

FATA: AT THE THRESHOLD OF CHANGE

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Abstract

Among various landmarks in the history of FATA, the British colonial phase in the Indian subcontinent is an important one. The description of British traveler historians about the land now known as FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas) in Pakistan has been highly derogatory presenting the Pukhtuns of FATA to the world as savages. About Waziristan, Lowell Thomas wrote:

'... thank God we are thousands of miles away from Waziristan, with its wolf-like inhabitants, its appalling and dirt, disease and sudden death. As we view it barrenness, its hellish temperatures, its cities filled with dust from afar, it comes back to us as the very navel of bedevilment. Surely the men who guard such plague-spots on Britain's "far-flung battle-line" deserve much gratitude from stay-at-home Englishmen; more, indeed, than they are likely to get'.¹

This abhorrent quote shows how an arrogant colonial mind could see the impassable and indomitable tribal areas on the north-western frontier of India. This paper is aimed at to see by comparison as to what has transformed there. The same Waziristan when seen through Google satellite in year 2013, shows to the world the recent episode in the series of devastation caused by invaders and the resistance offered to them by the proud inhabitants of the FATA, who have been bartering their freedom for blood since centuries.

Keywords: FATA, Waziristan, Pakhtuns, British colonial period, Pukhtunwali

Introduction

The colonial yoke, threat and source of conflict apparently were removed, and the people of FATA were assured independence in the state of Pakistan by the Father of the Nation, Muhammad Ali Jinnah. For next many decades the FATA belt was kept deprived of the status of settle districts and so no

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development was offered to its residents. Had it not been the policy of government and instead governance reforms were introduced some decades ago, the situation would have been different. The rule of political agent was extended to these areas even after 1947; Frontier Crimes Regulation of 1901 remained functional hence the colonial design of governance persisted. It is argued that instead of giving autocratic power to the political agents, who formed a nexus with 30,000 maliks, against some six million people of region, the establishment was required to set up institutions to establish the control of the government, to bring the region at par with the rest of the country. The bureaucracy is also said to itself against any such arrangement because it would amount to sacrificing its own interests.² As the aftermath of army intervention in 2004, the institution of political agent was also weakened and a state of uncertainty and 'normlessness' prevails. On the whole, it the 'lethal mix of primitive tribalism, religious conservatism and geographical proximity with Afghanistan, [but] another factor that has really contributed in shaping the present face of tribal areas is the lack of pro-people reforms in the region.'³

The FATA people, known for their love for arms and martial qualities, are today left without arms. They are provided protection by the army but inside they have no sure feeling of security. They have been uprooted but they are keen to settle down. Their present is in doldrums but they wish to see their future secure and bright. The tribal society which has been resisting and accepting change has now reached at a threshold where the chances of a rapid transformation have become unmistakably visible. This paper is based on analysis of evidences collected through primary and secondary sources that have come to support this argument. The assertion will be explained in this paper in three sections. The first section is about the history of transformation to highlight the significance of emergent change; the second one deals with the contours of change in FATA seen so far; and the third section outlines suggested patterns of action for realizing change and development in FATA as it is definitely at a threshold of change, it had never thought of before.

FATA: History of Transformation

The Pukhtuns have a proud history of religious identity, ethnic pride, well-kept genealogy, social dialectics defined by two strands of rivalry and cooperation, and a spirit to sacrifice and preserve life. True to their ideology of independence, they have developed the world known arms factories. The supply of rifles and arms managed by the local production has helped the tribal people to resist the unwanted change agents to take firm roots in their land. So resisting modernism with using a modern technology is a paradox unique to the Pakhtuns. About Pathan temperament Thomas wrote: 'The Pathan does not believe in industry. He believes in Allah, ... Therefore, the Pathan is well content and wiser, ... The Pathan does not envy the West [and] its machines. He does not want them, although he is ready to turn them to use if he can. [For them] progress is a disease of the West.'⁴ With this notion in mind, and seeing Darra Adam Khel

reputed for its industry of arms, there definitely has to be a different set of rules. Since this area is not under the control of any state rule, but tribes' unwritten law prevails.'

It was in fact Pukhtuns' spirit of adventure, exploration and assiduousness which broadened their worldview and gradually brought the factors of change to their doorstep. This dialectics has infused deep into the Pukhtun psyche, Pukhtun code of life, thoughts, actions, and strategies as would be shown in the following sections.

Tribal Feuds

The area has been ignored on all counts of development during the colonial times, except building of one or two roads hence it had stayed at the pre-colonial level of development. It was very natural as they were regarded the most ferocious enemy of the British. The history of conflict, ambush, conspiracies, tempting through money and favours had continued for about a century. The tribes had been weakening themselves due to both external and internal clashes. This has been a big source of their underdevelopment.

From their mud-houses, a highly warlike Pukhtun tribe, Afridis mostly residing in Khyber Agency, were found to 'emerge from time to time to carry on bitter feuds with neighbouring tribes...'. Such inter-tribal warfare was found 'fortunate' by the colonial mind to keep the Afridis busy fighting among the Pukhtuns.⁵ At the individual's level, tribal chiefs fight for titles, influence and power, even within the same ranks.⁶

They used to become united when faced by an external threat, and, when that was removed, started fighting with each other. So, unsurprisingly, the official reports in the 21st century confirm FATA to be the one of the poorest regions of country. The money offered to the leaders of the tribes for winning their favours and allegiance has been playing divisive and treacherous role as the *maliks* have been trying to seek goodwill of the ruling powers in the settled areas of India. They have fought endlessly and have remained divided in themselves deeply. Their generations have been paying revenge of follies committed by their forefathers in the most precious manner—with their blood. It has been the saddest part of the history of FATA that these fearless heroic people have been crushed with every rising tide of power both in their east and the west.

Jirga has been the Pukhtun council of elders which decides on disputes or matters of collective importance. The punishments given by *jirga* include burning the culprit's house or his expulsion from the area. So the Pukhtuns have been leaving their tribal areas to taste the modernizing world just round the corner, in the settled districts and big cities of the country. Tribal feuds still go on and, apart from killing people on both sides, prove a source of change for many individuals.

Sectarian Conflict

The FATA region is overwhelmingly Sunni (Hanifiite) Muslims whereas a considerable number of Shiite Muslims is found in Kurram Agency. The sectarian clash has been seen among Sunni and Shiites frequently in the past as well as the present.

Roads and Communication

It is said that the Pukhtuns resist anything which would bring government, and consequently subordination to it, to them. The road has been one such sure device. Afridis, the valiant guardians of historic Khyber Pass, have been resisting construction of road through their area. The colonial period taught the locals about the value of keeping the difficult and narrow passes of Khyber and Kohat open, accessible, protected and so they have been securing ‘muajib’⁷ for this favour. First they resisted building of roads and later they agreed to it, even took part in its construction, and enjoyed benefits of an all-weather road thereafter.

History tells that to preserve their independence and to allow the products of modern world into their own traditional world, they have been fighting for and against the roads. For instance, when the British rulers decided to build a pucca road through Kohat, it was highly resisted. Then the colonial rulers, who first tried tempting the locals with money, decided to use force in February 1850. Failed to establish their control, the British finally managed safe exit and an agreement to ensure safety of the mail passing through the area.⁸ Tribes’ internal conflict had been blocking roads as well, to handle which the British administration took political measures. The tribal politics had been maneuvered by colonial rulers on the issue of safe roads. There is a long history of battles, *jirga* meetings, agreements, violation of agreements, and conspiracies around a road (from Peshawar to Kohat) in the province from 1850 to 1899.⁹ Telegraph and telephone were also extended to the region of Afridis under an agreement with the tribesmen in 1923.

Protecting Motherland

Staying away from the civilized world by resisting the ‘road’ and then moving into the remotest corners of globe is a paradox of Pukhtun existence. The qualities of Pathans have also been admired by the British traveler historians. For instance, Thomas says:

The Finest of the Pathans, from a moral and a physical point of view (intellectually they have unknown possibilities), are the mountaineers who inhabit the unadministered zone between Afghanistan and India. Although these men raid down into India whenever the spirit moves them, no outsider can cross into their tribal territory, where the only law is that of knife and the rifle. Here they live their lives, sans schools, sans police, sans law-courts, sans taxes, free from the chains of civilization, and enjoying to the full the blessings of barbarism.¹⁰

The axiom of protecting the motherland is inherent in the philosophy of Pukhtuns who know that their independence can be preserved only in their own land. They know each nook and corner of their land, so they have been relentlessly attacking the enemy by successful ambush. This quality has, however, been defeated at the hands of hi-tech military surveillance and strike capacity, but this cannot change the traditional pride of the Pukhtuns about their piece of land or the motherland.

Religion

About the Pukhtuns in general and those of Dir, Swat and Bajour, in particular, the observation of McMahon and Ramsay, holds largely true. They reported in 1901 that the people are Muslims of Sunni sect, appear bigoted at first sight but their religion is 'little more than skin-deep' ¹¹. It was added that:

They are regular in their devotions and in their performances of the outward observances of the Mohammadan faith, and in these observances they are well kept up by their Mullahs and priests. The people as a whole are more superstitious than religious, and it is by playing on their superstitions that the priests are enabled to obtain an easy and effective hold over them. Nothing would be too absurd or improbable for them to believe if represented to them as the dream or vision of a religious personage. Priests and religious communities swarm throughout the country.... This is due to the existence of many famous shrines and to the superstitious weakness of the people, ¹²

Evidences of this blind-following are abundant in the history of the area. Both the religious sermons, as a matter of tradition and the extremist militancy, as a matter of modern practice, have defined the Pukhtun attitude towards religion and religious ideals. It is also held about them that: 'Notwithstanding their subjection to priestly influence, the people are not individually fanatical ... If left alone by their priests they would be an easy people to deal with, but their collective fanaticism when roused is almost incalculable.' ¹³ It can be seen in the events happening in the region even a century later that these qualities were playing their part when the clerics used their influence and tried to set up a parallel state, enforce Nizam-e-Mohammadi and involved people at a very large scale. Those who were not ready to comply were terrified, tortured and brutally killed. The history of the movement headed by Sufi Mohammad and later his son-in-law Fazalullah, provide irrefutable evidence to this fact. This individual and collective fanaticism had interplayed with the forces strengthened by the war in Afghanistan and later the US-led 'War on Terror'. In this process people who had their religion merely 'little more than skin-deep' were ferociously victimized whereas the state could not provide them effective security when they needed it most. This holds true for the whole region of FATA.

Development Scenario of FATA

1. Population

The people living in tribal system rely on strength in number of male members of the house in order to claim their share in the land distribution and supplying armed fighters for various security or warfare ventures. Son-preference, therefore, is very natural and inbuilt in the tribal social formation. The same is one big reason of population increase recorded in previous censuses. The pride and security in number of people in a blood-thirsty tribal system is obvious. Dislike for contraception has its roots in religious and patriarchal norms. Government's family planning programs were not extended to the tribal areas, though verbal commitments have been there until 2006. Low level of literacy, scattered population, difficult terrain, poor means of transportation and a staunch opposition on religious grounds have let population increase here faster than other parts of the country. Some more reasons are threats to life in series of revenge, poor quality of life, risks coming from extensive travel displacement, and exposure to nature.

2. Housing

In the backdrop of housing shortage in Pakistan the living standard and housing conditions are important indicator of development and change. Among the crucial indicators of quality of life in FATA, housing is also among the poorest ones alongside housing facilities such as water supply, kitchen, toilets, sanitation, etc. The construction material has been mostly brick and mortar for walls, wood and earth for roof and wood for doors and windows. Poverty has maintained the poor quality of housing. The tribal tradition of burning one's house as punishment indicates the construction material and the temporary nature of housing.

3. Poverty

FATA is the most underdeveloped region of Pakistan owing to lack of development infrastructure available elsewhere in the country. This poverty of resources has links with economy and demography. The economists have found that poverty rises among the households having: large size, high dependency ratio, female-headed nature; single-earner in urban areas; unemployment or underemployment, illiteracy head of the household and no/little livestock in rural areas. Small towns or villages have little means of employment, hence have more poor.

High IMR and maternal mortality rate show a synergic relationship with poverty. Hence controlling fertility is important. It was announced in 2007 that Family planning program will be introduced in the FATA. Wage transfer and remittances have no doubt supported the economic uplift of FATA people. Education and health are two important components of poverty-reducing strategy. The specific programs ongoing in the country are: lady health workers program

for family planning and primary health care, expanded program of immunization, nutrition program, TB and Malaria Control Program, HIV/AIDS program.¹⁴ The Social Action Programme started in 1992-93 and the recent MGDs have also not approached FATA to improve its conditions effectively and bring it at par with the rest of the country.

Education

Due to scattered nature of population, no paved roads and no felt need of education may be cited for poor condition of literacy and schools. The traditional source of learning—reading from a Quran teacher in the mosque or in his/her home—could have been exploited to spread functional literacy. The initial Islamic lesson of '*iqra*' (literal meaning 'read'), could have been popularized through the mosques and clerics. The leaders and elite have been sending their children to other cities, and abroad for better and higher education. The poor folk have remained illiterate or very poorly educated. Women are no doubt highly discriminated in this regard. Girls have been reported studying in the boys' schools at very young ages and they soon drop out as the school is meant for boys mainly. Such conditions show that FATA was no doubt bound to remain behind in basic indicators of development. The very hopeful signs now visible are widespread demand for girls' schools. If the security forces have promised a building and arranged at certain places tented schools in seriously affected areas it shows a positive response to the demand and aspirations of the people. It can be a dawn of new era in which girls' schools are provided wherever they are demanded. In fact, the task of reconstruction and rehabilitation must ensure provision of, as well as inducing a demand for new improved facilities.

Due to internecine feuds and perpetual conflict in the tribal areas, people could not go beyond religious education which was limited only to reading the Holy Quran in mosques or in rare cases at the home of some Quran teacher. This has happened for generations; even today girls are thought to be sufficiently educated if they learn reading Quran. For interpretation and implementation of religion in real life the tribesmen have been relying on the clerics who were held in great esteem. These interpreters have, therefore, had been shaping the social environment according to the clerics' own wishes and whims, and the spirit of 'jihad' had been infused in people. The British administration did not show any interest in educating the people of this region, rather it is said that British were afraid of them being educated. The number of schools opened in colonial period has been negligible as compared with those by the Government of Pakistan.¹⁵ The plight of education, however, can be described in the context of burning of hundreds of schools, threatening student to go to schools, and also intimidating the administration. In one such incident in South Waziristan Agency, where the terrorists occupied a school as they wanted to recruit young men for their ranks, so the local residents resisted. The police could not check the crime effectively and the terrorists took away the principle and his brother.¹⁶ Girls have been specially threatened and deprived of their right to school.

Health Facilities

The colonial period went with no concern for providing modern health facilities to the tribal people. It was only the folk wisdom and traditional healing techniques using local medicines for various diseases. Spiritual healing has also been very popular. These methods still hold true for a large part of FATA people today. For ordinary ailments people see the local *hakims*, and doctors, mostly not properly qualified. If they find a town nearby they go there. For complicated problems they go to big cities. Availability of transport is important in accessibility of health facilities along with the affordability. Women are treated more often by traditional healers and traditional birth attendants even if they develop complications.

Gender Issues

A folk says tells that ‘Love, lucre and land are the chief causes of blood-feuds among the wild tribesmen...’¹⁷ Traditional sources of feuds definitely have certainly revolved around these issues but here will be discussed only gender issues.

Pukhtun men have been practicing two systems of acquiring wives: bride-price and Islamic system of *mehr* (dower). Both have link with the status of women. It was true in the colonial times that a ‘wife costs only the price of a rifle or two camels; so, if she misbehaves she can be beaten or divorced or can have her nose cut off. Although the last punishment is not often resorted to, ...’¹⁸ One can see similar practices still in vogue. However, as reported by respondents, due to guidance of a religious leader, Syedzada, who was held in great esteem by people, the residents of a village of South Waziristan stopped taking ‘bride price’, as he explained people it as a savage custom suggesting ‘eating the flesh of your daughter’. The mullah has been reformatory in many ways, too. It was reported by respondents from North Waziristan Agency that the Taliban took away the arms from people, punished the criminals, and their terror was enough to root out such people from the area under their control.

Development Efforts by the Government

FATA a region ignored or left unattended regarding modernization in the pre- and post-colonial phases has left indelible mark on the history of development of the region. Soon after Partition Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah continued paying the *muajib* and allowances to the tribes. The government tried to set up schools, explore mineral wealth, and planned to establish industrial units in the area. To compensate the past neglect and especially to alleviate poverty, the government of Pakistan has established several institutions especially working for FATA.

A task force was set up to suggest administrative restructuring and development planning. Consequently on participatory methods FATA Development Authority was set up in 2006. Public-private partnership was

emphasized for the purpose of realizing development. A basic motive of the government behind such efforts was the understanding that poverty nurtures extremism, for which the youth was especially focused. Women's development plans and activities were also under way through Women Skill Development Centers.

For encouraging female education, the government in its Annual Development Program of 2007 announced giving Rs. 200 monthly stipend for girl students and a special allowance of Rs. 1000 for each female teacher of the backward areas.¹⁹ These measures tell about the challenge faced by women teachers and of getting girls to schools. It is an established fact, testified through interviews as well, that for girls if school is within safe distance they will be allowed. It is obvious in the fact that girls are sent to boys schools as well though near the age of ten they are usually withdrawn.

The government has also been trying to maintain law and order in the region for sustaining development efforts. As subsistence farming is the mainstay of the economy, the government has made seven big and two small dams in the area to supply water needed for irrigation.

Economic Development

The scatter of population visible on the map of FATA shows the challenge of getting messages and facilities within the reach of people. Road network is highly significant in bringing modernization to this region with a difficult terrain. Whatever roads are there, have been linking people to the outer world effectively. The people need even better road linkages because they have managed high tech transport themselves, out of non-custom paid vehicles available in the region and those got through earning remitted from other parts of the country and abroad at a very large scale. The resource-poor nature of the area has been in a way blessing for people, as they have been going out for economic reasons the most of all. They have been bringing in new experience, vision, wealth, modern life gadgets and a strong desire for change.

If at present the indicators of education, health, water and sanitation, family planning, and women's rights show that FATA stands far behind the rest of the country, it has to do a lot with the crippling features of the culture people have been living in. When a FATA person goes out for earning and comes back, he usually spends small time with his family and then goes back. For him the life is full of adventure, color and enjoyments along side hardships of earning and home-sickness. As long as the person keeps his family in the native village he can hardly think of daring the customs and norms that hinder overall development of the community.

Development and Governance

Like the variation in physical and ethnic features of FATA, the level of development also varies. Though there are no highly developed cities or towns in the region but those living at the remotest corners with minimal development

show that whatever is available in this comparatively developed region is very much valuable. If one region has access to mobile phones, TV and internet facilities, the others lying nearby, might have no such facility at all. Such an uneven access to means of uplift is itself highly discriminatory and puts question marks on the efficiency of the past regimes which did not bother to administer the area on equitable basis, because the political will has been missing at large.

The leadership of FATA also cannot be absolved of the responsibility to propose and push for planned change in FATA to bring it at par with other regions of the country. The representatives of the area have been sitting in the Senate and the National Assembly. Though they were not mostly chosen by direct vote but through an indirect system, the political system also needs to be revamped for making the people's representatives accountable to them.

The social psychological aspects of tribal society are critical in determining the nature of conflict within the society. The tribal warfare has been reported at various levels: inter-tribal, intra-tribal, inter-sectarian, intra-sectarian, within the family, among brothers, cousins, wives, etc. The mullah was found issuing edicts to prohibit all interest-based private loan related transactions in the whole province.²⁰ It shows that the issues the Muslim governments could not resolve in centuries were decided summarily discarding all the differences of opinion on it.

The government is responsible for human security first of all. But in FATA *rod kahi* still plays havoc with the lives of people. The traditional *jirgas* still give punishments of primitive nature such as house-burning. Feuds are alive between tribes²¹, religious groups and the series of revenge goes on unscrupulously. Sectarian violence²² or low-intensity conflict has been on since the 20th century.²³ All these are issues of governance and development.

Survey Findings

A survey was conducted with 30 residents of FATA all of them not residing in FATA at the time of survey. Some have their families or relatives in FATA living now. One respondent has just taken his family back in the very troubled locality of South Waziristan in the hope to resettle there, get compensation for damage and re-start their life again with fields and gardens. Now they are trying to manage their life with the help of security forces. There are many who shuttle to FATA and a few of them have permanently shifted to Karachi because of the ongoing conflict. There were some who were working abroad but have home in FATA. All of the respondents have very close link with FATA, has lived there for long and most of them hope to return to it whenever they would feel it is feasible. Female respondents have revealed a very different picture of life and in this way it proved useful to include them. Men mostly and women rarely could understand conversation in Urdu but had Pushto as their mother-tongue, so the language of their convenience was used for interview.

Mostly it was face to face interview, except a small proportion in which telephonic and internet communication helped.

A very slow pace of change nowadays in the world's highly vulnerable and volatile region had dictated a life style which was commensurate with the traditional style of law and governance, code of ethics, and a fellow feeling for all the tribesmen shown by *malmastia*. No doubt, there were feuds, personal rivalries, collective conflicts, too, but those were not at that great a scale as one can see in the years after turn of the 21st century. To mention here 'slow pace' is meant to contrast it with the disruption caused by war in the region, displacement due to many reasons out of control of the residents. The abrupt changes are the greatest factors of change in the present day and future life of the FATA people.

This argument is based on the data collected through in-depth interviews with families who have migrated due to conflict in their native areas in FATA to elsewhere. No matter what form the conflict in the region takes place in future, the conflict-induced dislocation and migration is going to be the major event in the life history of the people who have experienced it. The detailed argument follows:

Initial isolation of FATA had many geographical, historical, administrative and cultural reasons. The very difficult terrain has caused inaccessibility. Unpaved roads, highly scattered population, assertion on independence and self-rule, have been the major reasons to leave FATA in an isolated, self-sufficient or self-contained situation. This isolation, however, has been dotted with visits to the outer world mostly for economic pursuits. Women have been much more isolated than the men.

Self-contented nature of the FATA society has made it enjoyable for its people. They had expressed immeasurable happiness and peace in life. Elders, youth, children, women and men all were engaged in their traditionally assigned roles and the system was in a state of equilibrium and harmony by and large. People shared joys and sorrows, played games, had elders' company to have guidance and *jirga* rules doing justice. Money was no big issue; whatever was available was enough to make people content and life was going on. People led simple life, had respect and sympathy for others, even they were to sacrifice their lives for fellow folk. They sought and offered such help unconditionally, as it was to enhance tribal unity and fraternity nurtured by the tribal pride, humanity and ethical values. 'The love and affection of my childhood days is no more there. Now we pity ourselves for losing that.'

After going through the trouble of leaving home under pressure, being asset-less in the new destination, a state of anxiety, uncertainty and threat to life and honour have been troubling the people so much so that their earlier habit of helping others selflessly is withering away. Economic insecurity or dependence on relatives, acquaintances or philanthropists, have been some other sources of tortures. Self-centeredness has gone up. Women have gone under more severe

confinement. Now people are more concerned about economic issues. Economic constraints and pressure for adjustment has changed psyche of the displaced people. Unemployment and unsteady income, challenge of managing all household needs at the new place, utility bills, house rent, all have been repeatedly troubling the displaced people.

The tribal economy has been dependent on many sources:

1. Agriculture, depending upon the topography, fertility of land, availability of water, and temperature. The limited land available for cultivation has made most of the people to grow food crops for domestic and local consumption.
2. Livestock provides a good source of food, dairy and meat products and assets. Those living on herding have flocks in number exceeding 100. They mostly graze such animals away from the community and nearby land as this would deteriorate the local pastures and villagers having a small number of goats, sheep, cows, or draft animal, would then face difficulty.
3. Those who can find jobs across the border try to maintain that even under difficult conditions. These days Afghanistan has offered better payment to the workers from Pakistan due to the dollars disbursed to them. Thus wages have gone up and people see working in nearby Afghan towns as good as in Dubai or Europe. The trend is not checked rather has increased.
4. Working in other parts of the country and abroad is another option widely used by tribal area people. Remittances, therefore, are a big source of sustenance, development and contentment even in resource-poor FATA areas.
5. The push and pull factors, mentioned above, have been instrumental in exposing people to modern way of life and giving them a desire for becoming modern, too.
6. Those who have no skills, no money to move out, or no exposure to the outer world, are the ones under distress conditions these days if they have to leave the area or their livelihood means are destroyed.

Marriage Preference

People marry usually in young age; there are cases of polygamy as well, and joint families hold dozens of children in the villages. It was found that the system of marriage is flexible, as in other parts of the country. The foremost preference is for the close relatives, and blood relations, but the extended family and '*dala*' (tribal branch) are considered first. As regards marriage by one's own choice, it is gradually accepted under changed conditions. Marrying in non-relatives is gaining currency, therefore. Even females are now given more freedom as the past about asserting their choice and this is accommodated within the family to show as if it is choice of the family, too. There are isolated events of eloping as well if not allowed by the family.

Analysis

Major Features of Change in FATA

The impact and intensity of the thrust of change is not invariable; rather it is different for different socioeconomic segments of the FATA population even within the same community. Due to variable degrees of ability to absorb shock of the conflict and displacement, the people had to chalk out their strategy or reaction according to their linkages with the outer world depending upon its willingness to cushion the effects. Therefore, some shifted to the nearby towns mostly in the initial stage in hope of things settling soon. Later, on due to disappointment, some of them shifted to far away places as well. People have expressed various mental health issues; the foremost being homesickness and the feeling of alienation. The shock of being deprived of their gardens, open fields, springs and mountains, home and hearth, in short 'own paradise', have caused nostalgia, irritation and dementia. Old persons are especially in great pain. A woman shouts, 'Go and see my cow would be coming home in the evening...' Another goes, 'God, do not give me paradise; just get me back to my village'. Physical fitness is also reduced due to lack of physical mobility by these new city-dwellers that were used to walk for miles in daily routine. New places are largely not conducive to continue the old tribal norms, customs and patterns of social interaction, thus these are fading out in the migrant population. Any prolonged detachment from their home towns would definitely distort the spirit, message and 'function' of the traditions and customary practices of tribal areas.

The Future Track of Change

Discussion on different actors of change, which can be instrumental to transform the FATA society, is summarized as follows:

1. Political conditions, conflict and governance: The geography and economy are no doubt very important for change, but in the context of conditions prevailing in FATA today, one would find the most important and relevant issue as that of governance. A participatory and egalitarian government can gradually cultivate and establish democratic norms among the people who have been operating *jirgas* on democratic principles since centuries. The institution of *malik* and political agents needs to be revised or transformed according to the demands of new age. A representative government can be more effective in winning support of the people in controlling the local and internationally sponsored terrorism in the FATA belt. Residents there have developed mix feelings, from satisfaction to outright rejection and complaining about losses incurred during the efforts to control people supporting violence, in order to establish writ of the state. Peace committees can be mobilized, and extremists can be differentiated from the common innocent people.

2. Religion: Religion is regarded as a strong force of preservation of traditions, and in the meantime, it also provides incentives for change and struggle. In the case of FATA, religion has contributed significantly both in keeping traditional religious fundamentals intact and also in initiating change. Ahmed has highlighted role of ‘mullah’ in Waziristan, when it rose to power and challenged the established authority of local tribal chiefs (*maliks*) and the political agents representing the government in Islamabad. His explanation show how the role of ‘mullah’ is interlinked with the interests of the Islamist political parties, and how the provincial and national politics was turned in their favour, speedily. The mullah was in fact ‘enmeshed, in the purposes of several wider interests in Pakistan.²⁴ The role of *madaris* have been widely debated regarding promoting religious education, literacy, as well as obscurantism and fanaticism among a wider section of population as their enrolment has been rising since the 1980s, a decade of boom for these seminaries. However, an observation about role of *madaris* in the tribal region is worth-noting. It holds that the seminaries have brought technology, sophistication, grace, elaboration and the awe around the institution of religion among people who were not even willing for boy’s education. The propaganda technology used by *madaris* has been adopted for political purpose as well. Technology, electricity and connection with wider networks broadened the horizon of people even in the remote tribal areas. All this had the legitimacy, inspiration and enjoyment of religion as well.

Much has been written about the impact/change in the tribal region ensued by the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, war and then its withdrawal. Robinson’s observation is much pertinent here. He believes that ‘the Mullah’s movement was not a one-off event but a manifestation of longer term tensions and structural changes on the Frontier, in particular a decline of order and authority.²⁵ He finds that:

... the old mechanisms for maintaining law and order – respect for old tribal leaders, the authority of the tribal *jirga*, and the code of Pukhtunwali – are breaking down and are not being satisfactorily replaced by the machinery of the state. Tribesmen are now involved in kidnapping and hijacking, not for political purposes as in the past but for economic ones. They are also much involved in the trade in arms and drugs. The North-West Frontier ... is not unique in the breakdown of the underpinnings of order and the failure of the state to replace them with new ones. This is a problem of much of Pakistan.²⁶

In year 2013, this breakdown of law and order and social fabric in a wider sense could be seen in the tribal region, after prolonged militancy and military operations in certain tribal areas to control the militants and terrorists getting

support from across the border as well as from inside the country. The situation of the region is very complex in that it is not simply an Islamist movement, not only any terrorist activity rather it has wider local to international repercussions.

One can imagine that in a state of weakening of Pukhtunwali and the traditional religious elite, the two strongest normative structures of control are fading out. The process of change now finds less resistance from such deep-entrenched bastions of morality of community feeling. In this molten phase it can be predicted that the Pukhtun society of FATA can be diverted to an enlightened path, in which religion takes its place as a supreme guide but allows people participation in the modern world in a more modern way than ever before. It must be a path where the FATA residents are better aware of the benefit of modern secular education, contraception, polio vaccine, and genuine development of human resources as they have seen outside the FATA belt. Undoubtedly, in the recent past in FATA, religion has been hampering a shift towards modernization due to imposed role of religious lobbies. The people need to know that the religion does not circumscribes all the activities of humanity, and the mullah cannot be a source of 'comprehensive guidance' in all aspects of life.

Cultural Conditions

'Pukhtunwali', the Pakhtun code of ethics, social and cultural behavior and discipline in life, is the one kept proudly dear by all the Pukhtuns, universally. In fact, this was identified as the 'real religion of the people'.²⁷ Those who adopt the identity of being 'Pukhtun' act upon 'Pukhto'.²⁸ It is said:

Pokhtan kho agha pokhtan they chi akhpal gherat wadri gi.

Translation: (Pathan is the only one who has the sense of honour (ghairat).

It is said that various tribes, *khels* and *phalis* of Pukhtuns, might be different in disposition but they will die for preserving their Pukhtunwali, indicating that its inherent meanings are same across the board, despite other variations of objectives, customs, and temperaments.²⁹ Its main pillars according to Akbar S. Ahmed are *malmastia*, *jirga*, *tarboor*, *nang*, *tor*,³⁰ *nanawati*, along with other numerous supplementary rules.³¹

This guiding set of principles outlining Pukhtun worldview has served as a binding force, and a defense against any threat to the integrity of Pukhtun identity, unity and rallying spirit. Another important factor to see is the role of media in society in this age of information revolution. It can transform miraculously. 'Media institutions are crucial for political stability and progress. It is generally accepted that, among other functions, media encourage and disseminate diverse opinions and views, and promote national consciousness'.³² Media can bring and beat cultural hegemony and imperialism, depending upon the mindset of people who run it. It can enlighten the minds and impose fundamentalism as well.

Literacy and Education

The little amount of education provided to tribal people had helped them be familiar with religion, and if those who got functional literacy, were able to do some low-paid job in modern sector of the economy. The better-off tribal families have been affording sending their children for higher studies to national and international cities. These persons, when interviewed, have expressed their love for their homeland, hope for its future, and hatred for those who come to ruin it. Even today, they say, 'There is very little trouble in our area; it is only a few events of terrorism or an uncanny fear of drone; otherwise FATA is as safe as any other place in the country.' Rather these respondents mentioned that 'FATA is much safer place than Karachi, Quetta, or Peshawar.' This unconditional view of educated enlightened people of the area is a sign of hope that they would work for its betterment as well. It has been unfortunate that the educated section of population has been working in other parts of the country or abroad due to lack of attractive jobs near home. In that case FATA has become for many only a distant ancestor's place of residence, or a place to spend summer vacations or a hill station to spend Ramdhan of summer.

The class-specific access to education is an unfortunate aspect of deprivation. Still today, the only source of literacy and education in many parts of FATA is mosque or religious seminary, girls go to some Quran teacher, and in few cases to boy's school, the rare privilege for those young souls living in remote inaccessible mountainous settlements or belonging to the peasants, shepherds, and woodcutters, etc. No doubt, these occupational groups working in remote tracts do not have access to schools in rest of the country, too, but this very fact does not legitimize their deprivation anyway.

Transport

Tribal areas might have maintained their posture of '*ilaqa-e-ghair*' (no-man's land) or unsettled areas but their people have been leaving or shuttling to this region so frequently that the settled areas seem to have appealed them more than FATA, at least to a number of them, who have settled out of it. This is a proof of integration of FATA with the rest of the country that before and after the Partition 'the tribesmen have been descending at a rapid rate into the Settled Areas'. So half of the Mohmand live in Mardan and Peshawar districts, Wazirs in Bannu, Mehsud in Tank, Afridis in Peshawar, and, Orakzais are found in Hangu.³³ The Pukhtuns are well known people in the field of transport throughout length and breadth of Pakistan. They get non-custom-paid vehicles in the tribal areas and then use them within the FATA region, a fact which shows that a good deal of transport facility has been assured by this arrangement. However, when compared with the latest situation in South Waziristan where army has got control, it is distribution of donkeys by the Pakistan Army to facilitate people's bringing water, food or necessary supplies food from distance.

Civil Society

As the spirit of the age tells, this is the age of state's fading out and alternative, non-state, non-governmental, or civil society organization replacing it. This replacement has very glaringly happened in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and its FATA belt. In fact, FATA was more readily available to allow the civil society organizations (CSOs), gaining hold due to little bureaucratic hold and nascent population ready to receive help, guidance or whatever the CSOs could offer. It was soon after the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan and exodus of refugees to Pakistan to support which the world community responded. The CSOs had their multifarious objectives, as the research has shown, from rehabilitation, humanitarian assistance, and development, to ideological and strategic ones. The molten situation provided a fertile ground to experiment and disburse philanthropy as well. There were branches of international relief agencies, UN agencies, Islamist groups, national and local NGOs, all rushing to help the refugees and war-torn Afghanistan, apparently. A few of those with unacceptable objectives were banned as well. This shows that the land and the people were befooled in the name of help. The funds apparently secured people in distress were used for recruiting *jihadis* (Islamic fighters) or serving the interest of stakeholders. The CSOs earned bad name as well despite doing a huge amount of untiring work for decades. The politicization of development efforts has its close linkages with the money received from Islamist and philanthropists around the world as well as the international interests. One can still find many CSOs working in the province, and FATA as an extension of it, belonging to major donor countries. The composition of NATO force in Afghanistan and that of civil society organizations in FATA has good resemblance. If the USAID has interest in spreading modern education, the Bill Gates' foundation is highly concerned about eradication of polio in Pakistan, more so in FATA, hopefully, since this belt has shown a great deal of resistance to the campaign lately. Some organizations operate from Pakistan but cover the area of Afghanistan as well, due to problems of logistics and political uncertainty there. A large number of *jihadi* and terrorist networks are also operating in the FATA, its two border countries, as well as in the region covering Central Asia, South Asia, Middle East, and as the post-Arab-spring situation shows, these networks are not isolated; many have their ideological, moral and practical supporters and international forces at their back. This whole mess of stakeholders has made the situation of FATA highly complex in terms of understanding it, and then sorting out a strategy of planned or unplanned change. However, there would be a good number of CSOs to support pro-people initiatives in FATA. Many such are manned by FATA people themselves.

At the national and local levels, there operate many CSOs which are a sign of hope for a bright future. There are lawyers and journalists' forums especially with FATA identity. There are groups/networks operating online and a good amount of activity focused upon the state of affairs in FATA these days.

Media

The role of media in changing a slowly progressing society is very crucial. One can imagine the pace of change in a society by looking at the pace of information exchange in that society. It is held by Gupta that: 'Media forms a society's outlook, if its impact is positive and media accomplished its task and responsibilities in an outstanding manner and guides the new generations by imparting knowledge and awareness then the society has greater chances of being a pluralistic, just and democratic society. On the other hand, negative impacts of media might intensify hatred leading to violence and bloodshed forming all brutal conflicts.'³⁴

The official and national media coverage in FATA is not universal but it is the acumen of its residents that they have been using a variety of sources to propagate and receive their messages. The obstruction of mountainous terrain can be beaten only by establishing small range stations. The Pukhtun genius never lives behinds. In 2007, it was reported that there were at least 23 FM channels in lower Dir run by clerics, defunct organizations and Afghan refugees were all active in this matter to their respective audience.³⁵ The message is not only sent, but made to be received, and complied as well by force, as was seen in Swat. The technological capability of adaptation is at its best in FATA. There were 10 such radio stations in Malakand Agency, along with many others in Bajour and adjacent tribal areas. The government of MMA was reported to be not interested in controlling their anti-state activities. The device was so cheap; just Pak Rupees 5000 for a radius of four to five kilometers, as one owner of an FM station told. This power of media can be utilized for driving modernity as well. It is held that: 'The media themselves form part and parcel of modernity, hence, various cultural responses/expressions ... are at the same time reactions to the general, economic and technological modernization process and to the media as such.'³⁶ The people have been using solar stations for electricity is not provided by the government, so they deserve the best of modern facilities like any other part of Pakistan. They have the urge and the capability to adopt modernity.

Women in Development

Women have been the most neglected section in terms of development. So they have the greatest stake in any development offer to the area. As regards the fact that how receptive they would be, is a matter of concern. Women have been kept in most parts of FATA in protection, under strict watch, subordination and oppression in the name of traditions, honour, purdah, religion, and whatsoever. Undoubtedly, this legitimacy of traditions is under threat, and the women who have seen the modern world around even through their *perforated* veils, or inquisitive eyes, in their occasional visits, or through the TV, would not stop so easily. This awareness and consciousness, though acquired through forced migration, conflict-related displacement or voluntary exodus to safer places, all is very valuable in terms of giving them the urge to change. Moreover, whatever little amount of literacy and education they get, opens a door of information, and,

therefore, a stimulus for improvement, to women. This new consciousness is very precious, if compared with what the researcher found in a survey conducted in 2006 with women of FATA. They did not have even the idea or knowledge about their *meher* (dower), and heard the word ‘divorce’; those who knew it were so much afraid of it as an unbearable stigma. If allowed to express and act freely, women would be willing torchbearers of change in FATA.

Conclusion

It has been the travel experience of the Pukhtuns of FATA first of all and the international war the last, the two most crucial factors which have brought change to the doorsteps of FATA people. There were primitive institutions resisting change along with an endless enterprising spirit which kept the society changing throughout in at least last five centuries. There is not everything bad with the primitiveness and not all good with the modernity, which have been knocking the former steadily out. All the virtuous aspects of Pukhtunwali need to be preserved, no matter what the cost, as these endorse the human dignity inherent in it. Sadly, this code is also succumbing to certain brutal forces of change from outside the system. When Thomas commented, ‘Their hearts are always in their hills, and hither they return,’³⁷ he could not predict how much water would have gone down the stream and how drastically their homes and hearths would have been transformed at the hands of international war on terror in the early 21st century, in the interval between their leaving homes under threat and coming back to collect the rubble. Nonetheless, one thing is for certain, the Pukhtun spirit would not accept this change in its totality.

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