

Decline of Insurgency in Pakistan's FATA

A Counterinsurgency Perspective

ABSTRACT

The Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan insurgency seriously challenged the Pakistani government's writ of state in FATA from 2004 to 2008. However, by 2017, the insurgency collapsed. This paper argues that Pakistan's counterinsurgency campaign after 2009 caused the decline of the Taliban insurgency by targeting the TTP through a true counterinsurgency operation, rather than the conventional warfare tactics used earlier. This counterinsurgency shift involved a more judicious use of force, rather than simply more force, and deployed both enemy-centric and population-centric approaches, but with a marked emphasis on the former over the latter.

KEYWORDS: counterinsurgency, Pakistani Taliban, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), insurgency

INTRODUCTION

The Pakistani military has launched a number of military operations in different agencies of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) since the onset of insurgency by the Pakistani Taliban, also known as Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), in 2004. The Pakistani government's initially weak counterinsurgency campaign from 2004 to 2008, centered on various peace agreements, led to escalation of the FATA insurgency. As a result, the Pakistani Taliban not only succeeded in establishing effective control over certain agencies of FATA, such as Bajaur and North and South Waziristan, but also

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Asian Survey, Vol. 59, Number 4, pp. 693–716. ISSN 0004-4687, electronic ISSN 1533-838X. © 2019 by The Regents of the University of California. All rights reserved. Please direct all requests for permission to photocopy or reproduce article content through the University of California Press's Reprints and Permissions web page, <https://www.ucpress.edu/journals/reprints-permissions>. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/AS.2019.59.4.693>.

established influence in some settled parts of the country, such as Swat, which is only 170 kilometers from the country's capital, Islamabad.

In the various military operations launched in Bajaur and South Waziristan, including Operation Zarb-e-Azb in North Waziristan in June 2014, hundreds of insurgents were killed and the insurgency's infrastructure was completely destroyed. This seriously weakened the Taliban movement and was followed by schism within its ranks. Some leaders of the TTP broke away from the main organization and formed their own small groups. Most of the militant leadership managed to flee across the border into Afghanistan. This weakened TTP resorted to a number of terrorist attacks on soft targets in Pakistan's big cities, such as Lahore and Peshawar, but its hold in FATA was completely broken. The decline of such a powerful insurgency raises a couple of serious questions. Why did the FATA insurgency collapse and disintegrate? And most importantly, what had changed in the government's approach, and how and why did that change cause the decline of the insurgency?

The execution of a better counterinsurgency operation since 2009 by the Pakistani government against the powerful FATA insurgency led to its decline. In general, I contend that the effectiveness of military intervention, counterinsurgency itself, involves far more than simply a change in the amount of force used by the state. Accordingly, the execution of a better counterinsurgency since 2009 by the Pakistani government against the powerful FATA insurgency involved the transformation of forces from conventional ones to counterinsurgent ones, requiring a judicious use of force focusing on the destruction of insurgents' strength. This led to the insurgency's decline.

Before discussing Pakistan's better counterinsurgency strategy and its causal link to the decline of the Taliban insurgency, it is important to discuss how Pakistan's weak counterinsurgency strategy in the early years from 2004 to 2008 allowed the Taliban insurgency to become a powerful movement.

PAKISTAN'S WEAK COUNTERINSURGENCY AND GROWING TTP POWER IN FATA

The US invasion of Afghanistan after the 9/11 terrorist attacks pushed many militants belonging to al-Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban into FATA. FATA is located along the Pakistan–Afghanistan border and enjoyed semi-autonomous status since Pakistan's independence in 1947. The Pakistani

state largely followed the British practice of treating FATA as a semi-autonomous buffer zone. The writ of the Pakistani state in FATA has never been strong.¹

FATA locals provided sanctuary to the fleeing militants due to their shared ethnicity and the Islamic factor. The US pressured the Pakistani government to take action against these militants, who staged attacks from FATA against the American-led international forces operating in Afghanistan. Under pressure from Washington, the Pakistani government sent its forces into FATA in 2004 for the first time since independence. The locals in FATA resisted Pakistani security forces, which marked the beginning of the insurgency in FATA. In the following years, the TTP emerged as a powerful force.

The TTP's growth in size and strength can be largely ascribed to an ineffective or poor counterinsurgency strategy by the Pakistani government from 2004 to 2008.² Arguably, various constituents of Pakistan's counterinsurgency strategy rendered the campaign a failure. The Pakistani government of General Pervez Musharaf joined the US-led "war on terror" under pressure from Washington as well as its own strategic compulsions, mainly centered on India.³ In the first few years, the Pakistani government largely viewed it as an American war.⁴ The majority of the Pakistani public also doubted whether the country was fighting its own war.⁵ Until around 2008, the government did not see the FATA insurgency as a critical threat to Pakistan's national security.⁶ Therefore, there was a lack of clarity and commitment on the part of the Pakistani government in fighting the Taliban insurgency, which allowed the movement to gain a foothold.

In addition, the Pakistani government's use of conventional forces in fighting the insurgency proved counterproductive. Pakistani military forces were largely trained to fight a conventional war with its archrival, India.

1. Ifikhar Durrani, "The Country and the Territory," *The News*, (Islamabad) February 4, 2007.

2. Anatol Lieven, "Counter-Insurgency in Pakistan: The Role of Legitimacy," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 28:1 (2017): 170–72.

3. Pervez Musharaf, *In the Line of Fire: A Memoir* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006): 202.

4. Shaukat Qadir, "The State's Responses to the Pakistani Taliban Onslaught," in *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in South Asia through a Peacebuilding Lens*, Moed Yusuf, ed. (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2014): 132.

5. Haider Ali Hussein Mullick, *Helping Pakistan Defeat the Taliban: A Joint Action Agenda for the United States and Pakistan* (Clinton Township, MI: Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, 2009): 17.

6. Clay Ramsay, Steven Kull, Stephen Weber, and Evan Lewis, "Pakistani Public Opinion on the Swat Conflict, Afghanistan, and the US." *WorldPublicOpinion.org* (July 2008): 16–24.

And military elites did not show any serious interest in providing counter-insurgency training to the forces fighting the insurgency. Instead, they kept their conventional capabilities intact because of their persistent focus on a conflict with India.⁷ David Kilcullen contends that Pakistan's counterinsurgency failed largely due to the conventional nature of the force, which seriously lacked counterinsurgency training and equipment.⁸ The conventional and indiscriminate use of military force caused extensive civilian damage, which facilitated the insurgents' recruitment process from the affected population.

The conventional forces did not succeed in uprooting the insurgents. And after the failure of these military ventures, the Pakistani government held peace negotiations with the insurgents, boosting their legitimacy. The government then signed various peace deals with the insurgents, giving them strength and confidence, clearly negotiating from a position of weakness, which only boosted the insurgents' confidence in their ability and power. The poorly planned counterinsurgency enabled the FATA insurgency to grow and develop into a powerful movement.

In December 2007, several independently operating militant groups united to form the TTP. Baitullah Mehsud became its first leader. The better coordination and sharing of resources which followed the formation of a single coherent organization allowed the insurgents to increase their influence and hold in FATA. They also began challenging the writ of the state in the settled districts of Pakistan adjoining the tribal areas. For instance, the TTP provided assistance to its allied group in challenging the writ of the Pakistani state in some districts of the Malakand Division, which was only 170 kilometers from the capital of Pakistan.⁹ The international community, especially the US, was alarmed by the growing power of the FATA insurgents because of their role in the ongoing insurgency in Afghanistan.¹⁰

The TTP's growing power posed a serious challenge to Pakistan's internal security. Some security analysts warned the Pakistani government of the

7. C. Christine Fair and Seth G. Jones, *Counterinsurgency in Pakistan* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2010): 37.

8. David J. Kilcullen, "Terrain, Tribes, and Terrorist: Pakistan, 2006–2008," *Brookings Counterinsurgency and Pakistan Paper Series*, No. 3, 2009.

9. See the editorial "60 Miles from Islamabad," *New York Times*, April 26, 2009.

10. Paul Richter Parsons and Christi Parsons, "Obama Prepares to Meet with Leaders of Afghanistan, Pakistan," *Los Angeles Times*, May 5, 2009.

seriousness of the TTP's threat to the country's stability. Ahmed Rashid, for example, contended that "Pakistan's biggest threat comes from the Pakistani Taliban. It does not come from India."¹¹ Another security analyst, Hassan Abbas, commented, "Dismantling TTP and bringing its leadership to justice is critical for Pakistan's internal security."¹² But before discussing Pakistan's better counterinsurgency strategy, a brief review of the theoretical literature on counterinsurgency is needed.

COUNTERINSURGENCY: A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

According to the theoretical literature, there are two broadly accepted approaches to counterinsurgency: population-centric and enemy-centric.¹³ Mark Moyar noted that these "two schools of thought have dominated the study of counterinsurgency warfare in the English-speaking world" since the Vietnam War.¹⁴ The population-centric approach views insurgency as a contest between the insurgents and the counterinsurgents to win over the local population. This approach advocates securing the support of the local population for a better counterinsurgency.¹⁵ In contrast, according to enemy-centric logic, insurgency is more like a military struggle between insurgents and counterinsurgents without much attention paid to the strategic importance of the non-combatant population, and thus counterinsurgency focuses on the outright defeat of insurgents.¹⁶ The theoretical literature also offers some insights on the best counterinsurgency practices.

Apart from these two broadly accepted approaches, political will plays an important role in making a counterinsurgency campaign successful.¹⁷ Political will is demonstrated by how the government deals with insurgency at strategic and operational levels, which requires the appropriation of sufficient resources.

11. Ahmed Rashid, "Pakistan's Continued Failure to Adopt a Counterinsurgency Strategy," *CTC Sentinel* 2:3 (March 2009).

12. Hassan Abbas, "A Profile of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan," *CTC Sentinel* 1:2 (January 2008): 4.

13. Kersti Larsdotter, "Regional Support for Afghan Insurgents: Challenges for Counterinsurgency Theory and Doctrine," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 37:1 (2014): 138.

14. Mark Moyar, "Leadership in Counterinsurgency," *Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 34:1 (2010): 135.

15. Larsdotter, "Regional Support for Afghan Insurgents": 138.

16. Larsdotter, "Regional Support for Afghan Insurgents": 138.

17. M. L. R. Smith, "A Tradition That Never Was: Critiquing the Critique of British COIN," *Small Wars Journal* (2012).

For example, David Galula maintains that counterinsurgency operations “require a large concentration of efforts, resources, and personnel.”¹⁸

But political will alone is not sufficient to make a counterinsurgency campaign successful. It requires conventional forces to adapt its organizational structure and strategy in line with the counterinsurgency operation.¹⁹ Specific training is also required.²⁰ These changes are necessary because counterinsurgency warfare differs from conventional warfare in its objectives. A conventional war pursues decisive strategic goals, whereas counterinsurgency aims more at overt political objectives.²¹ Writing in the mid-1980s, Eliot Cohen highlighted that counterinsurgency campaigns are “not ‘half’ a war, but rather a completely different kind of conflict.”²² Apart from the military forces, the role of local security forces such as the police is considered a crucial element in a counterinsurgency campaign, because these forces tend to have a better understanding of the threat environment and local intelligence.²³

Adaptation of conventional force to counterinsurgency force encourages a more judicious use of force, not only effectively targeting insurgents but also helping to reduce civilian damage. This position is more aligned with the population-centric approach, giving significant importance to the protection of civilian population while conducting counterinsurgency operation. Andrew Mumford contends that “the traditional ‘centre of gravity’ for a counter-insurgency campaign is the population,” which requires that “plans for military assaults upon the enemy have been couched in terms of protecting the civilian population and preserving their trust.”²⁴ Similarly, Rod Thornton maintains that in counterinsurgency campaigns, “the quality of

18. David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006): 55.

19. John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005): xxi–xxv.

20. Paul Melshen, “Mapping out a Counterinsurgency Campaign Plan: Critical Considerations in Counterinsurgency Campaigning,” *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 18:4 (2007): 681.

21. Andrew Mumford, *The Counter-Insurgency Myth: The British Experience of Irregular Warfare* (New York: Routledge, 2012): 5.

22. Eliot A. Cohen, “Constraints on America’s Conduct of Small Wars,” *International Security* 9:2 (1984): 167.

23. Seth G. Jones, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2008): 10, 16.

24. Mumford, *Counter-Insurgency Myth*: 6.

force . . . has to be seen as more important than its quantity.”²⁵ Indiscriminate or excessive use of force in a counterinsurgency campaign tends to aggravate the grievances of the local population.²⁶

This targeted use of force helps to destroy the insurgents’ infrastructure, including their political, economic, and military capabilities, which is crucial for the complete defeat of an insurgency. This position returns us to the enemy-centric approach, which calls for the outright destruction of insurgents. Timothy Deady claims that destruction of “insurgents’ strategic and operational centers of gravity” permitted the US forces to achieve successful counterinsurgency in Philippines.²⁷ After destroying the insurgents’ infrastructure, clearing the area of the remnants of the insurgency is also essential. Clearing requires the counterinsurgency forces to find and destroy scores of improvised explosive devices and frequently engage in house-to-house or field-to-field fighting.²⁸ Even after clearing, there is a need to hold the area to prevent the insurgents’ returning.²⁹

After the destruction of the insurgency infrastructure, winning the hearts and minds of the local population is required for a durable success in a counterinsurgency. This position is again allied with the population-centric approach which emphasizes winning over the civilian population. Defeating an insurgency requires more than a military approach, because it is largely motivated by social, political, or economic grievances. Galula contends that “counterinsurgency is 80 percent political action and only 20 percent military.”³⁰ Winning hearts and minds can help turn the population away from the insurgents’ cause. By addressing grievances and initiating development projects such as building schools, roads, or health clinics, the counterinsurgents may win the hearts and minds of the population. The British counterinsurgency expert Sir Robert Thompson said that “‘winning’ the population can tritely be summed up as good government in all its aspects . . . such as improved health measures and clinics . . . new schools . . . and improved

25. Rod Thornton, “The British Army and the Origins of Its Minimum Force Philosophy,” *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 15:1 (2004): 84.

26. John Lynn, “Patterns of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency,” *Military Review* (2005): 27.

27. Timothy K. Deady, “Lessons from a Successful Counterinsurgency: The Philippines 1899–1902,” *Parameters* 35:1 (2005): 58.

28. James M. Dubik, *Operational Air in Counterinsurgency: A View from the Inside* (Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of War, 2012): 16.

29. Dubik, *Operational Air in Counterinsurgency*: 17.

30. Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*: 63.

livelihood and standard of living.”³¹ A retired US Marine, T. X. Hammes, said emphatically, “The fundamental weapon in counterinsurgency is good governance.”³²

These considerations from the theoretical literature on counterinsurgency and insights from the field guided the analysis of Pakistan’s counterinsurgency campaign. As I demonstrate, Pakistan’s effective counterinsurgency campaign, involving the judicious use of force, rather than simply more force, while focusing on the destruction of insurgents’ forces, emphasizing an enemy-centric approach over a population-centric one, caused the decline of the FATA insurgency.

PAKISTAN’S MORE EFFECTIVE COUNTERINSURGENCY

The Pakistani government made significant changes in its counterinsurgency strategy to make the campaign more effective beginning in 2009. For example, the military forces fighting in FATA underwent a significant transformation, from conventional to counterinsurgent. The forces were given appropriate modern counterinsurgency training and equipment. The transformation of the fighting forces was followed by the targeted use of force against insurgents, focusing on destroying their infrastructure and avoiding civilian damages. Local people were evacuated from the insurgency-stricken areas before military strikes were launched. The precise and effective use of force destroyed the insurgents’ sanctuaries and, most importantly, crippled their military capabilities. Their waning fighting capability forced them to run, which allowed the military forces to capture and hold the area, stationing military troops to reduce the chances of the insurgents’ return. These strategies quite successfully defeated the TTP, forcing the leadership to seek sanctuary across the border in Afghanistan. Winning the hearts and minds of the people did not go as well. Tens of thousands of people were displaced from their native towns and their homes and property seriously damaged. But the far more effective counterinsurgency led to the decline of the FATA insurgency.

31. Robert Grainger Ker Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966): 112–13, 161.

32. Michael Fitzsimmons, “Hard Hearts and Open Minds? Governance, Identity and the Intellectual Foundations of Counterinsurgency Strategy,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 31:3 (2008): 341.

A Strong Political Will

An insurgency cannot be defeated without strong political will.³³ Strong political will means allocating necessary resources.³⁴ The Pakistani state's strong political will to defeat the FATA insurgency was a direct response to the exponential increase in the strength and influence of the TTP in FATA and beyond. Also, the TTP's increasing involvement in terrorist attacks in mainland Pakistan led to a shift in the government's perception of threat to the country towards the FATA insurgency and away from India.³⁵ In an interview with the German magazine *Der Spiegel*, General Shuja Pasha, the head of Pakistan's chief spy agency, Inter-Services Intelligence, said, "Terror is our enemy, not India."³⁶ This shift was evident throughout the military's culture.³⁷ And Pakistan's prime minister, Yousuf Raza Gilani, termed the war against insurgents "a war of the country's survival."³⁸

The shift in threat perception was accompanied by a change in public mood, which was turning against the TTP. After numerous large-scale terrorist attacks by TTP militants in mosques and marketplaces across the country, public opinion turned significantly against the Pakistani Taliban movement.³⁹ Public opinion further swung behind the government after the group declared Pakistan's constitution un-Islamic. This fostered the popular perception that the Pakistani offensive was driven by the growing insurgent threat, not by pressure from the US.⁴⁰ The majority of Pakistanis therefore demanded military operations against the TTP. An opinion poll in 2009 put

33. Paul Dixon, "Hearts and Minds? British Counterinsurgency from Malay to Iraq," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 32:3 (2009): 357.

34. David H. Ucko and Robert Egnell, *Counterinsurgency in Crisis: Britain and the Challenges of Modern Warfare* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2013): 16.

35. Mullick, *Helping Pakistan Defeat the Taliban*: 6.

36. Susanne Koelbl, "Pakistan's New Intelligence Chief: Terror Is Our Enemy, Not India," *Der Spiegel*, January 6, 2009.

37. Interview, Maj. Gen. (ret.) Athar Abbas, Rawalpindi, Pakistan, April 5, 2014. Abbas was director-general of Inter-Services Public Relations, the media wing of the Pakistani Army, from 2008 to 2012.

38. Ishtiaq Mahsud, "Desperation in Pakistani Hospitals, Refugee Camps," *Associated Press*, May 9, 2009.

39. Mukhtar A. Khan, "Pakistani Government Offensive in Swat Heading for the Taliban of Waziristan," *Terrorism Monitor* 7:17 (June 2009): 10.

40. Imtiaz Ali, "Military Victory in South Waziristan or the Beginning of a Long War," *Terrorism Monitor* 38:202 (2009): 1-10.

anti-TTP sentiment among the Pakistani public at 81%.⁴¹ In a Pew Research poll in August 2009, 77% of Pakistanis supported military operations against the Pakistani Taliban.⁴² Some religious political parties, such as Jamiat-ul-Ulema-Pakistan and Ahl-e-Sunnat, also voiced support of military operations against the TTP militants.⁴³ Breyman and Salman reported that “growing revulsion against the Pakistani Taliban’s outrageous behavior is one of the major factors underlying improved public support for the Army’s counter-insurgency offensives.”⁴⁴ This wider political and popular support gave the Pakistani government much-needed legitimacy in planning and executing a better counterinsurgency campaign.

The Pakistani state’s growing political will became evident when negotiations with the insurgents were dropped. The negotiations had only strengthened the insurgents’ hold. Zaidi observes that “the realization had perhaps dawned on government circles that the negotiation process had not yielded many dividends.”⁴⁵ Highlighting a change in the government’s stance toward the militants, he noted that “the continuous peace deals and their unilateral revocation by the militants sapped the negotiating will of the government, which banned the Tehrik-i-Taliban [Pakistan].”⁴⁶

Strong political will translated into effective action against the insurgents. For example, the military operation in Bajaur Agency was conducted with improved planning and more force than previous military operations in FATA.⁴⁷ More than 20,000 troops took part, assisted by helicopter gunships, tanks, artillery, and about 3,000 local fighters.⁴⁸ Zaidi noted that “the Bajaur operation was pursued much more vigorously than previous ones had been.”⁴⁹

41. Ramsay et al., “Pakistani Public Opinion on the Swat Conflict, Afghanistan, and the US.”

42. The Pew Global Attitudes Project, *Pakistani Public Opinion: Growing Concerns about Extremism, Continuing Discontent with U.S.* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2009).

43. “Ahl-e-Sunnat Parties to Launch Movement against Talibanisation,” *Daily Times*, May 7, 2009.

44. Steve Breyman and Aneel Salman, “Reaping the Whirlwind: Pakistani Counterinsurgency,” *Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 34:2 (2010): 72.

45. Syed Manzar Abbad Zaidi, “The United States and the Counterinsurgency: The Peace Process in Pakistan,” *American Foreign Policy Interests* 31:3 (May 2009): 153.

46. Zaidi, “United States and the Counterinsurgency”: 154.

47. Iqbal Khattak, “Bajaur Operation 25 to 35% Intense,” *Daily Times*, September 2, 2008.

48. Rahman Ullah, “The Battle for Pakistan: Militancy and Conflict in Bajaur,” *Counterterrorism Strategy Initiative Policy Paper* (Washington, DC: New American Foundation, 2010): 8.

49. Zaidi, “United States and the Counterinsurgency”: 153.

Similarly, significant military resources were devoted to defeat the insurgents in South Waziristan. The “intensity of efforts and vastness of means are essential” to show resoluteness on the part of the counterinsurgents.⁵⁰ The military operations in 2009 were carried out with better planning and resources, fielding 30,000–60,000 troops.⁵¹ The Pakistani army diverted some troops, including seven combat brigades, from the Indian border and deployed them in South Waziristan to support the counterinsurgency operations.⁵² The FATA insurgency was being treated as the country’s most important security threat, even surpassing India, at least momentarily.

The June 2014 military operation in North Waziristan, Operation Zarb-e-Azb, was also conducted vigorously after peace talks with militants had been given a chance. The democratic government newly elected in 2013 and led by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had announced peace negotiations with the Pakistani Taliban.⁵³ But the insurgents were not willing to lay down their arms, and they continued their terrorist activities. In a spectacular terrorist act, the militants attacked Jinnah International Airport in Karachi on June 8, 2014, killing 36 people.⁵⁴ The government launched a full military operation on June 15.⁵⁵ Military spokesperson General Asim Bajwa marked the operation as a “war of survival,” adding, “this is the biggest and most well-coordinated operation ever conducted against terrorists.”⁵⁶ Military troops, the Frontier Corps (a paramilitary force), intelligence operatives, and the Pakistan Air Force jointly conducted the operation in North Waziristan. At the heart of Operation Zarb-e-Azb was the 7th Infantry Division, considered the Pakistani army’s “oldest and the most battle-hardened division.”⁵⁷ Two battalions of Special Services Group, the army’s special operations force, also took part. As a result of these far more dedicated operations, the military

50. Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*: 55.

51. Rahimullah Yusufzai, “Assessing the Progress of Pakistan’s South Waziristan Offensive,” *CTC Sentinel* 2:12 (2009): 8–12.

52. Fair and Jones, *Counterinsurgency in Pakistan*: 74.

53. “PM Sharif Announces another Push for Taliban Peace Talks,” *Dawn*, January 29, 2014.

54. “TTP Claims Attack on Karachi Airport,” *Dawn*, June 8, 2014.

55. Ismail Khan, “All-Out Military Operation Launched in North Waziristan,” *Dawn*, June 16, 2014.

56. Syed Irfan Raza, “Zarb-i-Azb Is War of Survival, Says ISPR Chief,” *Dawn*, June 27, 2014.

57. Farrukh Saleem, “Winning Ground War, Losing 500,000 Hearts and Minds,” *The News*, (Islamabad) June 27, 2014.

was finally successful in routing the TTP from its strongholds in Bajaur and North and South Waziristan.

Improving the Military Forces' Counterinsurgency Training and Skills

As discussed in the theoretical section, counterinsurgency training is required for a military victory against insurgents because conventional force is counterproductive in fighting an insurgency.⁵⁸ Success in counterinsurgency operations also depends on the military's ability to adapt its organizational structure and strategy.⁵⁹ In this regard, the British document on counterinsurgency, *Keeping the Peace (Duties in Support of Civil Power)*, stated that "there is no place for a rigid mind. . . . Although the principles of war generally remain the same, the ability to adapt and improvise is essential."⁶⁰

Pakistani military elites now had a clear understanding that the military forces lacked counterinsurgency skills, which explained their poor and inefficient performance against the insurgents from 2004 to 2008. General Ashfaq Kiani, then chief of the armed forces, focused on improving the counterinsurgency strategy through new arms procurement choices and a revised military curriculum. Calling 2008 the "Year of the Soldier" and 2009 the "Year of Training," Kiani also initiated reforms in the Directorate of Military Operations (the army's strategy think tank) and intelligence operations to meet the needs of counterinsurgency warfare.⁶¹ The Frontier Corps was given counterinsurgency training, plus modern counterinsurgency weapons, along with better salary packages and promotions.⁶² These measures transformed the corps into a modern fighting force appropriate for counterinsurgency.⁶³

In 2009, the Pakistani government also accepted counterinsurgency training assistance from the US.⁶⁴ US Special Forces personnel conducted

58. Melshen, "Mapping Out": 681.

59. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*.

60. Cited in Ucko and Egnell, *Counterinsurgency in Crisis*: 10.

61. Mullick, *Helping Pakistan Defeat the Taliban*: 20.

62. Athar Abbas interview.

63. Shuja Nawaz, "Learning by Doing: The Pakistan Army's Experience with Counterinsurgency," Atlantic Council, 2011: 9.

64. Yochi J. Drezen and Siobahn Gorbman, "U.S. Special Forces Sent to Train Pakistan," *Wall Street Journal*, May 16, 2009.

counterinsurgency training for Frontier Corps officers.⁶⁵ The Pakistani military leadership had previously refused such help from the US. Military officials had questioned the utility of counterinsurgency training, saying that the country's main security threats emanated from India, not from the TTP. But with the shift in threat perception, Pakistan's counterinsurgency capabilities were being significantly enhanced. A US intelligence assessment affirmed the considerable improvement in Pakistan's counterinsurgency approach: "Pakistan has added more border posts, begun counter-insurgency training, fenced portions of the border and seeks to obtain counter-insurgency equipment while also expanding para-military forces."⁶⁶ These adaptations enhanced the forces' capabilities to better fight the insurgents and ultimately defeat them.

The Pakistani military also improved its counterinsurgency approach through "learning by doing."⁶⁷ Based on the experience of the Bajaur counterinsurgency operations during Operation Shirdil ("Lion Heart") in August 2008, junior officers were made part of the decision-making process—especially Frontier Corps officers, who had traditionally been considered incompetent because of their training and due to their ethnic links with the predominantly Pashtun militants.⁶⁸ Input from junior officers in the field led Lt. Gen. Tariq Khan, the commander of the operation, to change his approach to the counterinsurgency considerably. Instead of employing an enemy-centric "out-terrorizing the terrorist" model, Tariq used a population security approach, emphasizing troop patrols and supporting tribal *lashkars* (militias) and *jirgas* (tribal councils).⁶⁹ The best counterinsurgency practices advocate "deploying smaller and more dispersed units, patrolling to protect the population, and raising local police forces to sustain operational gains."⁷⁰

65. As of November 2008, the training was limited to the select senior Frontier Corpsmen, who would impart the training to the rest of the force. Jason H. Campbell and Jeremy Shapiro, "Brookings' Afghanistan Index: Tracking Progress and Security in Post-9/11 Afghanistan," Brookings Institution, Washington, DC, 2009: 34.

66. Michael D. Maples, "Annual Threat Assessment: Statement before the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate," February 2008: 22; Michael D. Maples, "Annual Threat Assessment: Statement before the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate," March 2009: 12.

67. Stephen P. Cohen and Shuja Nawaz, "Mastering Counterinsurgency: A Workshop Report," *Brookings Counterinsurgency and Pakistan Paper Series*, July 7, 2009.

68. Mullick, *Helping Pakistan Defeat the Taliban*: 21.

69. Mullick, *Helping Pakistan Defeat the Taliban*: 19.

70. Sameer Lalwani, "Pakistan's COIN Flip: The Recent History of Pakistani Military Counterinsurgency Operations in the NWFP and FATA," Counterinsurgency Strategy Initiative Policy Paper, 2010: 6.

“Learning by doing” through battleground experience and significant input from junior officers brought about radical change from the pre-2008 Pakistani counterinsurgency campaigns in the tribal areas. The newly acquired tactics and better use of human intelligence enabled a more judicious use of force to protect the civilian population. The local population of Bajaur was evacuated to enable airpower and heavy artillery, forcing militants from their hideouts.⁷¹ After attacking the insurgents’ forces with intensive airstrikes and artillery fire, ground forces were mobilized to chase and apprehend them.⁷² Learning in the field significantly improved counterinsurgency tactics, which in turn helped dry up the insurgents’ local support base, making it easier to apprehend the insurgents without alienating the local population.

Targeted Use of Force to Reduce Collateral Damage

A firepower-intensive approach in a counterinsurgency campaign is seldom productive. Samarjit Ghosh contended that “the use of brute force instead of low-intensity strikes is a classic flaw in counterinsurgency campaigns: its military effectiveness is suspect, and it invariably embitters the local population.”⁷³ The security of the local population is very important. Paul Dixon suggests a less coercive approach to counterinsurgency, using “minimum force” as a way to avoid civilian damage.⁷⁴

From mid-August 2008, the Pakistani military adopted a counterinsurgency approach, shifting from the indiscriminate use of force to more targeted use to protect the civilian population.⁷⁵ Often, the local population was cleared out to separate them from the insurgents and to achieve the targeted use of force. After isolating the population, the Pakistani military used air power to soften up the insurgents’ targets, followed by ground forces to secure the area. Haider contended that Pakistan “has made a significant but tenuous move toward a hybrid approach that relies on killing the enemy but minimizing collateral damage.”⁷⁶

71. Sameer Lalwani, “The Pakistan Military’s Adaptation to Counterinsurgency in 2009,” *CTC Sentinel* 3:1 (2010): 10.

72. Lalwani, “Pakistan Military”: 10.

73. Samarjit Ghosh, “Insurgency in the FATA & NWFP: Challenges and Prospects for the Pakistan Army,” Manekshaw Paper No. 6 (2008): 18.

74. Dixon, “Hearts and Minds?”: 353.

75. Mullick, *Helping Pakistan Defeat the Taliban*: 6.

76. Mullick, *Helping Pakistan Defeat the Taliban*: 14.

Operation Sherdil in Bajaur saw improved strategy and planning, with the targeted use of force significantly reducing collateral damage. But it also increased the troops' vulnerability, leading to higher Pakistani military casualties.⁷⁷ At the same time, however, the Frontier Corps emerged as a more competent and useful localized force, able to strike the fleeing insurgents more effectively without alienating the local population.⁷⁸

The Pakistani military launched Operation Rah-e-Nijat (Path of Salvation) on October 17, 2009, with the stated objectives of securing population centers and dismantling the TTP organizational infrastructure in South Waziristan.⁷⁹ The military tried to limit collateral damage by evacuating the population before the attack and by using tactics learned through local experience.⁸⁰ For two months before the ground assault, a blockade was imposed around the target area to cut off the insurgents' supply lines. Intelligence resources rooted in the area were used to target air strikes on the insurgents' sanctuaries and infrastructure.⁸¹

The military also used psychological techniques to isolate the TTP militants from the larger population. Leaflets from local religious authorities and tribes were circulated, informing the youth of "false jihad" and blaming the militants for bringing destruction to the tribal areas. A letter was sent from the chief of army staff, General Ashfaq Kayani, to the tribal elders of the Mehsud tribe, explaining that the operation was aimed at local and foreign militants, not at the Mehsud.⁸² A security analyst maintained that "the focus on conducting psychological and information operations, amassing popular support, and dividing insurgents to limit the scope of operations all factored into the moderately successful outcome."⁸³

The targeted use of force helped limit collateral damage.⁸⁴ Major General Athar Abbas, the chief military spokesman, said, "We are trying to shape the

77. Brain Cloughley, "Insurrection, Terrorism and the Pakistan Army," Pakistan's Security Research Unit, Brief No. 53 (2009): 17.

78. Athar Abbas interview.

79. Fair and Jones, *Counterinsurgency in Pakistan*: 71.

80. Interview with a military brigadier, in Kharian, Punjab, Pakistan, June 24, 2014. He fought insurgents in South Waziristan, and he preferred to remain anonymous.

81. Syed Adnan Ali Shah Bukhari, "New Strategies in Pakistan's Counter-Insurgency Operation in South Waziristan," *Terrorism Monitor* 7:37 (2009): 1–12.

82. Iftikhar A. Khan, "Kayani Writes to Mehsuds, Seek Tribe's Support," *Dawn*, October 20, 2009.

83. Lalwani, "Pakistan Military's Adaptation": 12.

84. Breyman and Salman, "Reaping the Whirlwind": 76.

environment before we move in for the fight. We are also trying to minimize the loss of life.”⁸⁵ Almost 200,000 locals had been relocated in South Waziristan, and some locals complained that the government’s arrangements to deal with the displaced people were inadequate. Similarly, before launching the military operation in North Waziristan in June 2014, the government had deliberately evacuated the local population to protect them and to minimize collateral damage.⁸⁶

Eliminating Insurgents’ Infrastructure: Clear and Hold Strategy

A true victory against an insurgency cannot be achieved without dismantling the insurgents’ military capability and other related infrastructure. Melshen argued that “if the infrastructure is not destroyed, the insurgent organization will either survive as it is, or adapt to the current counterinsurgent pressures on the organization.”⁸⁷ And after any victory, troops must be stationed in the area to prevent the insurgents’ return.

During the counterinsurgency campaign, Pakistani military forces focused on eliminating the insurgents’ infrastructure. Operation Sherdil, which began in Bajaur in August 2008, aimed to target and dismantle the nerve center of the TTP there. The military succeeded in destroying the insurgents’ hideouts and other infrastructure. They also recovered large stockpiles of weapons, ammunition, and other materials, such as guerrilla warfare manuals and bomb-making instructions.⁸⁸ After eliminating the insurgents’ military strength, the forces conducted search operations to apprehend the fleeing militants.⁸⁹ After seizing control of the Taliban-dominated areas in Bajaur, the military held the area, maintaining a permanent presence with small bases and troop patrols to prevent the return of the militants.

The military faced serious challenges while conducting military operations in South Waziristan. The TTP there was considered highly adept in guerrilla warfare. And a sizeable number of Punjabi Taliban and Uzbek fighters had

85. Pamela Constable, “Pakistan Treads Lightly as New Fight Looms,” *Washington Post*, June 29, 2009.

86. Talat Masood, “Military Operation in North Waziristan: An Overview,” *Express Tribune*, June 25, 2014.

87. Melshen, “Mapping Out”: 671.

88. Anthony Lloyd, “Captured Battle Plan Shows Strength and Training of Taleban Forces,” *The Times* (London), November 11, 2008.

89. “Forces Regain Control of Bajaur,” *The News*, March 3, 2010.

reinforced the TTP and its ability to resist the military. One Pakistani military official noted, “It’s going to be a tough fight for these places.”⁹⁰

Despite these difficulties, the Pakistani military made significant progress against the insurgents in South Waziristan in October and November of 2009, and wrested back control of important towns and villages. The operations targeted TTP strongholds such as Ladda, Makin, and Sararogha, which had served as the command and control center of the TTP militants.⁹¹ After stiff resistance, the military finally gained control of these areas. The houses of militant commanders, such as Wali-ur-Rehman and Shabeeb Khan, and other suspects were also demolished.⁹² The insurgents’ sanctuaries were completely wiped out. By January 2010, Pakistani forces had cleared most of the South Waziristan Agency of insurgents. Athar Abbas announced military victory, saying, “The myth has been broken that this was a graveyard for empires and it would be a graveyard for the Army.”⁹³ The holding tactics were repeated in South Waziristan: after dismantling the insurgents’ infrastructure and seizing control of the Taliban-dominated areas, military troops were stationed there to prevent the return of the insurgents.

Similarly, during Operation Zarb-e-Azb in North Waziristan in June 2014, the Pakistani Air Force used airstrikes to destroy the militants’ military capability. Precision-targeted weapons destroyed the insurgents’ infrastructure and weakened their overall capability. The military recovered a huge cache of weapons and ammunition. According to the commander of the operation, Major General Zafar Ullah Khan, the arms recovered from the militants could have supported the conflict for another 15 years.⁹⁴ After the first year of Operation Zarb-e-Azb, North Waziristan was believed to be largely free from insurgent control. Pakistan’s army chief, General Raheel Sharif, said, “We have successfully dismantled their infrastructure and created significant effects. We as a nation are determined to take this surge to its logical end, whatever it may take.”⁹⁵ A Pakistani newspaper reported, “The stronghold of the notorious Haqqani Network and TTP is no longer their

90. “Street Battles Rage in Uzbek Militants’ Stronghold,” *Dawn*, November 2, 2009.

91. Zahid Hussain, “Laddah, Sararogha Cleared; Street Fighting in Makin,” *Dawn*, November 18, 2009.

92. “Five More Militants Killed in South Waziristan: ISPR,” *Dawn*, December 10, 2009.

93. “Army Breaks Myth about SWA,” *The Nation*, November 18, 2009.

94. “Arms Recovered from Terrorists Enough for 15-Year War,” *The News*, (Islamabad) November 16, 2014.

95. “Editorial: Military Operation,” *Dawn*, June 9, 2015.

command and control center. The combined air and land offensive has decimated the sanctuary.”⁹⁶

After destroying the insurgents’ infrastructure, clearing the area of the remnants of insurgency is essential. Pakistan’s counterinsurgency approach used a “clear and hold” strategy. Haider noted that Pakistan’s counterinsurgency strategy had “executed a presence-oriented approach”: they “cleared areas, [and] established small bases inside populated areas (instead of going back to large forward operating bases).”⁹⁷ After clearing an area, the Pakistani troops stationed there provided support to local intelligence and militias for continued success. After defeating the insurgents in North Waziristan, the government announced it would garrison the area to prevent the return of insurgents. Army chief General Raheel Sharif said that the “army won’t go back from the area till the job is done.”⁹⁸ The military also deployed troops to forward positions in mountainous and forested terrain, such as Shawal and Dattakhel, to attack the fleeing insurgents.⁹⁹

Winning the Hearts and Minds of the Population

Apart from military measures, a successful counterinsurgency also needs to win the hearts and minds of the population by alleviating the causes of their grievances. This can be achieved primarily by improving governance through social and economic development.¹⁰⁰ Another important aim of a counterinsurgency program is to reclaim government sovereignty and legitimacy in an area that was once under the control of an insurgent group. To achieve this goal, the government must “re-establish institutions and local security forces” and focus on “rebuilding infrastructure and basic services” so as to establish “local governance and the rule of law.”¹⁰¹

On the front of winning the hearts and minds of the FATA people, Pakistan’s counterinsurgency campaign did not perform well. For the social and economic development of the FATA region, the government launched

96. “Grading Zarb-E-Azb; One Year and Counting,” *Pakistan Today*, June 14, 2015.

97. Mullick, *Helping Pakistan Defeat the Taliban*: 21.

98. “Terrorists Thrown Out from Fata for Good: Army Chief,” *Dawn*, September 17, 2015.

99. Rahimullah Yusufzai, “Zarb-E-Azb: Findings and Conclusions,” *The News*, (Islamabad) June 21, 2015.

100. Dixon, “Hearts and Minds?”: 362.

101. *Counterinsurgency*, US Army Field Manual 3–24, December 2006, <<http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/Repository/Materials/COIN-FM3-24.pdf>>, accessed July 25, 2015.

the Sustainable Development Plan.¹⁰² The government also tasked the FATA Secretariat, a FATA Task Force, and the FATA Development Authority to identify the development needs of the region and to develop short, medium, and long-term strategies to meet them. But many of these plans were not fully implemented until recently, mainly because of insufficient resources.¹⁰³

After defeating the insurgents militarily, the Pakistani government launched various development projects in an attempt to win the hearts and minds of the people. However, these attempts largely failed. For instance, after clearing areas of insurgents in Bajaur in 2010, the military undertook various development projects, such as building schools and local health units. The government also initiated projects to develop road infrastructure in the agency and helped the local people in building houses and in setting up businesses.¹⁰⁴ But locals complained of inadequate funding compared to the scale of destruction from military operations.

In some cases, such as the South and North Waziristan Agencies, the situation was far worse. Because of the heavy presence of the insurgents in both agencies, full-fledged military operations were launched. These two agencies had witnessed a huge displacement of the local population, as well as the massive destruction of peoples' houses and property, because the fighting between the insurgents and the government forces was so intense.¹⁰⁵ A large number of local people had to leave their houses when the security forces launched the Rah-i-Nijat operation in the Mehsud-dominated area of South Waziristan in 2009.¹⁰⁶

Similarly, June 2014's Operation Zarb-e-Azb in North Waziristan displaced around two million local people, almost 70% of whom were women and children.¹⁰⁷ The government was ill-prepared and ill-equipped to deal

102. "FATA Sustainable Development Plan 2007–2015," Civil Secretariat FATA, Peshawar, n.d.: II.

103. Krista Mahr, "Million Displaced Pakistanis Face Tough Choices before Going Home," *Reuters*, March 16, 2016.

104. Interview with a military brigadier, in Kharian, Punjab, Pakistan, October 10, 2013. He commanded the forces fighting the insurgents. He requested anonymity.

105. "FATA Temporarily Displaced Persons Emergency Recovery Project," Report No. PAD2141, *World Bank*, August 30, 2017: 9–10.

106. "Final Phase of South Waziristan IDPs' Return Begins on Tuesday," *Dawn*, July 23, 2017.

107. "The Government of Pakistan Launches the FATA Sustainable Return and Rehabilitation Strategy," April 7, 2015, <<http://www.pk.undp.org/content/pakistan/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2015/04/07/the-government-of-pakistan-launches-the-fata-sustainable-return>>, accessed December 12, 2015.

with the scale of this humanitarian crisis.¹⁰⁸ Conditions at the camps established for the internally displaced people were miserable; they lacked basic infrastructure such as water, electricity, washrooms, and proper living arrangements.¹⁰⁹ The lack of civilian-led governance in FATA made the situation more challenging and increased the vulnerability of the displaced people.

In early 2015, the military claimed to have eliminated the insurgents from their last refuge in North Waziristan. In March and April of the same year, the Pakistani government announced a strategy for repatriation and rehabilitation of the people of FATA. The rehabilitation strategy aimed to reconstruct damaged facilities, particularly those dealing with education and health, and improve local governance. For the rehabilitation of internally displaced people, the government provided Rs. 5 billion (US\$ 33.33 Million) to the FATA Secretariat.¹¹⁰ But the local people complained that they could not rebuild their homes with the little money provided by the government and did not have adequate means to start a new life in FATA.¹¹¹ The people who returned to their homes faced serious hardships, with a poorly performing agricultural sector, few employment opportunities, and dysfunctional businesses and markets.¹¹² Moreover, local communities were unhappy with the permanent deployment of military troops in FATA after defeating the insurgency, especially given military mistreatment that often involved frequent inspections and a harsh attitude of soldiers towards the civilian population at the security checkpoints established every few kilometers. These checkpoints were manned by soldiers from other parts of the country with little knowledge of local Pashtun culture or its traditions. Body searches of the locals by the soldiers amounted to the violation of local traditions which created further resentment.¹¹³

108. Jon Boone and Emma Graham, "Pakistan Unprepared for Refugees Fleeing Operation against Taliban," *The Guardian*, June 26, 2014.

109. Hiba Mahamadi, "Interview: Hassan, Internally Displaced Person from Ladha, South Waziristan," *Newsline*, December 2014.

110. "FATA Secretariat Receives Rs 5 Billion for Repatriation and Rehabilitation of IDPs," *Pakistan Today*, August 30, 2015.

111. Interview, Khan Zaib Burki, Islamabad, March 21, 2019. He is based in Islamabad but he frequently visits his home town in the South Waziristan Agency of FATA.

112. Saad Sayeed and Radha Shah, "Displacement, Repatriation and Rehabilitation: Stories of Dispossession from Pakistan's Frontier," Working Paper FG8, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Berlin, April 2017: 7.

113. Khan Zaib interview, 2019.

The grievances of local communities, particularly in South and North Waziristan Agencies, were serious: they claimed that their houses and businesses were destroyed during the military operations and had not been rebuilt.¹¹⁴ The emergence of the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM), a new civil organization of ethnic Pashtuns, demonstrates local communities' discontentment with the government's policies. The PTM asserted the rights of the Pashtuns living in FATA and beyond, which has attracted many other alienated people of FATA. The PTM has launched peaceful protests demanding the return of the dislocated population to their home places, an end to extrajudicial killings and disappearances, and clearance of land mines in FATA.¹¹⁵

Because FATA was directly controlled by the federal government, it lacked the institutional capacity to plan and execute development projects. However, in May 2018 the government of Pakistan passed the 31st Amendment to the constitution, merging FATA with the adjacent province of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa.¹¹⁶ Mainstreaming FATA and giving its people the same economic and political rights as any other province of the country may help address the long-held grievances. Without true amelioration of the socioeconomic conditions of the people, a permanent peace in the region cannot be guaranteed. Brigadier (Retd.) Shaukat Qadir maintained that "the virtual absence of a holistic governance response to the counterinsurgency strategy leaves a vacuum that, if left unfilled, would doom the state's efforts to pacify militants permanently."¹¹⁷

COLLAPSE OF THE TTP

As a result of the more effective counterinsurgency of the Pakistani government, the TTP's hold in FATA was broken. As discussed earlier, the TTP's hold and infrastructure were dismantled in Bajaur and South and North Waziristan, and the Pakistani government established its writ of state. The military operation also significantly reduced the operational capability of the TTP, as evidenced by the reduction of terrorist-related

114. Sayeed and Shah, "Displacement, Repatriation and Rehabilitation": 18.

115. Ishtiaq Ahmed, "Emergence of the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement," *Daily Times*, (Islamabad) April 14, 2018.

116. Shahzaib Khan, "FATA's Belated Decolonization," *Express Tribune*, June 3, 2018.

117. Shaukat Qadir, "State's Responses": 154.

incidents in Pakistani cities, particularly in FATA. For example, 2,863 people were killed in such incidents in FATA in 2014, but only 411 in the first three months of 2015.¹¹⁸

The ongoing and more effective assaults on the TTP have led to factionalism and instability within the organization. Fazlullah emerged as the new leader of the TTP amid a leadership crisis caused by the death of Hakimullah Mehsud in a drone strike in November 2013. But Fazlullah did not gain wide popularity within the ranks, because he did not belong to the Wazir or the Mehsud tribe, unlike all previous leaders of the TTP. Since Fazlullah assumed the leadership, the TTP has faced a number of factional conflicts. The factionalism worsened after military strikes in June 2014. In September of that year, several leaders of the TTP formed a new faction called Jamaat-ul Ahrar.¹¹⁹ In October, several other leaders broke away from Fazlullah's TTP and pledged allegiance to the head of the Islamic State, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.¹²⁰

In the face of territorial losses and internal factionalism, the TTP made several missteps. In particular, attacking soft targets backfired. On December 16, 2014, militants belonging to a TTP faction led by Fazlullah attacked the Army Public School in Peshawar, killing 142 people, primarily school children and staff members. This attack was called "Pakistan's 9/11."¹²¹ According to Michael Semple, a former deputy European Union envoy to Afghanistan and an expert on the Taliban, "Fazlullah's latest outrage reflects his weakness."¹²² Another attack was carried out at the Pakistan–India border crossing near Wagah, Lahore, on November 2, 2014, by Jamaat ul-Ahrar, killing around 55 people.¹²³ An attack in early 2016 at the Bacha Khan University in Charsadda, 20 miles from Peshawar, by a faction of the TTP led by Mullah Mansoor, killed 20 people, including students and teachers.¹²⁴ These attacks

118. Farhan Zahid, "The Success and Failures of Pakistan's Operation Zarb-E-Azb," *Terrorism Monitor* 13:14 (2015): 5.

119. "Pakistani Taliban Splits; New Faction by the Name of 'TTP Jamatul Ahrar' Comes into Existence," *Economic Times*, August 26, 2014.

120. Zahir Shah Sherazi, "Six Top TTP Commanders Announce Allegiance to Islamic State's Baghdadi," *Dawn*, October 14, 2014.

121. Zahid, "Success and Failures": 6.

122. Dean Nelson, Taha Siddiqui, and Ashfaq Yusufzai, "Mullah Radio, Terrorist Demagogue behind the Savagery of Peshawar," *The Telegraph*, December 20, 2014.

123. Zahid, "Success and Failures": 6.

124. Declan Walsh, Ihsanullah Tipu Mehsud, and Ismail Khan, "Taliban Attack at Bacha Khan University in Pakistan Renews Fears," *New York Times*, January 20, 2016.

demonstrate a deep frustration within TTP ranks over its huge losses from the Zarb-e-Azb campaign in North Waziristan.¹²⁵

Due to the lack of cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan, and to Afghanistan's lack of complete control over its territory, the Afghan provinces adjacent to FATA have become sanctuaries for the militants fleeing the Zarb-e-Azb offensive. These safe havens have enabled the militants' leadership to survive and to continue plotting terrorist attacks within Pakistan.

CONCLUSION

The strong counterinsurgency measures by the Pakistani government brought an end to the insurgency in FATA while dismantling TTP's infrastructure and manpower. To reiterate my contention: a counterinsurgency strategy with specialized counterinsurgency forces, judicious use of force, and a focus on destroying insurgency infrastructure causes the decline of an insurgency, or at least prevents its escalation. The FATA case provides empirical evidence to support this contention.

The TTP's increasing hold in FATA and its indiscriminate terrorist attacks prompted the Pakistani government to deal with the threat seriously. This produced the strong political will necessary for decisive action against the TTP insurgency. With this strong resolve, the government came up with a better counterinsurgency strategy, which focused on specialized counterinsurgency training for the military forces. In addition, considerable military and financial resources were devoted to preparing the forces to launch attacks on the insurgents.

More troops, with more sophisticated weapons, enabled the military to destroy the insurgents' sanctuaries and their military capability. Most importantly, the "clear and hold" model was followed to consolidate the gains made against the insurgents: after clearing an area, troops were permanently stationed there to prevent the insurgents' return. But local communities were very unhappy with the large-scale destruction wrought by the military operations and the government's inadequate help with repatriation and rehabilitation. The PTM emerged in response to the grievances of the local communities.

125. Farhan Zahid, "The Pakistani Taliban after the Peshawar School Attack," *Terrorism Monitor* 13:1 (2015): 3.

To address these grievances, the government ended the semi-autonomous status of FATA by merging it with the neighboring province of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa in an attempt to bring the long-neglected region up to par with the rest of Pakistan. But it will take a great deal of time, resources, and, most importantly, strong government commitment to bring social and economic development to the region, which is imperative to prevent the resurgence of insurgency. Unless the long-standing socio-economic grievances of the local communities are addressed, the threat of insurgency will continue to haunt officials in Pakistan.