



# **ISLAMABAD POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE**

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **“Mainstreaming of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tribal Districts (KPTD), formerly FATA, into National/Political Architecture: Challenges and Solutions”**

&

### **“Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Concerns, Reservations and Aspirations: Mainstreaming GB”**



- The biggest issue in mainstreaming Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tribal Districts (KPTD) into the national/political architecture is implementation on the ground. Rebuilding of damaged infrastructure needs to be completed on priority basis.
- Awareness among policy-makers regarding local sensitivities and culture are need of the hour, as well as exhaustive consultations with the local population.
- Majority of FATA inhabitants are dependent on farming, therefore, channelizing water for agriculture in the form of small dams, is needed.
- More than cross-border trade, strict border management over the short- to medium term is more pressing in order to deny cross-border movement of terrorists as the ongoing period of consolidation in FATA, does not warrant any new phenomena of terrorist incursions from Afghanistan. After strict border management mechanism is fully operational, the available trade corridors through Khyber and Wana may be optimally utilized for trade diversification.
- The Western route of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), joining Gwadar-Quetta-Zhob-Ol Khan-Peshawar- Islamabad is ideal for integrating FATA areas. Therefore, FATA should be integrated into this project for speedy development.
- Special Economic Zones (SEZs) must cater to the development needs of FATA and planned in a way to benefit this region through special incentives.

These were a few of the recommendations put forward by speakers during the first part of the IPRI National Dialogue Series roundtable on “Mainstreaming of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tribal Districts (KPTD), formerly FATA, into National/Political Architecture: Challenges and Solutions” organised by the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI), here in Islamabad today.



Delivering his keynote address to diplomats, bureaucrats, students and journalists, former Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan **Mr Owais Ahmed Ghani** provided a detailed overview of the FATA region from the international national and local dimensions. He said that the international dimension has remained dominated by the geopolitical interests of competing nation-states turning the Hindukush into a geopolitical faultline. ‘US-China competition for dominance in 21<sup>st</sup> Century is the latest phase of the

Great Game with Pakistan forced to play the same game by the same rules. Policies and actions of the US, the world’s biggest hegemon, will decide the future course of South Asia geopolitics’, he said. Mr Ghani remarked that the unstated US objectives are to ‘keep the region in chaos and acquire permanent bases on the pretext of terrorism; destabilize/weaken/de-nuclearise Pakistan (on USSR pattern)’. He predicted that due to such a US policy, ‘Fifth Generation/hybrid war under the US-India axis against Pakistan will continue; and FATA, GB & Balochistan regions will be main targets of subversion by hostile external powers & their agencies.’ He lamented that such policies have had and will continue to have deep impacts on Pakistan, particularly in the tribal regions with societal polarization between Westernised liberal-secularists and religious-conservative elements; rise of Shia-Sunni sectarian militancy spillover into Pakistan of warlordism, *Jihadi Tanzeems*, terrorism, and rise of mafia-like gangs’. He pointed out that while national cohesion has improved and tribal populations progressively integrated into Pakistani society with significant economic interests throughout the country, ‘there remain significant administrative systems anomalies and so-called Special Areas need urgent attention.’ He recommended that instead of doing things in haste, incremental step-by-step approach is needed which consists of continuous & extensive consultation with FATA residents. He called for implementing improved administrative & judicial systems to eliminate their current shortcomings; close coordination between administrative, political & military set-up; and detailed homework on administration & judicial systems, as well as targeting easier areas for reforms first, followed by difficult ones.



In the session ‘*Mainstreaming of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tribal Districts (KPTD), formerly FATA, into National/Political Architecture: Challenges and Solutions*’ moderated by Ambassador (R) Inamul Haq, **Dr Sohail Shehzad**, Professor, Khyber Law College, University of Peshawar discussed ‘Tribalism and Rewaj and Proposed Rule of Law Reforms in KPTD: Challenges in Transforming Traditional Institutions into Formal Justice Institutions.’ He said given the practice of Rewaj over decades, the tribal areas are not attuned to formal state structures, especially legal systems of

justice. ‘Implementing formal legal systems will be a challenge for the state. Transition will also be critical, especially in terms of past decisions taken under Rewaj vis-a-vis women’s rights, land rights and inheritance etc. that will need to be respected and upheld.



**Dr Waseem Ishaque**, Assistant Professor from the National Defence University pointed out that security and development are complimentary and both have to be pursued concurrently. He was of the view that the internal and external security environments of FATA are very important and need to be stabilized at all cost before any meaningful socioeconomic undertakings. He recommended that a comprehensive security architecture has to be evolved by merging loose security components of Levies, Khasadars and Frontier constabulary, which are efficient; but need to be converted into a formidable policing force, by regroupings and

reorganization- capitalizing upon their strengths and capacity building. Similarly, a separate package for capacity building of Frontier Corps is needed, if mainstreaming has to become a reality within envisaged timeframe of five years.’ Dr Ishaque also stressed that while remaining within the bounds of tribal culture, comprehensive land reforms must be undertaken with complete concurrence of locals. Special allocation in the National Finance Commission for FATA development should also be made, and allied countries approached for enhanced developmental activities in sectors like health, education and infrastructure development. ‘Just as the entire nation was united in rooting out the menace of terrorism on war footings, in similar fashion, the whole government and whole-of-nation approach is required for fulfilling FATA’s developmental needs’, he concluded.

**Mr Mohammad Amir Rana**, Director of the Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies (PIPS) shared the perceptions of the people of FATA about the proposed reforms, merger, military operations and rehabilitation programs in their areas. He said that while the majority of the local population is in favor of the merger with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, there is growing resentment among many people about the pace of the rehabilitation and reconstruction activities; large number of security checkpoints, complete Internet blackout, and high cost of new infrastructure constructed etc. He was of the view that the government should have started the process of mainstreaming by focusing on the ‘softer’ issues first which deal with the day-to-day affairs of the people, rather than opting for the ‘hard’ security and judicial restructuring first.



**Dr Syed Adnan Ali Shah Bukhari**, Consultant at IPRI discussed ‘Security Sector Reforms in KPTDs: Internal & External Security Challenges’. His presentation looked at the law enforcement agencies and the various security institutions in former FATA; proposed Security Sector Reforms (SSR) in KPTDs; internal challenges & external threats; national and regional initiatives to overcome external challenges. He highlighted that internally, the terror threat remains high in spite of the military operations. He also pointed out lack of development funds and bureaucratic bottlenecks in the reconstruction and

rehabilitation process. Regarding the external environment, he was of the view that Afghanistan remains a major source of concern for Pakistan’s tribal belt due to terrorist sanctuaries, hostile

agencies, illegal migration, and criminal syndicates. ‘KPTDs are “soft underbelly” of Pakistan; and there is need for expeditious implementation of SSR to avoid a conflict trap. For this, it is important to create awareness about benefits of SSR among KPTD’s inhabitants,’ he concluded.

Earlier welcoming the speakers, Acting President IPRI Brig. (R) Mehboob Qadir outlined the vision behind IPRI’s National Dialogue Series, an initiative spread over two years to dilate upon matters of national importance and intended to come up with broad contours of a national narrative. He said that though FATA had largely remained peaceful since the inception of Pakistan in 1947, the ingredients of a less ungoverned space were inherently present in the shape of colonial-era administrative, constitutional, political and socioeconomic makeup of the region. ‘This coupled with external influences, most notably the chaos and anarchy in Afghanistan, had the evil effect of converting FATA into a “no-go” area for the Pakistani state and act as a source of instability for Pakistan and the region. Therefore, it was decided by the government a few years ago to introduce wide-ranging reforms in the realm of constitutional, administrative, political, socio-economic and security, to ensure sustainability of state intervention, and remove the causes of violence and anarchy bedeviling the FATA region. A major step in this regard was taken in May 2018, when the government merged FATA with the adjoining Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province (KP) and announced the extension of state institutions into the newly-merged Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tribal Districts (KPTDs). ‘This is proving to be easier said than done because FATA faces replacement of existing archaic institutions with modern state institutions.’

The session on FATA concluded that while the ongoing military operations have dislodged Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in most parts of FATA, bringing relative peace to the region, however, there is concern, that the militants could stage a comeback/once the military leaves the region. In this backdrop and despite all odds, the people of FATA have demonstrated utmost nationalism, by denying space and supporting the security forces in rooting out the terrorists at a very heavy cost. They all deserve the nation’s appreciation, unstinted support and continuous efforts in rehabilitation activities.

