

The FATA Conundrum: A Case Study of Pak-Afghan Border

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Abstract

Historically, the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) of Pakistan has been of great strategic, geographical, economic and political importance, capturing the attention of the region as well as the international community at large. It has been most vulnerable to the events in neighbouring Afghanistan, particularly. Events such as, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, 9/11 and current unrest have played a detrimental role in the area. Additionally, overlapping and prolonged socio-ethnic, geographic and religious attachment of both Pakistan and Afghanistan, has been mostly dominated by the mistrust and policy of non-cooperation by both the states. The involvement of superpowers, regional players and their interests have further complicated the situation, which has led to the radicalization of the area. As a result, terrorism has been able to flourish in FATA in particular across the border and in the region as a whole. With changing regional dynamics in terms of FATA's merger in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province of Pakistan in 2019, and rise of new terrorist groups like the Islamic State (IS) in

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Afghanistan, which poses a threat to the region, Pakistan and Afghanistan in particular it is imperative that both Pakistan and Afghanistan work collectively to secure their borders and the region from the escalating threat.

Key words: Transnational Terrorism, FATA Militancy, Administrative Measures.

Introduction

Since times immemorial, the areas that now constitute the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) of Pakistan has been a region of great strategic, geographical, economic and political importance, capturing the attention of the region as well as the international community at large. Located next to Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkwa province on one side and straddling along the Pak – Afghan border in the west, FATA covers an area of 27,220 sq. km and is home to the *Pashtun* ethnic population comprising of about 5.002 million.²

FATA comprises of seven administrative areas, which are referred to as agencies; North and South Waziristan, Kurram, Orakzai, Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, and six smaller settled districts known as, frontier regions (FRs) (Kohat, Tank, LakkiMarwat, Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan, and Peshawar).

During the British rule over the Indian Sub-continent, FATA was a part of British India. It was administered through a set of laws

²"Physical Features and Climate," FATA Secretariat Website, available at: <http://fata.gov.pk> (Accessed on March 9, 2018).