



***“Interests of FATA’s people at the core of
National policy and plans.”***

**(Sardar Mehtab Ahmed Khan Abbasi,
Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa)**

**Brief record of the Seminar titled ‘FATA:
Stability, Integration and Reconstruction’**

August 04, 2015





The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), hosted a one day seminar on 'FATA: Stability, Integration and Reconstruction,' on August 4, 2015. Welcoming the Chief Guest, Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sardar Mahtab Ahmed Khan Abbasi, the Director General Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad Ambassador Masood Khan, said that FATA is the keystone of our national security. Paying tribute to the Governor, he said that he has been the custodian of the interests of the people of FATA. He said that FATA is facing myriad of security, political representation, economic development, reconstruction and repatriation, and rehabilitation. He said that Zarb-e-Azb operations have had many successes, and militants have been neutralized or pushed back. But, he said the fight is by no means over. The enemy is striking from within and without. Right now one of the top priorities of the State of Pakistan is to end the fight in the territory of FATA and to pave the way of economic growth and prosperity of FATA.



This was followed by the inaugural address of the Governor, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sardar Mahtab Ahmed Khan Abbasi. In his inaugural address, Governor, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sardar Mahtab Ahmed Khan Abbasi highlighted the importance of stability, integration and reconstruction in FATA, and said that the process of stability; integration and reconstruction are co-related and are simultaneous on the path of progress. While shedding light on reconstruction he said that, in FATA reconstruction not only means rebuilding the damaged public sector infrastructure but also the private property as well as the livelihoods of the people of FATA. It also entails rehabilitation with all the facilities and services that are in a dilapidated condition. In addition, he said, it also included means to improve the technical aspects and scope of reconstruction according to current requirements. The Governor, KPK, stressed that the intent of the government is to invest in such a manner that the social fabric of FATA's society is rejuvenated and restored.

While speaking about the process of FATA's integration, he said that integration should be broadly divided into two categories, first, integration on administrative affairs, and second, integration with the political underpinnings. He highlighted that administrative integration could take place without a Constitutional amendment, however, political integration would involve major changes in the legal status of the region with the unavoidable fear of the spill over of regionalism and demands of new provinces' in the country.

The Governor KPK, also highlighted the different reforms and measures', that have been introduced such as police reforms, change in judicial structure as well as criminal and civil justice system, introduction of a prosecution service in selected areas, and reforms for economic and social growth, that have already been put in to action to lead FATA towards administrative integration. He also highlighted Indian designs in FATA, expressing that they are no more a secret. Talking about Iran, he said that Iran has invested in FATA for its own strategic interests. The US, has been a dominant player in the geo-strategic chessboard in the region.

He welcomed China as a new entrant who, he observed, will surely assert itself in order to protect its economic and security interests. Governor KPK, concluded by commending the nation on the success of Operation Zarb-e-Azb and said that the operation has played a major role in putting the nation at ease by pursuing Pakistan's enemies in a systematic and committed manner. He also acknowledged the countless sacrifices rendered by the Armed Forces of Pakistan as well as the thousands of men, women and children of FATA.

Session I



The first keynote speakers of the seminar, Mr Ejaz Ahmed Qureshi, Chairman, FATA Reforms Commission, shed light on the FATA Reforms, and stressed that promoting peace, ensuring justice, participation of people in policy making are the main approaches adopted by the FATA reforms commission. He also said that improvement in justice system at agency level, extension of FATA tribunal, local government system at agency, greater coordination between armed and civilian authorities, establishment of universities, health services, Madrassa reforms, establishment of Industrial zones, poverty alleviation and bank loans to individuals were other recommendations made by the committee. While speaking about the reforms in FATA he said that improvement of the quality of life of the people in FATA and quality services is the biggest priority of the government at the moment. He mentioned that any reform which are not backed by the political system of the country and its sustained support are bound to collapse. It will remain an empty rhetoric which can lead to further disillusionment and alienations of the people of FATA



The second keynote speaker of the seminar Mr. Habibullah Khan, Former Secretary SAFRON, gave an insightful presentation on "FATA: Economic Development as a Means for Integration". Mr. Habibullah touched upon the macro issues pertaining to the problems of FATA, particularly, on issues of economic empowerment and the prevalent economic deprivation of the area. He explained the hurdles in the way of developing infrastructure in FATA and the higher costs attached to it. The impediments to development in FATA were defined as being away from the main markets of the country, negligible private investment, occupation with security challenges and among others, strategic planning being a victim of uncertainty. Mr. Habibullah also explained the impact of the Constitutional provisions in making the government a custodian of the status quo and resulting in further alienation. He further suggested that the tribesmen must be taken on board and the restoration of peace and economic development must be undertaken simultaneously.



During the first session, Ambassador Ayaz Wazir spoke on the issue of FATA: Afghanistan and other Regional Dimensions. He highlighted that the people of FATA have been manipulated into playing roles in shaping developments in the region. FATA has been at the mercy and whims of the civil and military bureaucracy. Ambassador Wazir also raised the question of IDPs and the state they are living in today. He said there are injustices happening in the tribal areas which are leading to the disenchantment of the population of FATA. While suggesting recommendations, Ambassador Ayaz Wazir was of the view that, it is imperative to empower the people of FATA in order to bring peace in the tribal areas.



The second speaker of the first session, Gen (R) Talat Masood spoke on the political dimensions and the media; he stated that there is a dire need of comprehensive approach to deal with the problems of FATA. He endorsed the fact that the fate of FATA should be decided by the people of the area. While talking about the role of media, he said that the media should be able to cover the problems associated with the people of FATA and acknowledged the security situation in FATA as the biggest hiccup in the process and active media coverage of the region; nonetheless, it is not something impossible with the provision of technology today. Safety and security of reporters must be ensured by the state.



The third speaker, Mohammad Zahoor, coordinator, Government support Project/ Post Crisis Needs Assessment (PCNA) from the FATA Secretariat talked about the work of the FATA Secretariat. He said that the government carried out an exercise to identify the drivers of crisis in FATA, in collaboration with international donors. He said the process which took more than a year resulted in a report of the PCNA, and was approved by the Strategic Oversight council headed by the Prime Minister of Pakistan which has since been adopted as a chief peace building strategy. He also talked about the Temporarily Dislocated Persons (TDPs) and expressed that the FATA Secretariat has launched a comprehensive Strategy for the Sustainable Return and Rehabilitation of FATA's returning Temporarily Dislocated Persons (TDPs). The strategy not only focuses on the rehabilitation and reconstruction of damaged facilities, but also prioritizes restoration of livelihoods and interventions in education, health, housing and improving governance and service delivery functions.



The next speaker of the session, Dr. Sarfraz Khan spoke on FATA: Dealing with Militancy, Radicalism and Illicit Economy, in which he briefly introduced FATA, its land, people, culture, system of political administration and special constitutional status. He articulated that in the North Western borderland of former British India (currently, Pakistan), a region with a 'so called' special status was created by the

British to protect and promote its imperial holdings in the area and beyond. Post independence, Pakistan has been sustaining and reinforcing the same special status on FATA of the region for domestic as well as external purposes. He was of the view that, the special status of FATA, on surface, appears to be granting concessions, privileges and autonomy to the tribes. On the contrary, it has been fulfilling the interests of the powerful domestic establishment and its more powerful international allies. It has been instrumental in keeping tribal people underdeveloped and deprived of fundamental human rights.



The last speaker of the first session, Dr Simbal Khan, Programme Director/Senior Fellow, Peace and Development Unit, Planning Commission, Ministry of Planning said that traditionally FATA has been seen through the geo-political security lens, throwing light on the 'Heartland theories' and the 'Great Game' construct which made the British view FATA and Afghanistan as a buffer State. She opined that over the recent past, FATA has been viewed through the lens of militancy and terrorism. She said that decades of war in Afghanistan have had a spill over effect in FATA and have further led to securitized state policies on FATA.

Session II



The first speaker of the second session Brig. (Retd) Said Nazir, a Defense Analyst at Institute of Policy Studies spoke on "FATA After Zarb-e-Azb". Brig. Nazir shed light on the previously undertaken operations in FATA, which achieved little success and did not achieve the desired results, but instead inflicted more collateral damage and resulted in less elimination of terrorists. While lauding Zarb-e-Azb, Brig. Nazir stated that this operation is a strategic operation in nature which is undertaken across

the board and is being kept open ended, which has resulted in a major blow to the militant networks. A significant reduction in violence speaks volumes about the success of Zarb-e-Azb.



The third speaker of the session Ms. Amina Khan, Research Fellow, at the Institute of Strategic Studies, gave a presentation on “Constitutional and Political Status of FATA”. Ms. Khan gave an overview of the political and constitutional background of FATA and explained that although a part of British India, FATA was administered under special legal and administrative provisions of the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) enacted in 1901 since the British were unable to establish explicit control over the tribesmen. She further explained that 68 years of independence, FATA continues to be governed under the same social, economic, political & legal system of administration of the FCR and that FATA continues to remain the most underdeveloped, isolated and impoverished region of Pakistan. She also talked about the future of FATA, and suggested four options, merging FATA with Khyber Pukhtunkhwa, FATA as an independent province, following the Gilgit- Baltistan model, or continuing with the status quo.



The fourth speaker of the session, Mr. Saleem Safi, Journalist and Current Affairs host of *Jirga*, Geo News, gave an insightful presentation on “Voices of the People of FATA”. Mr. Saleem Safi expressed his views about the hurdles in assimilation of the people of FATA. He mentioned the divide between the State and the people of the FATA region. Although, FATA region comes under the direct jurisdiction of the President of Pakistan, no President has ever paid any visit to the area. Similarly, the development indicators in the area are so poor that there is no University in the area and hardly any hospitals for the people although so many years have passed. FATA remains underdeveloped and impoverished, but its people have never taken up arms against the Pakistani government which shows their patriotism.



Mr Habib Malik Orakzai, President Pakistan International Human Rights Organisation, spoke on the topic of FATA: Issues of Governance. Speaking on the governance system of FATA, Mr. Orakzai stated that the constitutional system of FATA has many loopholes, impacting the overall governance system. The recently proposed reforms are ad-hoc and the lack accountability and proper system of governance adds to its failure. He stressed that it is high time that the government of Pakistan takes a bold decision to mainstream FATA into the national polity and extend all services and rights to the tribes, which will give them equal rights as the citizen of Pakistan. While speaking on the issue of capacity building and improving infrastructure and local economy, Mr. Orakzai highlighted that, ideally areas under the military control should be handed over to the civil administration which has not happened because of the lack of administrative capacity.



The last speaker of the session, Brig (R) Mohammad Ayaz Khan, highlighted the Psyche of the People of FATA. He said that the current situation in FATA is the result of lack of positive leadership in Pakistan, dictates of powerful bureaucracy, and lack of tribal knowledge. Brig (R) Mohammad Ayaz Khan said that majority of the Pushtun tribes are of sunni creed and have a moderate approach towards the religion which is remarkable. They have lived besides minorities through decades. Years of Afghan jihad and Taliban have resulted in the wahabi influence to bear on the Pushtun psyche. Years of rigid and narrow set of Islamic codes have surpassed and eclipsed the early days of moderate tribal psyche. Brig (R) Mohammad Ayaz Khan stressed on the fact that what FATA needs now is a dynamic administrative system which addresses all its issues and grievances.



Concluding the session, the Chairman, BOG, Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), said that there is a need to mainstream the people of FATA not just culturally but politically and as citizens of Pakistan. FATA reforms have to be all embracing at the local as well as government level and there should be ownership of the problems that FATA is facing. The process of rehabilitation of the TDPs should be carried out in a dignified and respectful manner.

Concluding the seminar, the Director General Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), Ambassador Masood Khan, said that this is the first of a series of seminars that the Institute intends to hold on FATA and hoped that the participants of this seminar would form a team that would continue to contribute for the betterment of the people of FATA. He said that the next of this series would be held in Peshawar and hopefully beyond.