Kabul is taking it for granted. They are lacking the will to stop illegal crossings, as it is a part of their policy to create problems for Pakistan. Such reluctance can be checked from the fact that Islamabad has established 238 security check posts on her border regions, while the Kabul only have 100 (Shah, 2013). Thus, the lack of cooperation and Afghanistan’s continues irredentist policy towards Pakistan has largely hampered the effective border management and controlling the illegal crossings, which have long hunted the two countries in so many respects.

The porosity of Pak-Afghan border line has always been translated by militants and other outlaws to their strategic advantages and has exploited it to their ends. It has always been viewed by the non-state actors as an asset for their organizational and operational activities. The porosity of Pak-Afghan border and its importance for militant cause was once clearly stated by Sheikh Abdullah Azaam, in his 1984 fatwa (decree) on defense of the Muslim lands, as, “The open and unchecked Pak-Afghan border is a great asset, which is not under any political influence and thus forms a protective shield for the mujahidin” (Aziz, 2010). The validity of this statement can be checked from the fact that the mountainous terrains of Pak-Afghan border line have always been an independent region and have historically been the “soft-spots” of the two states (Korteweg, 2008). There are over 260 different formal and informal border-crossing routes alongside the Pak-Afghan border (Ali, 2018). Out of this, twenty formal routes are somehow guard and manned by customs officials, Khassadars, and Levies forces, while the remaining 240 informal and illegal routes are unmanned (Johnson and Mason, 2008). There are hundreds of other crossings, foot and goat paths used by smugglers and locals, unknown to the authorities on both sides (Johnson and Mason, 2008). Given the porosity and difficult terrains, the authorities on both sides have badly failed to manage and control illegal crossings and alleged activities of the non-state actors and other outlaws. For example, during the war on terror, it proved very difficult to contain the terrorists on either side. Such failure, difficulties in dealing with the militant’s threat, was largely attributed to the border’s porosity (Hayat, 2009). It has long served as a safe haven for Al-Qaeda and other

likeminded groups since the fall of Taliban regime in Afghanistan in 2001.

The porous Pak-Afghan border and resulted illegal crossings have its far reaching implications on the border regions. The FATA region is among these affected regions. It shares long border with Afghanistan, which is mainly porous and unchecked. Militancy in Afghanistan is a major problem with its spill-over effects on the tribal areas of Pakistan. Due to the porous border, militants easily manage to cross over into these areas and conduct their operations. Thus, militancy has become a major problem and a big threat to the development and improvements in these regions. Although, Pakistani military has conducted successive military operations and has largely dismantled the operational networks of militants in its tribal regions, but the failure and lack of will on the part of Afghanistan, to effectively deal with the menace of terrorism and to halt illicit cross-border infiltrations, is a major factor which leads to the sustainability of militancy in the border areas. The off and on attacks on the civilian population and security forces is reflection of the fact that the militant's threat is not over and the hunt against militants will continued in the future. In this endeavor, the tribal regions will remain an arena and have to bear the burden, as due to its proximity with Afghanistan, it has geographically and strategically become a centre stage for combating terrorism and militancy (Gall, 2014). Thus, in view of the poorly controlled Pak-Afghan border line, ongoing tag of war between the militants and state authorities and resulted unstable situation, the threats to FATA reforms and hurdles to its normalization speaks for itself.

AFGHANISTAN PROXY WARS AGAINST PAKISTAN AND ITS IMPACTS ON FATA

Supporting insurgencies and cross-border terrorism has been one of the contentions between Pakistan and Afghanistan. It has a long history that started right after the independence of Pakistan in 1947. Although there is no official recognition of such activities, but the fact is that proxy war between the two is a reality. In 1948, the Indian troops entered Kashmir in pursuit of territorial expansion and strategic encirclement of Pakistan. Afghanistan wanted to take advantage of Pakistan's post-independence instability and sow the seed of discord in the region, by allying with India in her attempts to destabilize Pakistan. For this purpose, in 1949 an Afghan *Loya Jirga* (Grand Council) challenged the Durand Line as an international border and started claiming over some Pashtun territories on Pakistan-side of the border (Kerr, 2010). Similarly,

in an attempt to exert further pressure on Pakistan, the Afghan leadership found it convenient to use their proxies against Pakistan, as a tool to create unrest in the society and destabilize her internally (Johnson and Mason, 2008). In this connection, the *Pashtunistan* issue presents the evidence of this fact. Kabul coined the idea that the Pashtun dominated regions on both sides of the border should be assimilated and declared as an independent Pashtun state, to be called *Pashtunistan* (Khattak, 2017).

To materialize this idea, they created *Pashtunistan* madrassas in the border regions and a major area in Kabul was renamed as ‘*Pashtunistan Square*’ ((Johnson & Mason, 2008). In these madrassas schoolboys used to wear uniforms with a small flag of *Pashtunistan* on their sleeves and would said a pledge of allegiance to the flag of *Pashtunistan* in their schoolyards, each morning” ((Johnson and Mason, 2008). Along with this, the Afghan government nurtured a group of pro-Afghan paid maliks, called *Pashtunistani maliks*, to provoke ethnic sentiments among the tribal Pashtuns (Sufi, 2015). In this course of irredentism, Afghanistan had the strong backing of some external forces as well, mainly New Delhi and Moscow (Malik, 1987). Although, the intensity of *Pashtunistan* movement was dumped with the passage of time, but the newly born state of Pakistan took it a serious threat to its national integration. The *Pashtunistan* movement had its negative implications on the FATA region. As, successive Afghan regimes did not recognize these regions as an integral part of Pakistan and challenged its status, that is why Islamabad could not timely assimilating it into the normal national mainstream life and giving it a definite political and constitutional status. Thus, over the decades, the region remained isolated from the national mainstream social, political, economic and legal spectrum of Pakistan. It was only in 2018 that Pakistan formally merged these areas into the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province (Wasim, 2018).

Similarly, offering safe sanctuaries to militants groups has become a routine activity that Kabul uses as a strategy to create unrest in the tribal areas of Pakistan. Afghanistan has already been found involved in sponsoring terrorist groups inside Pakistan and providing safe sanctuaries to such elements in her border regions. As a result of Operation Zarb-e-Azab (quick strike) in North Waziristan region, hundreds of militants and other out laws crossed over into Afghanistan, to flee from the onslaught of Pakistani military. The major responsible factor that mainly facilitated their escape from the main combat zone was that Kabul kept opened its border and welcomed their arrival (Khattak, 2017). In this backdrop, a newspaper has rightly reported that, “more or less 400 families affiliated

with militant groups, including affiliates of Al-Qaeda, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, and the Tehrek-i-Taliban-Pakistan (TTP), crossed into Afghanistan and have joined the likeminded groups there” (*The Express Tribune*, January 30, 2015). The general perception is that Kabul has given them a safe refuge and can use it against Pakistan in the future. This supposition can be clearly checked from the Afghan official’s statements. For example, Abdul Jabbar Naeemi, former Governor of Afghanistan, while commenting on the arrival of refugees from North Waziristan stated that, “People displaced from the other side of the border are our friends” (Donati, 2015). The hosting of such groups, by Kabul, is a major cause of concern for Islamabad. It is suspected that in the future these elements can create security problems for the country and can largely jeopardize its attempts, directed towards tribal regions reforms and integration.

In view of this reality on ground, analysts have warned that the militant threat is not completely eliminated and these elements (militants) are expected to re-emerge, as they are neither totally killed nor captured (Khattak, 2017). They are still able to operate because they were not limited to the tribal areas but have well developed organizational networks inside Afghanistan (*The Express Tribune*, January 20, 2016). Given the fact, that TTP and other outlaws have secured their bases across the border under the patronage of Afghan authorities, thus, a new wave of Afghan sponsored terrorism is likely to emerge. The off and on attacks on the civilian population and security personnel in the tribal regions and in other parts of the country clearly reflect this fact. It is to be noted that, “In the ending days of 2017, more than 50 cross-border attacks took place with 29 of them in the Bajaur region which borders Afghanistan’s Kunar province” (Khan, 2017). Similarly, in June 2018, the gathering of the Pakhun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) in South Waziristan was attacked by militants that left three of its members dead and many wounded (Yousaf, 2019). The attacks on security forces also keep going. On October 14, 2020, the militants attacked a military convoy in the Razmak area of North Waziristan, killing 20 security personnel (*The Express Tribune*, October 15, 2020). These and other such attacks clearly indicate that Kabul has already started its proxy campaign against Pakistan. The basic aim is to create unrest in the newly created tribal districts and jeopardize the prospects of its normalization and development. Thus, the Afghan sponsored militant threat remains the major issue and a challenging task in the post-merger scenario. In such a situation any reform initiatives

cannot become a success story and is likely to prove a self-defeated exercise.

CONCLUSION

One of the major prerequisites for any reform intervention in FATA is securing peace and a stable environment. However, the Afghan factor is seriously undermining the prospects of peace and development in the tribal society. In view of the above discussed facts the Afghan factor in the destabilization of FATA region seems logical and appealing to debate. As the FATA region shares a long border with Afghanistan, therefore, instability in its neighbourhood and its negative impacts are understandable. Due to the irredentist policy of successive Afghan governments the border line between Islamabad and Kabul is poorly managed and mainly remains porous and unchecked. In order to cope with illegal infiltrations and other associated problems, Islamabad has taken pragmatic steps to fence the border line. According to a rough estimate more than 70 per cent of the Pakistani side of the border is fenced and regularly patrolled. However, the Afghan authorities are yet to take the initiatives with regard to border line fencing and actual management. The porosity of border provides an opportunity for the non-state actors, who cross it easily and uses it for their alleged activities. Thus, the illegal cross-border infiltrations have become a routine activity, which is hunting the peace and stability of the border regions in general and FATA in particular. Although, the Durand Line is a historical reality but Kabul has rejected to recognize it as an international border. She is trying hard to create unrest and instability in these areas and has always been thwarted the prospects of its reformation and development. Thus, the first set of problems that left the FATA region underdeveloped and blocked the road to its reformation relates to Afghanistan. The past experiences hint that the tribal region reforms and integration process will highly depend on the situation in Afghanistan and her role in undermining the prospects of its normalization. Thus, unless and until stability in Afghanistan is attained and major issues between Islamabad and Kabul are resolved, the FATA region will continue to remain unstable and disconnected from the mainstream.

Nobody can go into the past and change it, but one can learn from the past mistakes and better plan about the future. The distrust and suspicions between Pakistan and Afghanistan cannot be washed away overnight, but both states can initiate some planned efforts to make their bilateral relationship friendly and mutually accommodative. They should

explore joint initiatives to bring development to the border regions with special focus on its infrastructural development and opening up economic opportunities zones, education and health facilities for its population. It can only be achieved by reforming and fully integrating it into the national mainstream normal life. If history is to be little bit a guide, the Afghan authorities should think pragmatically and accept the historical realities. It should shun the irredentist policies towards Pakistan, as further adventurism and irredentism will bring no advantages but only losses on both sides. Afghanistan should decouple the FATA region from its regional security policy. In this regard, instead of creating hurdles, Kabul should support the FATA reforms and integration process and must work jointly with Pakistan to bring durable peace and stability in these areas. Doing this will also boost the prospects for peace and stability inside Afghanistan.

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