

Crisis and Reconciliation in Swat*

By Sultan-i-Rome

Introduction

The historic Swat, often compared to Switzerland for its natural beauty and picturesque landscape, is situated in a geo-strategic region of the world where the significant regions of Asia—South Asia, China and Central Asia, meet.¹ Swat, which at present is part of the Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA) of the Khyber Pukhtunkhwa Province of Pakistan, has held prominence throughout its known history. It has been periodically invaded by huge armies: the deployment of a huge number (since 2007) of the Pakistani security forces is a living example.

During the years 2007-2009, the world saw the upheaval in Swat that not only shook the Pakistani government writ and fabric but at the same time kept the world, at large, alarmed as well. This paper deals with the crises, erupted in 2007, in historical perspective, the factors that stimulated the unrest and disaffection against the prevailing system and government, and attempts to give the blueprint for a permanent solution.

Historical Background

The Yusufzai Afghans migrated en masse to the Peshawar Valley, and by mid-16th-century occupied Swat and emerged as the dominant segment here. However, they did not establish a government and a state, and lived in tribal way. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, some portions of Swat came under the

¹ For the strategic location and significant position of Swat in the past, present and the future; and the narratives and location of the routes and passes to and from Swat see: Verma, n.d., pp. 52-56, 68-69, 267-268; Popowski, 1977, pp. 173-181, especially pp. 174-176 for Swat alone; Chandra, 1977, pp. 3, 8-11, 19-20, 72-73, 93-95, 182; [Shui-ching-chu], 1950, pp. 69, 72; Tucci, 1977 (1-4), pp. 70-85; Macmunn, 1929, p. 16; Khan, n.d., p. 62; Muncherji, 1959 (3), pp. 40-41; Raverty, 1982 (Vol. 1), pp. 194-313.

neighbouring Dir ruler, some under the British loose control and some remained independent.

Weary of the constant internal faction fighting and the Nawab of Dir's excesses, some sections of the Swatis made a common cause against the Nawab in early 1915 and succeeded in gaining independence. A *jargah*² of them installed Abdul Jabbar Shah as the King of Swat in April 1915, but replaced him with Miangul Abdul Wadud, in September 1917. With coming into power Abdul Wadud (alias Bacha Sahib) kept moving the expansion, consolidation and development of the Swat State.

Developmental works and schemes were undertaken. Measures were made to eradicate some of the socio-cultural vices. Possession of arms was controlled and regulated to a greater extent. Schools and hospitals were established, which provided a base for progress in modern education and health-care services. Peace, order and authority of the state were established in an illiterate society and tribal set-up with amazing success; and the state became a model of peace, tranquillity and progress in a Pukhtun tribal society. The changes were brought about by developing a model, which was a mixture of the traditional values, Islamic laws and modern norms and developments.

Miangul Jahanzeb (alias Wali Sahib) replaced his father as ruler on 12 December 1949. He gave impetus to the developmental works and schemes. Priority was given to communication, education and health sectors. At the same time he also endeavoured to Westernize the state and society. Power, status and position of the traditional leadership and privileged class remained intact to a greater extent but in a changed manner. With the passage of time considerable changes were brought about in the social set up. In Barth's (1995) words:

Internally independent, Swat State was ruled with its own rules, system and administrative machinery without the superfluity of paper work. The administrative system was unique and "represented a new and emergent structure" (p. 156).

In 1969, Swat State was brought to an end by General Yahya Khan, chief martial law administrator and president of Pakistan. This change brought both positive and negative effects and impacts to the land and the people.

The areas of the former Swat State were given the status of a district and thus Deputy Commissioner was put in charge there. The Kalam area, formerly an

² The traditional consultative institution and forum wherein issues of common interest as well as communal affairs are discussed and decided.

agency administered by the ruler of Swat State as ‘Administrator’ on behalf of the government of Pakistan, was made part of the Swat District.

During the Swat State era, both the policies and decisions were made and implemented locally. There was no red-tape and bureaucratic file work. Multi-faceted developmental works were done, but in the words of the Wali Sahib (ruler of Swat State, from 1949 till 1969):

There was never a foundation stone laid by me, and never an opening ceremony performed. No propaganda for myself. People used to tell me: “You must advertise!” I said: “This is my duty, I am doing” (Barth, 1995, p. 152).

After bringing an end to Swat State in 1969, Sayyad Munir Hussain, the first Commissioner of Malakand Division, wrote a note to the effect, Naeemul Hadi quoted: “Further developmental works are no more needed in Swat. *These are more than sufficient* [my italics]. We should have only to maintain them.” (personal communication, July 5 & 9, 1998)

The change in the mode of the ruling, with the end of the state, slowed down if not brought a complete halt to new developmental works. However, a decade later, in 1980s and onward, a number of works were carried out. For example, the number of educational and health care institutions increased, and the chain of communication system extended to every nook and corner. But the standard and quality became poor and having exceedingly deteriorated further with each passing day; and the civic amenities faded away. The new officers’ and bureaucracy’s main concern was/is not to remove the anomalies, to solve the problems and redress grievances of the people, or to address the core issues properly and spiritedly; but to make money and pass their time best. The Wali Sahib has compared (in 1979) the post- Swat State and the state periods as follow:

The present administration functions very differently from mine. Cases must wait for years before they are decided; security has become poor, maintenance of public facilities is poor. Officers in charge come and go; they never have time to learn, or to see any project through. The different branches of Government do not coordinate. At the time of the State, one mind and one purpose controlled it all; we could coordinate all the efforts and pursue persistent and long-term policies. (Barth, 1995, p. 151)

Thus with bringing an end to Swat State by the government of Pakistan, drastic changes occurred all around. A new and alien administrative apparatus was installed, characterized by federal and provincial centralization, bureaucratic

mindset, red-tape and dilly-dally. Determining priorities, developmental schemes and the allocation of funds were/are now made at the federal and provincial levels and the implementation was/is done through the bureaucratic hierarchy and chain which was/is a new and alien thing for the people.³

In this backdrop, following are the main factors that stimulated the unrest and dissatisfaction, and contributed to the upheaval, insurgency and current situation in Swat (2007-2010).

Factors that Stimulated and Expanded the Unrest and Dissatisfaction

Constitutional Issues

The tribal social organization and setup of Swat was altered drastically by the rulers of Swat State and hence, Swat as a tribal society, receded into the background.⁴ The area's constitutional status as a tribal area however, is significant as it differentiates the area constitutionally from the settled areas and also provided it a separate status.

The area is part of the Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA), under article 246 of the Constitution of 1973. Being so, no law made and passed by the federal and provincial legislatures apply here unless and until extended by the governor of the province with the approval of the President of Pakistan: under article 247(3) of the Constitution of 1973.

Additionally, the area's constitutional status has also created a sort of diarchy: the area is a Provincially Administered Tribal Area and hence, under the control of the provincial government, which is responsible for the maintenance of law and order; but the provincial government has no authority to make and promulgate laws for the area on its own. This is done with the consent of and by the governor of the province (under article 247(4) of the constitution) with the prior approval of the president of the country; both of whom are neither part of the provincial government nor answerable to it. Nor are they answerable to the people either.⁵

³ Some efforts and lobbying were made in late twentieth century, basically initiated, supported and stressed upon by foreign donor agencies, for introducing decentralization in Pakistan. Resultantly, the local government system, comprised of a hierarchy of local governments, was introduced in 2001 by the military government of General Pervez Musharraf, supported by most of the NGOs and the foreign donor agencies; but this also does not deliver due to a variety of reasons.

⁴ For some detail see Sultan-i-Rome, 2008, chapter 9.

⁵ For some detail see Sultan-i-Rome, 2009, pp. 8-12.

Judicial issues

The commonly held belief that Swat State's judicial system was Islamic and hence, disputes were settled swiftly, as per Islamic laws, is unfounded.⁶

The question that arises then is despite this, why do people view this period with such nostalgia? The reason is that the judicial system during this period was an effective one: the trials were quick and cheap; the judgments/verdicts were properly executed; and the cases were usually decided on the first or second hearing. Moreover, "some of the shortcomings of the Western judicial system—technicality, delay, and high costs" (Wilcox, 1963, p. 155) did not exist. Thus, before the merger of the state, whether just or unjust, disposal of cases was quick and cheaper. The litigants were spared of the trouble of bearing high expenses and prolonged procedures.

The situation however, changed with the merger of Swat State. The government gradually started to extend Pakistan's laws but at the end it failed to redress the grievances of the people that were in progress with each passing day. Though for most of the period in the post- Swat State time the judicial mechanism, on the whole, remained different from the rest of the province as special procedures were applied, it did not deliver.

These proved to be some of the negative results and outcomes of bringing an end to Swat State. This, along with other factors, resulted in the activities of Tahrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM) and the demand for the enforcement of *sharia* laws in the courts; and the consequent uprising of 1994. And in the post 1994 period still the system was characterized by prolonged procedures, undue delays, technicalities, high costs, and in some cases, bribery.⁷

It might be pertinent to ask why the people of Swat rose up in struggle for a change in the judicial system, while those in the rest of the country, did not? The reason is that they lived under a judicial system in the Swat State era which was quick, efficient, and cost-effective, and which they believed was in line with Islam.

Not only in the judicial system, but also in all the other areas, the Swatis compare the post-state/present situation, which compares dismally to what existed during the time of the Swat State—especially in the areas of law and order, health, education, communication, peace and security.

⁶ For details see Sultan-i-Rome, 2008, pp. 195-203.

⁷ For some detail see Sultan-i-Rome, 2009, pp. 12-16.

Police's role

The indifferent and repressive behaviour of the police towards the common populace and the way they deal and interact with them, and also their involvement in bribery, severe torture, high handedness and their collaboration with and assistance to criminals, embittered and alienated most people. Instead of offering peace, security and assistance to the people, the police became a source of trouble for them. Blatant police corruption even for day-to-day affairs became the source of such resentment. Moreover, the way the police tortured and insulted TNSM members and workers during their 1994-95 agitation generated further bitterness towards the police, within the rank and file of TNSM. All these developments played significant role towards creating the present upheaval in Swat.

Political parties' failure

Ironically, both the political parties and leaders, whether religious or secular, too behave in the same manner as of the officers and bureaucracy. They have often failed to take concrete steps to remove the anomalies, solve the problems and redress the grievances of the people. They utterly failed to address the core issues properly and spiritedly. They have the habit of making false promises and tall claims, and advertise and propagate (for their own ends) what little they do, but at the end prove to no or little avail.

Role of Babas and Mullas

The role played by the religious men—Mulla, Faqir, Haji Sahib, Baba and the likes, in the history of the Frontier (Khyber Pukhtunkhwa), especially the tribal areas including Swat, particularly against the alien powers cannot be underestimated. Their relations with India and Afghanistan, and even Turkey in the past; and their association with the prominent religious figures and officials of these states is not a new phenomenon.⁸ In this scenario, the role of Sufi Muhammad, Fazlullah, and other such figures who advocate armed struggle on religious grounds is neither unique nor a new thing. Besides, the asylum and protection granted to religious men from outside (who were opposed to and had actively struggled against alien powers in the region) is also not a new development.⁹

⁸ The archival record of the colonial government in India has ample examples and testaments to this effect.

⁹ The history of the Frontier is full of such cases and examples.

Intelligence agencies and governments

Foreign and Pakistani intelligence agencies have also played an important role. The Pakistani and American intelligence agencies organized and trained jihadi organizations (forerunners of the Taliban) for armed jihad (*qital*)¹⁰ to counter the Soviet Union in Afghanistan.¹¹

Many believe that the Taliban was the creation of Pakistan's intelligence agencies, for their own ends. The Swat Taliban repudiated the contention that they have any connections or a secret understanding with the Pakistan army or that their fighting with the Pakistan army is a façade (Dawran, 2008). President Asif Ali Zardari, however, conceded that "the militants and extremists...were deliberately created and nurtured as a policy to achieve some short term tactical objectives". He said: "Let us be truthful to ourselves and make a candid admission of the realities"; and that "the terrorists of today were the heroes of yester years until 9/11 occurred and they began to haunt us as well." (*The News International*, 2009, 8 July, Rawalpindi/Islamabad edition)

The American, Afghan and Indian intelligence agencies are also involved in their own ways, to engage the Pakistani Taliban and other jihadi organizations inside Pakistan to divert their attention and to drive them back from incursions into and fighting in Afghanistan and Kashmir; and thus to lessen the pressure over their forces in those areas. They do so as to create internal troubles for Pakistan so as to prevent it from interfering in Afghanistan and Kashmir and also to put pressure over it to do more. This is believed to be one of the cardinal factors responsible for the 2007-2009 turmoil in Swat and the other tribal areas. Against this backdrop an analyst has observed:

The blindfolded reaction of the [Pakistan] government has provided innumerable opportunities to foreign secret intelligentsia to interfere and aggravate the deteriorating situation further. (A call from the pulpit. Retrieved from <http://valleyswat.net>, on October 29, 2007)

¹⁰ Jihad has wider meaning and different kinds. Fighting in the way of Allah by means of arms (holy war fought for the cause of Islam against the non-Muslims) is one of its kinds and is mentioned as *qital* in the Holy Qur'an. With the overwhelming purposely use of the word *jihad* for its *qital* aspect only, its other aspects, kinds and dimensions remains hidden from the eyes of majority of the people around the globe.

¹¹ Also see Yusuf & Adkin, 2007; Rana & Gunaratna, 2007, pp. 12, 24-27, 35, passim; Marwat & Toru, 2005, p. 2; Duncan, 1990, p. 280; Lamb, 1991, pp. 196, 206-642; Khan, 1998.

The then federal government (2002-2007) and intelligence agencies, as well as the Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid-e-Azam) and Pakistan Peoples Party (Sherpao)—ruling partners at the federal level—covertly supported Fazlullah with a view to create problems for the then provincial government of Mutahida Majlas-e-Amal (MMA). On its part the MMA government was more tolerant of the Taliban than others, for it recognized that like the Taliban, they too are engaged in a struggle for an Islamic system, and thus, could not be seen as obstructing those advocating and struggling for the same cause. Such a policy put Fazlullah up and put him and his agenda in places in a relatively shorter span of time.

In response to the question: “Who is responsible for not taking timely action against the Taliban?” the then District Nazim Swat (Jamal Nasar) claimed “...The MMA government intervened and stopped the district administration from taking action against Fazlullah.... This inaction on part of the NWFP government turned Fazlullah into a monster and the issue reached a point of no return” (Jan, 2009). However, one Sher Ali Khan claimed on radio FM 96 Swat (an FM radio channel run by the army in Swat), on May 30, 2009, that the then federal government (practically run by General Musharraf) decided in 2006 not to take decisive action against Fazlullah.

The Afghan war echoes and neo-imperialism

In 1979, Soviet’s forces were sent to Afghanistan. US, Europe and the Arab countries started proxy war in Afghanistan against Soviet Union. For this Pakistan became baseline. The US dollars and petro-dollars (money coming from US and the Arab countries) worked well. Jihadi organizations were founded and Mujahidin trained. Madaris were established in every nook and corner, especially in the Pukhtun areas of Pakistan. A new jihadi mindset and culture was created to counter the Soviet Union in Afghanistan but it continued to work after the withdrawal of the Soviet forces as well. The US backtracked after Soviet’s withdrawal and left Afghanistan in anarchy and chaos.

To bring an end to the infighting in Afghanistan and to settle down the Afghan issue Pakistan and Saudi Arabia fully and openly supported the newly emerged group in Afghanistan coined as Taliban, with whom the Pakistani jihadis also established links and relations. This created the Taliban phenomenon in Pakistan as well. The fighters trained by US and Pakistan (with blessing and support also from the European and Arab countries) proved the future trainers as well. And when in the backdrop of the 9/11 (2001) incidents in US, Pakistan backtracked from the support of the Afghan Taliban under the US pressure, Afghan Taliban’s Pakistani supporters and counterparts (now called Pakistani Taliban) resented this U-turn and owed to fight against the US and its allies

(including Pakistani security forces). Hence the impact of the Afghan War has been enormous.

Besides, modern or neo or American imperialism has multifaceted interests in the region which include, a policy of containing Russia; get access to and control of Central Asia; and countering China, to mention a few. The Americans are also believed to have contributed to and maintained such a scenario to justify their presence in Afghanistan and the region; the real aim of that is to keep control over Central Asia and to keep check against Russia and China.¹² To counter this, the other actors: Russia, China, Iran, and Pakistan, could not remain to be mere silent spectators (India also is engaged for her interest) and hence added fuel to fire to play their war on the Pukhtun soil,¹³ of which Swat is a part.

¹² Also see Rifatullah Orakzai, *Swat aur Shangla mayn jharpayn*, November 18, 2007,

http://www.bbc.co.uk/urdu/pakistan/story/2007/11/printable/071118_shangla_update_nj.sht...

¹³ Although late, Mian Iftikhar Hussain, provincial minister for information, also conceded to the point by asserting that America, Russia, China, Iran, India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan play third world war (i.e. war for securing their interests) on the Pukhtun land (see *Mashriq* (Urdu daily), Peshawar, May 9, 2010).

Not mentioned by Mian Iftikhar but Arab individuals and some of their countries like Saudi Arabia have also been part to the game and the war as continuous moral and material support come from them to the Madaris, the jihadi organizations and their supporters. And European countries too have been part to it, whose forces are now directly taking part in shape of the NATO forces. However, countries like Germany and Italy are believed play double game.

Recently, former Afghan Ambassador, of Taliban regime, in Pakistan, Mulla Muhammad Zaif, too has said in an interview with a private TV channel that it is likely that Iran, Russia, China and some Pakistani forces have their hands in supporting and assisting the Afghan Taliban (see *Roznama Aaj Peshawar*, (Urdu daily, Peshawar), Wednesday, October 20, 2010; *Roznama Azadi Swat* (Urdu daily: Mingawara, Swat), October 20, 2010).

Even the Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman, Abdul Basit, said in June 2009 that there are unconfirmed reports that speak of the provision of funds from Arab and European countries to the extremists and terrorists. He said the issue will be raised with the concerned countries, after confirming

Other contributing factors

The dissipation of sanctions and restrictions over the non-Swatis, in the post Swat State period, for residing and doing business etcetera in Swat resulted in an influx of outsiders into Swat for business, trade, industry, tourism, labour, services, and other such activities. In this context the exemption from taxation also worked.

Emergence of a new wealthy class and their desire for a change in the power structure so as to find and create a space for themselves in the socio-political set-up is considered to be another factor.

Some section of the society, previously persecuted by the Khans and Malaks¹⁴ in the past, have a chance to take revenge and make the scores equal also joined the rank and file of TNSM and Taliban, owing to that some analysts label it a class war.

The plan to convert the present Saidu Sharif Airport (situated in Tahsil Kabal or Nikpi Khel; at a short distance from the village from which Fazlullah hails) into a military airbase and establishment of military cantonment in Swat were never seen to be put in practice and justified without such an upheaval. That is why, allegedly, Fazlullah was given a free run and the initial support by the Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid-e-Azam) and Pakistan Peoples Party (Sherpao)—the then ruling allies at the centre, and the intelligence agencies.

Mismanagement on the part of the successive governments, an inefficient administrative system and the failure of almost all the government departments in delivering services not only caused the loss of their credibility but also

the information (see *Roznama Aaj Peshawar*, (Urdu daily, Peshawar), Friday, June 26, 2009).

¹⁴ In Swat, Khans and Malaks were chiefs selected and designated so by the people of the respective segment. These were not hereditary posts and designations. The Malaks were, on the whole, lesser tribal chiefs compared to Khans. After the emergence of Swat State, the situation gradually changed and the state rulers started to designate the persons they wished as Khans and Malaks, who besides other perks, were paid stipends or Muwajibs as well, from the state exchequer; the amount of which represented the status of the Khan and Malak concerned. After the merger of the state this system came to an end, as neither the people designate and select Khans and Malaks nor do the government. Interestingly, all the families and offspring of the previous Khans and Malaks usually call them so. But they have neither the role as was in the pre Swat State period nor do that of the Swat State time.

disappointed the masses, who no longer have faith in the governments, on their departments or the prevailing system.

The federal government's operations in Waziristan and other parts of Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), the Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) operation in Islamabad in 2007 (especially the manner in which it was carried out), and the government's failure to enforce and implement Islamic laws in the courts spiritedly—as demanded by the TNSM and promised by successive governments—are some of the other key reasons¹⁵ that resulted in the 2007-2009 armed struggle and upheaval.

Restiveness, a trait of the Swati society, though receded due to the policies and steps of the Swat State rulers, re-emerged due to the aforementioned factors.¹⁶

TNSM factor

It was in 1989 that a movement was started in Dir District, called Tahrik Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM), meaning Movement for the Enforcement of Islamic Law, and an organization formed of which Sufi Muhammad was made head.¹⁷ Motto of the organization was to compel the Pakistani authorities to enforce Islamic laws in the judicial arena¹⁸ and make the judiciary conform to the Islamic system in Malakand Division. The organization gradually extended the movement to Swat as well (Shah, 1995, pp. 24-27). The prolonged legal procedures (after the merger of Swat State), undue delay, heightened expenditure, bribery, misuse of *riwaj* and further complication under the PATA Regulations¹⁹

¹⁵ Also see Haroon Rashid, *Swat shidat pasandu ka frontline kaysay bana?*, October 26, 2007, http://www.bbc.co.uk/urdu/pakistan/story/2007/10/printable/071026_swat_haroon_as.shtml

¹⁶ For some other such like factors and some detail see Sultan-i-Rome, 2009, pp. 6, 20-21.

¹⁷ For how the movement started, the organization came into being and Sufi Muhammad was made its head, see Shah, 1995, pp. 10-19.

¹⁸ Also see *Roznama Azadi Swat* (Urdu daily: Mingawara, Swat), October 25, 2008.

¹⁹ Regulation I of 1975 (The Provincially Administered Tribal Areas Criminal Law (Special Provisions) Regulation), which was enforced immediately, and Regulation II of 1975 (Provincially Administered Tribal Areas Civil Procedures (Special Provisions) Regulation), July 26, 1975, which was only published and wherein in section 3 it was stated that “it shall come into force on such date as Government [Government of North-West Frontier Province] may, by notification in the official Gazette, appoint

had already aggrieved most people of Swat. A judgment of the Peshawar High Court, on February 24, 1990, and then of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, on February 12, 1994, declaring the PATA Regulations ultra virus to articles 8 and 25 of the Constitution of 1973, worried the executive circle in Malakand Division, for it meant a dilution of their unbounded power. Therefore, they allowed a free run to the TNSM and approved and supported its activities tacitly. All this resulted in an increased momentum for the TNSM in Swat (though at first, the Swatis were passive towards the movement and its organizers faced difficulties²⁰), which consequently led to the uprising and armed struggle in Swat in 1994.

The promulgation of the 'Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (Nifaz-e-Nizam-e-Sharia) Regulation, 1994', as a result of the 1994 insurgency, and the purported changes it brought about did not satisfy the TNSM, so the organization started 'Jeel Bharao Tahrik' in June 1995. Consequent upon the resentment and the struggle, a new regulation titled 'Shari-Nizam-e-Adl Regulation, 1999', was promulgated, but it also failed to bring about any practical change; and the issue continued to fester. And while Sufi Muhammad and his organization were busy in the struggle for the enforcement of Islamic laws and change in the judicial system, the incident of 9/11 (2001) happened and America invaded Afghanistan in 2001. Although the Taliban asked Sufi Muhammad not to come to Afghanistan to support them, he along with tens of thousands of his supporters crossed into Afghanistan in November 2001 to fight on the Taliban's side against the Americans and their allies. After having lost a large number of his supporters and being unable to counter U.S. assault, he, along with his son-in-law Fazlullah, made their way back to Pakistan, where they were caught and subsequently incarcerated.

Sufi Muhammad remained in jail but Fazlullah was released after seventeen months. After his release, he started preaching a purity campaign on

in this behalf" are commonly known PATA Regulations. On March 19, 1976, the date of the enforcement of Regulation II of 1975 was set as March 25, 1976. However, amendments were made in Regulations I and II of 1975 through Regulation IV of 1976, December 29, 1976; and the powers to decide cases, both criminal and civil were transferred from the judiciary to the executive. The executive referred the cases to *jargahs* (under and in accordance with the PATA Regulations) which unfortunately did not work properly as their decisions were usually manipulated. Moreover, the cases were not quickly decided, which generated resentment; as instead of redressing the grievances and facilitating the people the PATA Regulations led the situation from bad to worse.

²⁰ See Shah, 1995, pp. 26-28.

FM radio channel. Since his father-in-law was in prison, he was supported by TNSM activists and sympathisers and with the assistance of the radio channel he quickly got on track. Soon, he started the construction of a *madrasah* (seminary) and *markaz* (centre) in his home village Mamdherai also called Imamdherai. People from all sections of society donated generously at his orders; and would personally gather in thousands at short notice. He was greatly projected in and by the local media, though some opposition existed.

His growing power and popularity emboldened him and his supporters to challenge the government writ now and then, to counter that, the government also had to make a show of force. These developments, however, were brought under control each time by reaching some agreement between the provincial MMA government and Fazlullah. The policy and course of action adopted by Fazlullah however, became a source of dissension within the rank and file of the TNSM. Though the TNSM disavowed his policy and officially severed connections with him, his power and popularity continued to increase amazingly. And in December 2007, the breakaway faction, led by Fazlullah, became part of the newly-established organization Tahrik Taliban Pakistan, at that time headed by Baitullah Mahsud, an alliance or umbrella organization of different groups.²¹

Musharraf's tussle with the judiciary

President Musharraf's tussle with Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry) and the judiciary started in March 2007, and the resulting chaos and struggle provided space for Fazlullah to continue his activities unhindered and expand his sphere of influence; as both the federal and provincial governments were involved (one way or the other) in pro or against the parties/sides activities, and all the political parties and non-state actors/civil society turned their guns to that direction and focused on that issue.

²¹ Interestingly, while outwardly there were differences between the two groups (one headed by Sufi Muhammad and the other by his son-in-law Fazlullah), especially with regard to strategy and course of action, both have the same motto and objective. Sufi Muhammad was reported to have told the media that if *sharia* laws were implemented as per his demands, he would go to Swat and disarm the other group (headed by Fazlullah); and Muslim Khan, the spokesman of the other group, asked that Islamic laws be enforced in toto, as per the draft submitted by Sufi Muhammad. See *Roznama Azadi Swat* (Urdu daily: Mingawara, Swat), October 22 & 26, 2008; *Roznama Aaj Peshawar* (Urdu daily: Peshawar), October 18 & 22, 2008. Also see *Roznama Azadi Swat* (Urdu daily: Mingawara, Swat), October 20, 2008.

In this backdrop the Swat issue and Fazlullah's activities went into the background; resultantly Fazlullah and TNSM benefited out of and exploited the new situation for their own ends, made their power and position strong enough, and kept control over the area.

Security forces' conduct

Although sent into Swat in July 2007 to curb Fazlullah's activities and growing power, and to restore government's writ, the security forces remained dormant and spectator to his activities. It was in the army's presence that he for the first time came out, in person, of his village with might and main and not only have a show off of his force but offered the Eid prayer in the Kabal ground, kilometres away from his home and centre.

Ironically (and to the further surprise of the masses) the army, deployed at Kabal Golf Course, sought Fazlullah's permission and offered the Eid prayer with and behind him. And afterwards, the operation against the Swat Taliban from November 2007 until February 2009 was carried in a way that apparently did not target the Taliban but innocent civilians.

The aforementioned behaviour and course of action of the army; and the way the security forces interacted with the civilians and the damages and destructions it brought forth during the three phases of the Operation Rah-e-Haq (Operation the Righteous Path), generated distrust and resentment against the security forces, and created and increased soft-corner and support for the Taliban.

Taliban's policies and works

Some of the Taliban policies and courses of action were abominable, but some of their policies and works generated sympathy and support for them. For example, unlike NGOs and the government functionaries, they addressed the people in simple Pashto, their mother tongue that was easily comprehended/absorbed by educated and non-educated alike, and thus went to the hearts of many.

They constructed new roads and paths; opened up irrigation water courses that were covered and brought within the houses in many places; decided cases and disputes quickly without bearing any costs by the parties; solved some age-old disputes and issues; tried to effect conciliation among enemies; and stressed upon women's right to inheritance; decreased doctors' and pathological laboratory fees; compelled PESCO²² and PTCL²³ employees to repair and restore the lines without delay; and ended electric power load-shedding in Swat.

²² Peshawar Electric Supply Company; that supplies electricity, repairs its transmission lines and restores the supply.

Besides, police highhandedness and oppression was brought to an end as the police became ineffective; a number of dacoits and the habitual murderers (*ujrati qatilan*: those who commit murders for others and taking money for the task) were eliminated; and *charas*, heroin, alcohol and other intoxicants and narcotics were banned. They also banned the direct flow of the toilet wastes to the drains and made compulsory septic tanks.²⁴ These and some other works of public utility and policies of the Taliban generated support and sympathy for them in a circle.

The Present Scenario

As both the government and Fazlullah refused to budge from their respective stances, by October 2007 the situation became extremely volatile. So the government deployed more security forces in the area and started an operation named Operation Rah-e-Haq. Overtly, some armed clashes occurred, but simultaneously, the government seemed to be willing to find a peaceful solution to the problem, with the provincial governor declaring that any army operation would be the last option. President Musharraf however, asked the other side, the same day, to lay down its arms (*Roznama Azadi Swat*, October 30, 2007). The other party also showed flexibility and expressed its desire for a peaceful solution of the issue through negotiations. However, despite this they also demanded the withdrawal of the security forces, an enforcement of Islamic laws, and the release of Sufi Muhammad.²⁵

The overt clashes and the security forces' heavy shelling by gunship helicopters, artillery and mortars, mostly hitting not the Taliban and their bases but the civilians and the hills, continued. However, after some days, Fazlullah and his *shura* (consultative body or aides²⁶) ordered their fighters to pull back from the

²³ Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited; that supplies the landline telephone connections and repairs and restore the lines.

²⁴ For some instructions issued by the Taliban to the public regarding civic works of such a nature see a pamphlet titled *Aama Itla* (Pashto) [April 2010], Minjanib Tahrik Taliban Swat.

²⁵ See Abdul Hai Kakar, *Ghair mulki nahi hay, magar aa saktay hay*, October 31, 2007, http://www.bbc.co.uk/urdu/pakistan/story/2007/10/printable/071031_swat_commander_as.s...

²⁶ For Fazlullah's aides see Rahimullah Yusufzai, *Men on mission*, Retrieved from <http://valleyswat.net> (on November 6, 2007).

roadside bases to avoid further losses to the civilians and went underground.²⁷ This, they termed not their flight from the fight, but a change of the war strategy.²⁸ While the situation seemed to have calmed down by January 2008, heavy and indiscriminate shelling caused heavy loss of lives and property of innocent civilians as well as the displacement of a large number of people: inside Swat. Monetary losses worth billions of rupees in different forms were also incurred.

In February 2008, general elections were held in Pakistan and the Awami National Party (ANP)-led coalition government was formed in the province. Since the ANP contested the elections on the slogan of restoring peace and order and bringing normalcy to the province, the provincial government negotiated with Sufi Muhammad and Fazlullah's organizations. Agreements were made and Sufi Muhammad was released. In addition to other terms, the government promised the enforcement of Islamic laws as per the demands of the other side, who in turn, besides other commitments on their part, agreed to support the government in its righteous endeavours and in the restoration of peace and maintenance of law and order.²⁹

²⁷ Announcement made on their FM radio channel. Also see Rifatullah Orakzai, *Swat: char muqamat par murchay khali*, November 27, 2007, http://www.bbc.co.uk/urdu/pakistan/story/2007/11/printable/071127_swat_a_reasfree_rzt.sht...; Rifatullah Orakzai, *Swat: Taliban kay murchay khali*, November 27, 2007, http://www.bbc.co.uk/urdu/pakistan/story/2007/11/printable/071127_swat_operation_updat...; Abdul Hai Kakar, *Swat: mazeed pachas halakatu ka dawa*, November 28, 2007, http://www.bbc.co.uk/urdu/pakistan/story/2007/11/printable/071128_swat_deads_sen.shtml

²⁸ See Rifatullah Orakzai, *Taliban hikmat aqli tabdeel, Matta fauj kay pass*, December 5, 2007, http://www.bbc.co.uk/urdu/pakistan/story/2007/12/printable/071205_swat_update_zs.shtml; Rifatullah Orakzai, *Swat: lugu mayn adam tahafuz barqarar*, December 8, 2007, http://www.bbc.co.uk/urdu/pakistan/story/2007/12/printable/071208_swat_matta_capture_n...; Abdul Hai Kakar, *Kharija policy mayn tabdili chahiyayn*, November 30, 2007, http://www.bbc.co.uk/urdu/pakistan/story/2007/11/printable/071130_taliban_uniform_sen.s...

²⁹ For texts of the agreements see *Myashtinai Pukhtu* (Pashto), 2008, No. 5, pp. 51-52, & No. 6, pp. 6-7.

Differences, however, soon emerged on certain points. Each side blamed the other for not holding fast to or honouring the agreements, which, once more, strained the relations and resulted in fresh armed clashes. The security forces embarked on the second phase of its operation; and the other side sorted out its own strategies. All these, however, again brought untold misery and great losses—of both human-beings and materials to the civilians. Additionally, the unprecedented curfew (which lasted 22 consecutive days during the month of Ramazan),³⁰ and the severance of electricity and telephone lines, caused immense problems for the local population. While one side resorted to decapitation, slaughter, targeted killing and the destruction of government installations (especially government educational institutions, bridges, police posts, and police stations); the other resorted “to carpet bombing and massive shelling as [usually] invading armies do” (Alam, 2008). The targeted blowing up and destruction of residential houses and bungalows, and shops and commercial markets etc. by both sides became routine. If the course adopted by one side generated resentment and brought misery and worry for a majority of the people; the actions of the other, compelled the people to look upon it “as an occupying force rather than a protector” (Alam, 2008). The course of action of both the sides was abominable for the civilians and the populace.

The security forces’ course of action managed to generate sympathy for the Taliban and resentment against the government and the army; because it was “the people of the area who” were “suffering as innocent civilians” were “being killed in the army action” (Expats from Pakistan’s Swat worry over relatives. Retrieved from

http://khyberwatch.com/nandara/index2.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=475&po..., on March 12, 2008).

Even the ANP parliamentarians and ministers, showed their reservations about the security forces course of action and the credibility of the operation. Haji Adeel, ANP Senior Vice President and Senator, observed: “What will be the credibility of the military operation in Swat when houses of ministers are destroyed and their family members are queued up for shooting.” He admitted that “the people have lost confidence in the government and the army” (Daily Times – Site Edition, 2008, December 7).

The limbo continued and the army conducted the second and third phases (Phase Three was claimed as the fastest one) of the Operation Rah-e-Haq; resulting in spreading and expanding the power, control and authority of the

³⁰ Ironically, the curfew in Swat broke the old global records as it continued for eleven months: sometimes with breaks of relaxation and sometime without any break of relaxation.

Taliban with each passing day and in shrinking and waning that of the government. The tragedy was that there were “many players involved” (both at the state and global levels); each one with “his own agenda” (Alam, 2008). But those who continued to be victimized were Swat and its innocent civilians.

While the government continued to press for an unconditional laying down of arms as a precondition to a dialogue and settlement, the other side was also adamant to its demands including the withdrawal of the security forces, implementation of Islamic laws as per their demand, compensation for their losses at the hands of the security forces, and an unconditional release of their arrested associates as a precondition for pulling themselves back.

Swat was at a crossroads. At last the provincial government smelled a rat, entered into a fresh agreement with Sufi Muhammad on February 15, 2009, and the clashes subsided. Amazingly and to the surprise of the Swatis, Indian, American and Afghanistan’s reaction (especially India’s) at the peace deal was abnormally negative. This testifies to greater extent the involvement and stakes, one way or the other, of the external elements and forces in the affair, upheaval and destruction in Swat. Even countries like France that were unheard so far on the issue of militancy and the upheaval in Swat, did not remain silent as “France’s new special envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan” later, while talking to reporters in New Delhi, expressed his reservation over the Talibanization in Pakistan and said: “The Swat agreement ‘has a worldwide resonance’.” (Daily Times – Site Edition, 2009, May 2).

Anyhow, at the peace agreement, Sufi Muhammad came to Swat, established his camp and made peace marches to various areas. Outwardly the situation was moving back to normalcy and the tempers were cooling-down. Sufi Muhammad, however, was pressing the government to speedup the implementation process of the Islamic laws otherwise he would wind up his camp and will go back; and later on he practically did so. It was expected per verbal commitments that Sufi Muhammad will not only restore peace in Swat but also will denounce, in public meeting, militancy and fighting against the government forces as un-Islamic. He, however, instead denounced different organs of the state, which resulted in a great miss and led the situation to worsen; because of the media propagating it to a higher degree in negative terms.³¹

Interestingly, Fazlullah and the Swat Taliban ruled the roost through their FM radio, from 2007 until April 2009. The broadcasts not only continued

³¹ This was his old viewpoint and stand which he expressed instantly/frequently, at occasions. It however is believed that he was now dictated by hidden forces/hands to pronounce this at this public meeting otherwise to be ready for the consequences.

uninterrupted (from the army and government side), at fixed frequency and time, but the frequency was continuously upgraded, enabling the Swat Taliban to extend their influence and to keep control over Swat and parts of Dir, Shangla and Malakand Protected Area (commonly called Malakand Agency).

Another development in the post-peace agreement days was the release of an old video-tape to the media, by a women activist Samar Minallah, wherein the Taliban's have lashed-out a girl allegedly for immorality. Despite the fact that this was not the sole case of lashing out the allegedly guilty/criminals as there were reportedly four cases of lashing out females and some twenty four of lashing out males, for allegedly different crimes, by the Taliban at the zenith of their power (a number of whom were recorded on CDs by the Taliban themselves and already available in the market) both the national and international media took this video-clip at hand, and propagated highly against the peace agreement. Interestingly, a year later government agencies claimed that the video-clip was fake and was financed by some non-state actors so as to defame Pakistan.³²

Though, the ceasefire was effected in February 2009 and peace restored, inwardly both the sides—the Taliban and the army—were making their positions stronger and flexing their muscles for a fresh and decisive round. Along with making their position stronger in Swat, the Taliban made inroads into Dir and Buner, with blessings of Commissioner Malakand Division, Muhammad Javaid.³³ Their inroad into Dir and especially Buner was sensationalized by the media; and was perceived as a march towards and a prelude to taking over Islamabad and the Pakistani nukes. Interestingly, the issue took crucial turn and was made more sensationalized when Fazlur Rahman (Amir/chief of Jamiat ul Ulama-e-Islam) said on the national assembly floor that the Taliban has reached Tarbela and there are only the Margalla Hills between them and Islamabad, the capital of the country.

The government claimed the inroads into Dir and Buner a violation of the peace agreement, effected between the provincial government and TNSM on February 15, 2009, and hence embarked on a military operation in those areas. On the other side Sufi Muhammad said that by launching these operations, “the

³² They claimed that they got the information from the arrested culprits, in the course of investigation, that the video was fake and that it was produced on the demand of some non-state actors for which a handsome money was paid. This caused a fresh debate in the media over the subject in March-April 2010.

³³ The projected inroads of the Taliban from Swat into Dir and Buner were dubbed/believed a manoeuvred for sensationalizing the issue and situation; and making ground and justification for a grand military action.

government had violated the Swat peace agreement” (DAWN.COM); and a Taliban commander, using the alias of Tahir, said that the “peace agreement with the NWFP government has practically been scrapped but we are waiting for a word from Maulana Sufi Muhammad for taking a decision” (*The News International*, 2010, March 5).

In this backdrop, “in a meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee”, held on April 30, 2009, “Pakistan’s top military leaders resolved to support the government in showing ‘zero tolerance’ towards militancy in Malakand division” (Daily Times – Site Edition, 2009, May 1). Though the operation was in progress, Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani announced in a broadcast to the nation on May 7, 2009, fresh military operation against the Swat Taliban. This led to the military Operation Rah-e-Rast (Operation the Straight Path) in Swat. An Indian analyst, Brig Gurmeet Kanwal (retd) had already cautioned “the senior leadership of the Pakistan army”, in October 2008, that:

It needs to understand that artillery barrages and helicopter and air force bombings of civilian villages and towns are inherently counterproductive. The field commanders must be taught to discriminate between innocent civilians and armed combatants and must demonstrate concern for senior citizens, women and children instead of treating them with disdain. (Kanwal, 2008)

But in disregard for the aforementioned and to the dismay of the civilians, their fears and apprehensions proved true, as the security forces resorted to indiscriminate bombardments and shelling by jet aeroplanes, gunship helicopters and artillery and the use of force targeting also the civilians that caused great civilian casualties, destruction of houses, buildings and the infrastructure, and displacement of hundred of thousands of people bringing distresses to all the Swatis one way or the other.³⁴ Even at this critical juncture, the policy of containment and not elimination was followed. Ironically, the catastrophe and calamity brought forth to the land and people of Swat was not natural but man-made. And it is a pity that the federal and provincial governments and the security forces try to absolve themselves of the responsibility.

The government and the security forces claimed success and, in late July 2009, return of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) was allowed phase-wise.

³⁴ This destruction and displacement was at the hands of the government security forces that were duty-bound by all moral and legal standards to take care of the civilians and their properties at all costs, in such a situation as well.

The grip of the Taliban loosened, but the distresses of the civilians perpetuated due to the mass destruction brought forth to the land and people of Swat. Moreover, the security forces, on the whole, behaved and interacted with the civilians like foreign occupation forces and did not uphold local values and traditions.

Of the two main actors, i.e. the Taliban and the security forces, the Taliban seemed uprooted and, in the blackout of the free media coverage, the security forces and governments issued statements/news of their own likes. But, though, not visible on the streets, the Taliban have presence in other ways. Besides, the security forces' success might not be construed that the Taliban's ideology and mindset changed or faded away. The Taliban are defeated physically and made vulnerable but their ideology, mindset and ideals still remain.

Therefore, all the forces and actors—direct and indirect—need to behave sanely and address the core issues contributing to and preparing ground for the Taliban and militancy and generating support for them, and the security forces need to further reform their ways of interacting with the masses, so that Swat might not again be a flash point. Only presence of the security forces never suffices for the Taliban's permanent removal from the scene, and is never a guarantee of durable peace.³⁵

At the defeat of the Taliban, *lakhkars* (*lashkars*³⁶) and some *jargahs*³⁷ in the name of peace *jargahs* have been formed, by and at the behest of the army.

³⁵ As is evident from the Peshawar case, despite having been army cantonment in Peshawar and the permanent presence and abode of the army, the government and the army fortify even the cantonment by replacing the barbed fences and grills with tall walls and giving further height to the existing walls as well as further fences them by heavy sandy embankments. The attack in Rawalpindi's General Head Quarter (GHQ) and the army area mosque too is a testament. Even in Swat, despite the defeat and disappearance of the Taliban, the security forces entrenched themselves for their security; and instead of removing the barricades and the entrenchments around them, they increase and make them stronger and fortified like.

³⁶ *Lakhkar/Lashkar* has been a tribal force taking field against the opponents/enemy on their own, when needed for self defence, at owns' arms, ammunition and costs; and disperses home at the close of the fight. It neither is nor has the role of a permanent standing force. In the backdrop of the operations and security forces actions—in the post 2001 scenario—in both FATA and PATA, the *lakhkars*, on the whole, are not formed by the people at their own will. The civilians being forced or induced to form these *lakhkars*, for which material support and incentives in different shapes are

Lakhhkars and *jargahs* are symptom of tribal society and the last Swat *lakhhkar* (from Nikpi Khel area) took field against Buner in 1923. Although a tribal area constitutionally being part of PATA, Swat's society is not tribal by any standard. Swat is far advanced and has gone through the tribal stage of its life, in the growth of civilization. By forming these *lakhhkars* and the *jargahs*, the Swati society reverts at least seventy-eighty years back. Keeping in view the ingredients and traits of the society, these might lead towards more polarization, social upheaval, welter and factional feuds in a new way and manner. It is food for thought that what will be the long term implications of the *lakhhkars*' taking arms and of the *jargahs*' decisions and steps; which moreover put a number of questions. For example under what law of the country they have the authority to take arms and make such decisions (e.g. to exile people, burn houses and confiscate properties) in presence of a state, federal and provincial governments, and a number of institutions and departments; and what are the legitimate position of their actions, decisions and steps?

Moreover, the security forces compel the civilians to patrol and do watches (especially at night-time) and search operations against the Taliban. But it is not the duty of the civilians to patrol, do watches and protect them themselves (as they have to do agriculture, trade and other works and services). It is the responsibility of the security forces to do the patrols and watches, ensure smooth run of life and not only provide security and working environment to the civilians but also a sense of honour and a sound sleep, without anxiety. Forming the

also given, these *lakhhkars* neither have the essence and spirit nor the force and legitimacy of the traditional ones.

³⁷ *Jargah/Jarga* (erroneously written as *jirga*) is the traditional consultative institution and forum where matters of common interest and communal affairs are discussed and decided. In *jargahs* all the stakeholders are represented; all the attendants express their viewpoints and present their arguments freely; and the decisions are made by consensus or unanimously, after the deliberations. Therefore the decisions, made in such a manner, are abided by all and the violators become liable to the fine and punishments etc.

The *jargahs* formed in Swat in the post-Taliban scenario are devoid of these ingredients and characteristics. Not only these *jargahs* are manoeuvred, one way or the other, but the decisions made and pronounced by them are also manoeuvred. Hence their decisions also lack the essence and spirit as well as the force and legitimacy of the traditional one. In Swat *jargahs* have been faded away during the Swat State time.

lakhkars and *jargahs* in the post-Taliban scenario and also the patrolling and watches by the civilians are steps that reverts Swati society to tribalism that is not a positive and encouraging sign.

The resentment against the destruction caused by the security forces in the course of the operations, the delay in and not recording all the losses—great or small that have been caused to the civilians in the course of the operations—while assessing the damages (in 2009), not giving full compensation of the damages but announcing a uniform meagre sum of rupees 160,000 and 400,000 for partially and fully damaged buildings respectively, giving no compensation for the damages of the household items and other articles and crops etc., the manner in which some of the security forces personnel interact with the civilians, the hurdles for the civilians in the everyday life, having no respect for *chadar* and *chardiwari*—sanctity of veil and privacy of houses—especially at the times of the search operations, disregard for the local values and traditions, occupation of private residences and other buildings that compel the owners to reside elsewhere in rented houses and making no payment to the owners of such residences and buildings and their rough use grow underground mistrust, abhorrence and resentment against the security forces and governments.

Besides, the security forces ruthless cutting of the trees standing on the paths and road sides and also that standing in the fields and other places (all planted and reared with great labour, and a great asset not only of the people and land of Swat but also of the country and humanity at large) on the plea of security concern (this act of the security forces is also in violation of the Islamic laws of war as well as of the Environmental Protection Act 1997 under which Environmental Impact Assessment of such a step is mandatory); banning cultivation of certain crops like maize (a source of livelihood for many; and which is not only a cash crop but also a food grain and source of wet and dry fodder and fire-fuel) in certain areas; forcing the masses in certain areas to have security passes (issued by the army) and that too over their necks or chests and also to have a vehicle pass; a number of check-posts which create hurdles in the smooth running of life even after one and a half years of the defeat of the Taliban; the unannounced frequent curfews on the Saidu-Mingawara (Mingora) road; and the news of the target killings and of the militants encounters with the security forces are some of the other factors that are matter of concern for the civilians at large.

The aforementioned issues and factors might possibly spark, if the grievances are not spiritedly redressed; the issues and concerns of the people of the area are not properly addressed; and the reconstruction and developmental works are not truly done without much delay. These might preferably be done through the civil administration and the concerned departments so as to shift the responsibility to them and establish their writ.

Permanent Solution

Terming the Taliban, fanatics and rebels is justified by some standards, as H. G. Raverty points to, in the nineteenth century, sardonically, that “all are ‘fanatics,’ ‘rebels,’ or ‘dacoits,’ who fight against us according to some people” (Raverty, 1982, Vol. 1, p. 251 n.). But this never proves a durable solution.

Although the Swat Taliban have been defeated, dispersed and made vulnerable, they are neither completely uprooted nor their ideology and mindset changed. Their defeat and disappearance from the scene might not be construed as an erasure of their ideology, mindset and ideals. Therefore, bringing them back to the mainstream is imperative.

If talks with the Afghan Taliban are imperative for a political solution, as head of the UN mission in Afghanistan, Kai Eide said that “it’s ‘high time’ a political solution is found with the Taliban to resolve the more than 8-year-old conflict. ‘It is time to talk’,” (*The News International*, 2010, March 5; Daily Times – Site Edition, 2010, March 5) why not in Pakistan as well?

Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani also conceded in Peshawar, on March 4, 2010, while addressing members of NWFP PPP Parliamentary Party, that “military operation was no solution to terrorism and extremism” (*The News International*, 2010, March 5). He even told the National Assembly, on January 19, 2009, that “military operations are not a solution to all the problems in the Tribal Areas and Swat, and vowed to come up with a ‘political strategy’ to deal with the situation” (Daily Times – Site Edition, 2009, January 20); and while talking to journalists, on February 13, 2009, said that “a military operation is not the only solution to the Swat situation” (Daily Times – Site Edition, 2009, February 14).

Being citizens of the country, the Taliban needs to be brought back to the mainstream for which general amnesty might be announced, and workshops and courses for their debriefing are to be arranged and conducted. If not all, the majority of them can certainly be brought back to the mainstream and made peaceful citizens with minimal efforts, the precedents of which are found in Indonesia and Saudi Arabia.

Further complementary and essential steps needed for defusing the situation permanently are the implementation of Islamic laws and making the judicial system responsive, efficient and effective; addressing the core local issues contributing to the disaffection and unrest; the security forces friendly interaction with the people; strengthening the civil administration; and the withdrawal of the army phase-wise, in a year. Moreover, withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan and Iraq, and resolving the Kashmir and Palestine issues are also

imperative. This will subside, the jihadi organizations and defuse the anti-West and anti-America sentiments that are found among the masses.

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