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WAZIRISTAN - Impact on the Taliban Insurgency and the Stability of Pakistan

BOKHARI Laila

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WAZIRISTAN - Impact on the Taliban Insurgency and the Stability of Pakistan

1 INTRODUCTION¹

This report is written in the context of the Transnational Radical Islamism Project (TERRA) at the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI). The TERRA-projects have since 1999 looked at various aspects of political violence and researched a number of insurgency and terrorist groups, with a special focus on radical Islamist movements.

The report takes a closer look at the struggles currently taking place in the Tribal Areas of Pakistan. It provides an overview of some of the militant factions who are active in the area, and analyses the Pakistani Government and Army responses to the violence. It argues that these responses may have backfired on the Pakistani authorities and created a vicious circle. Currently, there are signs that Islamist militants increasingly exploit the autonomy of the Tribal Areas and that they are even overrunning the weak state authority there. In addition, infighting for leadership is a factor which in itself is creating tension. There are growing fears that the process of a 'Talibanisation' may spill-over into the adjoining settled districts of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP). Reports of strict interpretations of Islam and glorification of the Taliban rule in Afghanistan amongst the population, alleged training of guerrilla fighters and terrorists by militant groups, as well as the harbouring of local and foreign militants by sympathizers in the Tribal Areas are worrying signals. Spill-over effects from such activities across the borders and onto the international scene are of concern not only to Islamabad but also to Kabul.

The Federal Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan (FATA) are characterised by their semi-autonomy from the Pakistani capital Islamabad. Tribal leaders have, since the British Empire ruled according to local customs and traditions and created their own power structures. Today, it seems the tribal belt between Pakistan and Afghanistan has become an arena for a number of different local, regional and international actors. Signs that the Taliban movement is reorganising in Afghanistan have created fears that it will use Waziristan as a scene for recruitment, radicalization and training of Islamist militants and terrorists. In response, the Pakistani Army has taken steps to "flush out foreign militants to avoid new and even more alien power structures developing".² Arguably, however, the response may have led to increased radicalisation among and infighting between the militants.

¹ The report is based on a lecture held at the NATO Centre of Excellence – Defence Against Terrorism (COE-DAT), Ankara, 18 April 2006.

² Interview, Major General Shaukat Sultan, Army Spokesperson, Rawalpindi, 20 December 2005.

In 2002, increased and continuous pressure put on Pakistan both from the U.S. and Afghan leaderships forced a reluctant Pakistani government to send regular army troops into the semi-autonomous tribal regions of Pakistan to counter the influx of the Taliban and al Qaeda remnants fleeing the U.S.-led Operation Anaconda in south-eastern Afghanistan. According to the U.S. coordinator for counter terrorism, Henry A. Crompton, “not only al Qaeda, but Taliban leadership are primarily in Pakistan, and the Pakistanis know that.”³ Pakistani officials say that the U.S. does not comprehend the complexity of the Tribal Areas in terms of ethnic loyalties, tribal alliances, foreign presence and infighting between different groups. But in the wake of two unsuccessful assassination attempts against President Musharraf in December 2003, there was a growing realization amongst Pakistani leaders that it may be in the country’s national interest to suppress the militants. One Army spokesman confirmed to me in an interview that, “Even if problematic, the Pakistani leadership has realised it has an internal problem it needs to control.”⁴ While the Afghan government has repeatedly complained about militants in Pakistan who are freely crossing the border to carry out attacks in Afghanistan, Pakistan denies that it is helping Taliban fighters, or making it easy for the militants to cross the border.⁵ However, Pakistan has repeatedly accused the different tribes in FATA of harbouring al Qaeda members who are also fighting U.S.-led coalition forces in Afghanistan. Widespread sympathy in the area for the Taliban complicates the issue further.

Local experts say many al Qaeda and Taliban militants fled to Pakistan’s tribal regions after they were chased out of Afghanistan by U.S.-backed forces in 2001.⁶ However, estimates on numbers vary considerably, and so do answers to the question as to who the militants are. They appear to constitute a mix of armed tribesmen, criminals, local Taliban fighters and foreign al Qaeda remnants. In addition, the battlefield of Waziristan has opened up a Pandora’s Box: a number of government officials and tribal elders have been killed in the Tribal Areas in recent years, either for supporting the government, or over suspicions of acting as informants for U.S. forces operating across the border in Afghanistan.

Several attempts have been made on initiating peace talks with the tribal leaders and the militants. In September 2006 the Pakistani government and local Taliban commanders signed a peace agreement in an attempt to achieve peace and calm in the area. The agreement marks a shift from earlier policies in a number of ways. One such shift is the decision that foreigners settled in the areas are not to be forcefully expelled. This change of tactic may be a sign of a government realisation that earlier handling with the militants has led to a so-called “blow-back”. A nation reaps what it sows, and as such aggressive military and covert policies may have led to unintended consequences.⁷ The recent talks may be a result of the army realising it

³ Henry A. Crompton, American coordinator for counterterrorism, in Eric Schmitt, “Springtime for Killing in Afghanistan” *New York Times*, 28 April 2006, URL <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/28/weekinreview/28schmitt.html>.

⁴ Interview, Major General Shaukat Sultan, Army Spokesperson, Rawalpindi, 20 December 2005.

⁵ AFP: “Karzai blames Pakistan over Taliban Attacks”, 19 May 2006.

⁶ Kamran Khan, Pakistani journalist, in PBS: “Frontline: in search of al Qaeda: theme. Pakistan’s tribal areas”, accessed 10 June 2006, URL <http://.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/search/journey/tribaltheme.html>.

⁷ The “blow-back” theory is discussed, although in a different context, by Chalmers Johnson (2000) *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of the American Empire* (New York: Holt Metropolitan Books).

was not getting anywhere. An issue to be discussed is however to what extent the peace talks have given the militants a legitimate and strengthened voice, and what results this may have.

2 THE TRIBAL AREAS (FATA)

The Federal Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), also known as ‘the Tribal Areas’ comprise seven districts: Khyber, Kurram, Bajaur, Mohmand Orakzai, and North and South Waziristan. The FATA are bordered by Afghanistan to the West with the border marked by the Durand line, the North-West Frontier Province and Punjab to the East, and Balochistan to the South. The border with Afghanistan is 2,400 kilometres long, mountainous and porous. The Tribal Areas have, according to a 1998 national census, a population of 5.7 million people, mostly Pashtun tribes.

The Tribal Areas were created by the British to serve as a buffer between India and Afghanistan. The region is only nominally controlled by the central government of Pakistan, a result of the special system of political administration that the British devised. The tribes heavily resisted colonial rule and were thus, “granted maximum autonomy and allowed to run their affairs in accordance with Islamic faith, customs and traditions.”⁸ Furthermore, the British gave the tribal elders special privileges in order to make them keep their populations calm and quiet. Only in 1997 were the tribes’ members given universal franchise. Before this, only a few tribal elders took part in the elections and held the right to vote. In terms of jurisdiction, the Pakistani courts and police have had no direct jurisdiction in the areas. A controversial set of laws called the Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR) dating back to 1947, however, gives the government the right to arrest anyone without announcing the reasons for arrest.

The autonomous character of the Tribal Areas has held them back in terms of socio-economic development. Successive governments in Pakistan have promised reforms and development for the areas, without much success. The tribal regions have for a long time been neglected by the provincial and national governments. While it is true that the tribes have been highly critical of any interference, and have lived under their own tribal regulations and laws, the governments have also failed to take steps in order to improve their basic standard of living (a responsibility which ultimately lies with the government). While the government-run educational facilities are in a poor state all over Pakistan, the services are worse in the tribal regions. Unemployment has increased due to the lack of adequate employment opportunities, and electricity is yet to reach the entire tribal region, which is a major hindrance to exploiting its limited agricultural potential. On the other hand, religious schools (madrassas) have monopolized the educational structure of these tribal regions by default, and for many jihadis, as well as criminals, the madrassas have become a main source of employment and revenue. Unless the economic

⁸ Rahimullah Yusufzai, “Analysis: Pakistan’s tribal frontiers”, *BBC News Online*, 14 December 2001, URL http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/low/south_asia/1711316.stm.

potential of the tribal regions is developed, there is every possibility of them being influenced by foreign and/or local militant elements.

In July 2002, Pakistani troops entered the Tirah Valley in the Khyber tribal district for the first time in 55 years. Shortly afterwards, the Pakistani Army proceeded to move into Waziristan. In a bid to seek tribal support for the U.S.-led war on terrorism, Pakistan has pursued the classic carrot and stick approach in the Tribal Areas, including South and North Waziristan. The operations were made possible after long negotiations with various tribes, who reluctantly agreed to allow the military presence after the assurance that it would be accompanied by funds and development. A record number of development projects, some funded by foreign donors, have been initiated in the under-developed tribal region to improve education, health and communication facilities. However, much is yet to be improved.

With the entry of the Pakistani Army the climate became tougher. While Islamabad initially argued for a careful and diplomatic entry, the use of force quickly changed the reality. Tribes that refused to cooperate were punished with the demolition of homes, sealing of shops and businesses, seizure of vehicles and dismissal from government jobs. However, some tribal elders did co-operate and delivered a number of tribesmen whose names featured on a “wanted list” of people suspected of sheltering suspects.⁹ But once the military action started in South Waziristan, a number of Waziri sub-tribes interpreted it as an attempt to subjugate them.¹⁰ Attempts to persuade them into handing over foreign militants failed, and with alleged mishandling by the authorities, in form of aggressive military offensives, the security campaign against suspected al Qaeda militants turned into an ‘undeclared war’ in 2004, between the Pakistani military and the rebel tribesmen.¹¹

The search for senior level al Qaeda members as part of the U.S.-led War on terrorism has also led to pressure to act forcefully.¹² In March 2004, heavy fighting broke out near the town of Wana in South Waziristan between Pakistani troops and an estimated 400 militants concentrated in several fortified settlements. It was speculated that Ayman al-Zawahiri was amongst those who were trapped by the Pakistani Army. Arrests made in the Tribal Areas bear witness that a number of key members of al Qaeda have operated in these areas. These individuals were mainly of Pakistani origin, but they also included militants from Central Asia, the Caucasus and other places.¹³ Widely circulated DVDs, which have allegedly been filmed in the Waziristan districts, show para-military training camps and have been used “to terrorise opponents and recruit new fighters, or [are] sent abroad to help raise money”.¹⁴ The use of

⁹ Rahimullah Yusufzai, “Waziristan: Bin Ladens hiding place?”, *BBC News*, 4 March 2004, URL http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/3532841.stm.

¹⁰ “Pakistan Army meets resistance”, *Dawn*, Lahore, 17 September 2004.

¹¹ Zaffar Abbas, “Pakistan’s undeclared war”, *BBC News*, 10 September 2004, URL http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/3645114.stm.

¹² Interview, Major General Shaukat Sultan, Army Spokesperson, Rawalpindi, 20 December 2005.

¹³ E-mail correspondence with Amir Rana, Director Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), 20 May 2006.

¹⁴ Mark Dummet and Bilal Sarwary, “DVD role in Afghan insurgency”, *BBC News*, 21 February 2006, URL http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/-/2/hi/south_asia/4733704.stm.

different media in recruitment and radicalization is increasingly seen both in the Tribal Areas, in the rest of Pakistan, as well as internationally.

The Tribal Areas have seen a number of changes since the entry of the Pakistani Army. Violence both by foreign and local militants and members of various tribes has increased and intensified. The autonomous character of the areas has arguably facilitated the influx of a number of foreign elements who have increasingly mixed with the local tribes. The specific characteristics of the local actors are discussed below, but firstly an overview of the Pakistani Army involvement in the area is given.

3 PAKISTANI ARMY INVOLVEMENT

The Pakistani Army knew that their involvement would be controversial in the eyes of the local tribes. As described in the previous section, the deep-rooted autonomy of the Areas, made it a particular challenging area to enter for the Pakistani Army. The below section will examine some of the objectives of the troop deployment into the Areas.

According to the Pakistani Army Spokesman, Major General Shaukat Sultan, the objectives of the Pakistani Army operations in the FATA were: first, to deploy the army on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border to stop a spill over of the activities of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, i.e. to stop militants on the run from the U.S. in Afghanistan from entering Pakistan; secondly, to help the political administration develop the Tribal Areas; and thirdly, to capture “terrorists hiding in FATA”.¹⁵ The strategy of the authorities has been to interrogate the suspects and to locate al Qaeda and Taliban fugitives through information provided to them by a mix of local tribesmen and their own personnel.¹⁶ At the same time, the Pakistani Army's Quick Reaction Force, comprising commandos and equipped with helicopter gun ships and artillery, has taken part in a number of military operations in Waziristan. Reports of Pakistani military co-operation and intelligence sharing with the U.S. Army as part of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) have increasingly infuriated both the local tribes and the militants in the region.¹⁷

The Pakistani Army operations are believed to have failed because of the sympathy of the Pakistani tribes towards the defeated Taliban regime and foreign fighters, but also as a result of the extreme anger felt at the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan.¹⁸ Furthermore, when the Pakistani armed forces tried to catch the fleeing members of al Qaeda (the foreign militants), the rage also turned towards Pakistan's rulers.¹⁹ The chiefs and tribal leaders of Waziristan warned Pakistan of retaliation and accused the operation of being U.S.-sponsored. Moreover, they stated that any further action by the Army would be seen as a declaration of war against the tribes. As an initial reaction, Pakistan sent officers to meet with the tribal council. The

¹⁵ Interview, Major General Shaukat Sultan, Army Spokesperson, Rawalpindi, 20 December 2005.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Interview with tribal leader, Kohat, NWFP, Pakistan, 12 April 2006.

¹⁸ Interview with researcher at ISS- Islamabad, 15 December 2005.

¹⁹ Interview with tribal leader, Kohat, NWFP, Pakistan, 12 April 2006.

officers pledged that before any further action was taken against any militants hiding in the area, the tribes would be taken into the military's confidence, and then the tribes themselves could take action against the militants.²⁰ The army would only enter if the tribes failed to deliver. However, according to local witnesses, Pakistani security forces and local political administrations continued to undertake small operations in which foreign militants were arrested.²¹ Concerns have also been expressed regarding indiscriminate rounding up of both tribesmen and militants.

In October 2003, according to Rtd General Hamid Gul, the Pakistani Army violated its agreement with the tribes when, without warning, it air-dropped 2,500 commandos into the village of Baghar in South Waziristan. Allegedly, the ground troops received aerial support from 12 helicopter gun ships. According to witnesses some of the helicopters flew from Machdad Kot U.S. air base across the border in Afghanistan, infuriating the local population.²² The operation created a deep resentment against the Pakistani Army. Previously the militants would only attack U.S. targets in Afghanistan, and then withdraw back into the Waziristan Tribal Areas.²³ Now, it seems they perceive the Pakistani Army and U.S. forces an equal enemy, and consequently the militants receive renewed support from angered local tribes.

Pakistan has deployed 70,000 troops into the area. While deployment was initially limited to South Waziristan, most of the militants have now shifted to North Waziristan. Alleged cross-border raids by the U.S. forces have also created domestic problems for the Pakistani government, because it seems as if the United States aids the Pakistani forces with intelligence information and with tactical air strikes on suspected rebel bases and safe houses.²⁴ One of the most extensive U.S. air strikes targeted the village of Damadola, on 13 January 2006 in the Bajaur Tribal Area, on the border of Afghanistan.²⁵ It caused widespread protests across Pakistan after it emerged that at least 13 civilians, including women and children, had been killed.²⁶ Al Qaeda's number two, Ayman al Zawahiri, was allegedly the intended target, but he managed to escape.²⁷

As a result of this and similar attacks, there is growing resentment among the tribesmen who complain that security forces attack whole villages indiscriminately when firing at a target. The increased violence and attacks against security forces is also a reaction to the tough measures taken by the Pakistani Army in search of the militants. An incident that has been widely reported in the Pakistani press exemplifies this argument: "The blast was the result of a

²⁰ Interview, Major General Shaukat Sultan, Army Spokesperson, Rawalpindi, 20 December 2005.

²¹ Interview with tribal leader, Kohat, NWFP, Pakistan, 12 April 2006.

²² Interview, Retd General Hamid Gul, Rawalpindi, January 2006.

²³ Intikhab Amir, "Whose Writ is it Anyway?", *The Herald*, Vol 37, Number 4, Karachi, April 2006.

²⁴ See for instance: USINFO: "Pakistan Key Partner in War on Terror, Defense Department says", 5 March 2006, URL <http://usinfo.state.gov/sa/Archive/2006/Mar/05-584654.html>.

²⁵ Kenneth Katzman, "Afghanistan: Post-War Governance, Security and US Policy", CRS Report to Congress, 4 May 2006, URL <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/67157.pdf>.

²⁶ "Pakistan and suicide attacks in Afghanistan", *Jane's Terrorism & Security Monitor*, 15 March 2006, and meeting with Farhan Bukhari, correspondent for Financial Times, Islamabad, 8 April 2006.

²⁷ David Ensor, "Airstrike may have killed bin Laden's No. 2", *CNN.com*, 14 January 2006, URL <http://www.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/meast/01/13/alqaeda.strike/index.html>.

suicide attack”, said a spokesman for a local militant group, Abdullah Farhad. “We wanted to show our anger at the searches of our women by security forces,” he said. “It is better to die with honour than be ridiculed.”²⁸

The Pakistani Army realised early on that there was a need to enhance the role of the tribal leaders (maliks) and elders. As a result, the Pakistani government has regularly initiated talks with the local elders in order to explain the objectives of the military operations, yet many see the operations in Waziristan as “Pakistan’s undeclared war”, where all means may be necessary.²⁹ While for the most part the targets for the militants have been the Pakistani Army, local official representatives or tribal leaders seen as collaborators have also had to take the brunt. This bears witness of a myriad of local actors.

4 ARMED TRIBESMEN, LOCAL MILITANTS OR CRIMINALS?

In attempting to characterise the actors involved in this conflict, it becomes clear that the non-state actors consist of a myriad of elements. While most attention has been put on the struggle to pull out foreign militants in the ongoing U.S.-led “War on Terror”, arguably the local actors have increasingly become involved as the violence has escalated.³⁰

One of the reasons for this is the specific characteristics of the area. The semi-autonomy has been mentioned above. Furthermore, the Tribal Areas are also among the most religiously conservative parts of the country. They run their affairs largely according to Islamic faith, customs and traditions.³¹ These areas have remained strong-holds for Taliban sympathisers since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, and the ongoing violence and attacks by the Pakistani Army, and the rumours about orchestrated support from the U.S., have led to a negative response both from local tribal leaders and religious parties within Pakistan. Pakistani militant groups are also seen to have benefited and exploited the situation.

The on-going violence has also led to fierce infighting for leadership and authority amongst the various tribes and militant factions. In 2005, militants carried out a sustained campaign against pro-government tribal elders, killing many civilians in the process. In the Wana and Makin regions of the Tribal Areas this has led to a power vacuum which has been filled by parallel governments established by the local Taliban leadership based on the pattern of their Afghan predecessors and role models. Violence has also led to a number of people fleeing their villages, and in some areas the traditional tribal jirgas (councils consisting of tribal elders in a number of regions) have not convened for a long time. A break-down of the traditional mechanisms of authority may therefore have worsened the situation and given rise to

²⁸ “The Force of the Pakistan Army”, *DAWN* (urdu version on-line), 30 May 2006.

²⁹ Zaffar Abbas, “Pakistan’s undeclared war”, *BBC News*, 10 September 2004, URL http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/3645114.stm.

³⁰ “Pakistan hunting Qaeda, Taliban”, *Daily Times*, Lahore, 1 March 2006.

³¹ Rahimullah Yusufzai, “Analysis: Pakistan’s tribal frontiers”, *BBC News Online*, 14 December 2001, URL http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/low/south_asia/1711316.stm.

alternative ones, for example the enforcing of Islamic laws and the development of so-called Shariah Forces.³² This has worried the governments both in Islamabad and Kabul.

A number of incidents show that Waziristan is increasingly a hotbed for Taliban activities and that many foreign militants are still hiding there. According to data gathered by the Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies analysing the arrests of militants and al Qaeda remnants in the Tribal Areas, most arrestees are Pakistani and Afghan nationals. However, they also include militants from Central Asia and Chechnya.³³ Pakistani Army officials estimated at the end of 2005 that there were around 400-600 militants in the Waziristan regions. Many of them have married and settled in the region, while some of them have arrived recently.³⁴ However, according to one tribal leader of Waziristan, more than 5,000 foreign militants are still living in the area.³⁵

The profile of the militants seems to be changing: a new, younger generation and local type of Taliban has sprung up in the Waziristan districts. Their struggle is aided with ample resources in the form of funds and weapons, and their aggression is directed against those who are seen as siding with the Pakistani government in its campaign against terrorism. Local Taliban activists are also said to blend with activists belonging to the defunct Pakistani militant group *Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan* (SSP), and they appear together in rallies to discourage folk music shows and public games. The self-proclaimed local Taliban leader Mullah Asmatullah is also said to have banned music and dancing at weddings and issued edicts asking all men to grow beards.³⁶ In Wana, different groups of the Ahmedzai Wazir tribe are reportedly running their own separate liaison offices to raise funds, recruit militants for jihad in Afghanistan and register public complaints.

Some districts in South and North Waziristan have increasingly become places of activism for banned militant organisations. In the Luni and Rohri districts of South Waziristan, representatives of various groups host meetings in mosques and hujras to invite and recruit people to go to war in Afghanistan.³⁷ Allegedly, these groups include the Pakistani/Kashmiri groups Hizbul Mujahideen, Jaish-e-Mohammed and Harkat ul Mujahideen (ex-Harkat ul Ansar). According to a former member of a militant group, people are sent from all over the Tribal Areas to Wana, where Taliban leaders train them and send them across the border to Afghanistan.³⁸

³² Intikhab Amir, "Whose Writ is it Anyway?", *The Herald*, Vol 37, Number 4, Karachi, April 2006, and Amir Rana, "Another Deal with Militants for Peace in Tribal Areas", Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), 6 September 2006.

³³ E-mail correspondence with Amir Rana, Director Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), 20 May 2006.

³⁴ Interview, Major General Shaukat Sultan, Army Spokesperson, Rawalpindi, 20 December 2005. According to Pakistan's Federal Interior Minister, Mr Aftab Khan Sherpao, the number is more likely to be around 600 local and foreign militants still present in Waziristan (*Islamabad Jinnah*, Urdu version, 17 May 2006).

³⁵ E-mail correspondence with local journalists, e-mails dated 12 and 13 May 2006.

³⁶ Intikhab Amir, "Whose Writ is it Anyway?", *The Herald*, Vol 37, Number 4, Karachi, April 2006.

³⁷ Interview with former militant, Rawalpindi, 13 April 2006.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

The local militants appear to be quite heavily armed, most of them students of local madrassas. They are led by two militant clerics who are aspiring to establish a Taliban-like government in the area, Maulvi Abdul Khaliq and Maulvi Sadiq Noor. Both have headed madrassas in Waziristan. Maulvi Khaliq's madrassa in Miranshah appears to have been the base for the entire anti-military movement.³⁹

Among the important figures that have been caught and killed from the Tribal Areas, with alleged links to al Qaeda, is Nek Mohammed. Nek was seen as a charismatic Taliban commander and key figure in the area, acting as a rallying point for the Afghan resistance, and as a facilitator for the many foreign and local al Qaeda fighters sheltered in the region. Nek Muhammad belonged to the Hamed Zai Wazir tribe's sub-clan, the Yargul Khai. During the Afghan jihad, he signed up for a training camp where he met, among others, the Taliban leaders Saifullah Mansoor and Jalaluddin Haqqani. At that time the South and North Waziristan districts were part of a supply line that ran from Paktia to Zabul across the border, which was supposed to reinforce the positions of Afghan fighters. When the U.S. bombardment of Afghanistan began many fled over the border to Pakistan or Iran. Nek helped them settle in South Waziristan, and many former-Taliban and al Qaeda remnants, together with other civilians, fled to Shahi Kot (in Afghanistan) and across the border to the Tribal Areas. Some of these people were arrested directly by the Pakistanis, but many were also offered protection by the local tribes.⁴⁰

Nek Muhammad was killed in a missile strike near Wana, the district headquarters of South Waziristan., but before that, he and his foreign comrades formed a new jihadi group called *Jaish ul Qibla al-Jihadi al-Alami* (Jaish-ul-Qibla). This group played an important role in preparing recruitment and propaganda material (literature and films) for the militants. The group also provided and facilitated para-military training for new recruits, in facilities located in South and North Waziristan. These centres started training fighters in the middle of 2003.⁴¹ Camps were established in Wana, Azam Warsak, Kalosha, Zareen Noor, Baghar, Dhog and Angor Ada in South Waziristan. In North Waziristan, camps were established in the border areas of Shawal, including Darey Nishtar and Mangaroti, where neither Afghanistan nor Pakistan is in control.

Another group was later formed out of the Jaish-ul-Qibla called *the Jandullah* (Army of God). Jandullah aimed to conduct operations all over Pakistan and to "take the battle to all possible fronts".⁴² This group was headed by Attaur Rehman and Abu Musab al-Balochi who were later arrested in Karachi after an unsuccessful attack on the Corps Commander in Karachi. Information from Jandullah detainees indicates that most members of the group were trained in South Waziristan, until autumn 2005.⁴³ They claim that villages around Kalosha in South

³⁹ Zaffar Abbas, "Pakistan's Taleban Challenge", *BBC News*, 10 March 2006, URL http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4782140.stm.

⁴⁰ Interview with tribal leader, Kohat, NWFP, Pakistan, 12 April 2006.

⁴¹ Interview with former militant, Rawalpindi, 13 April 2006.

⁴² Syed Saleem Shahzad, "Taliban's bloody foothold", *Asian Times*, 8 February 2006.

⁴³ Interview with militant, Lahore, 15 April 2006.

Waziristan had been handed over as gifts to the families of Arab fighters who had chosen to settle there.

Jandullah is believed to be one of several small terrorist cells that emerged after the government's crackdown on radical Islamists in Pakistan. According to local security officials there are an estimated 20 cells, mostly splinter-groups of banned militant organisations, active only in Karachi. Jandullah claims that it is a purely militant outfit whose objective is to target Pakistan's pro-U.S. rulers, as well as U.S. and British interests in Pakistan. Small independent groups of five to ten members operate under a central Jandullah command that keeps on working even after a major operation has been undertaken by the group. Pakistani officials cite such groups as an example of the new face of Islamic militancy in Pakistan, allowed to develop strength, resources and motivation in the Tribal Areas.⁴⁴

Observers describe Jandullah as a well-entrenched al Qaeda group comprising a few dozen hardcore militants from the professional and educated class, mostly in their 20s and 30s.⁴⁵ The head of Jandullah, Attaur Rehman, is a member of the middle-class and graduate of Karachi University. He was arrested in June 2004 for masterminding a series of terrorist attacks in the city. Attaur was earlier associated with Islami Jamiat Tuleba, the student wing of the political party Jamaat-e-Islami. He later broke away from the Jamaat to form the Jandullah.

Jandullah is seen as one of the most recently created and fiercest of the terrorist groups behind the many violent attacks in Karachi. The group hit the headlines after an attack on the motorcade of Corps Commander Karachi Lt Gen Ahsan Saleem Hyat in June 2004. Hyat narrowly escaped death, but 11 people, including eight soldiers, were killed on the spot. Jandullah was reportedly first headed by the alleged al Qaeda mastermind Khaled Sheikh Mohammed and later another Al Qaeda commander Abu Faraj Al Libbi. Al Libbi reportedly was al Qaeda's chief operational leader in Pakistan before his arrest in May 2005, he was also seen as the mastermind behind the two failed attacks on the Pakistani President in 2003 and 2004.⁴⁶

A number of established groups in Pakistan have arguably been attracted towards the Tribal Areas. Furthermore, many perpetrators of the attacks that have taken place in other parts of Pakistan have received their training in camps in the lawless tribal region of Waziristan.⁴⁷ Various groups are attempting to benefit from the rising popular disaffection against the Musharraf government's domestic and foreign policies to expand their support. Finally, according to claims by the Pakistani Army, the violence in the Tribal Areas is also causing an import of criminal gangs.⁴⁸ In a local move to fight the rise of criminality, a group calling itself the Mujahideen Shumali Waziristan (the holy warriors of North Waziristan) has itself claimed

⁴⁴ Interview with former ISI-official, Islamabad, 14 April 2006.

⁴⁵ Interview with local journalist, Islamabad, 8 April 2006.

⁴⁶ "Who's who in al Qaeda", *BBC News*, downloaded 25 September 2006, URL http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2780525.stm.

⁴⁷ Interview with local journalist, Islamabad, 8 April 2006.

⁴⁸ Meeting with Major General Shaukat Sultan, Army Spokesperson, Rawalpindi, 20 December 2005.

to be fighting local bandits with “Taliban methods”.⁴⁹ This has caused fears that a local Pakistani Taliban may have developed in the area.

5 THE PAKISTANI TALIBAN, LOCAL OR FOREIGN MILITANTS?

One of the key issues with regard to the struggle in the Tribal Areas has been whether the militants consist of mainly local or foreign elements. There are increasingly voices who point to a further ‘Pakistani Talibanisation’ of the areas in question, i.e. a local Pakistani variation of the methods used by the Afghan Taliban regime.

In what was perceived as an escalation of violence from both sides, the Pakistani security forces began an offensive in March 2006 targeting a hide-out of suspected foreign militants in the Waziristan border town of Danday Saidgi. Officials say that 45 people were killed in the attacks, including more than 30 foreigners, mostly Chechens.⁵⁰ This was followed by hundreds of pro-Taliban militants declaring a virtual war on the Pakistani security forces and government institutions. This was seen as instrumental in attracting various groups to join forces. The result was a massive campaign of videos and photos being circulated across Pakistan illustrating the militants’ control in Waziristan. They claim to have attracted thousands of foot soldiers to support their cause, including Arab, Chechen, Pakistani, Afghan and Uzbek nationals, Africans from Sudan, Algeria, Libya and Morocco, and local tribesmen.⁵¹ According to their statements, North Waziristan is now their “Islamic state” and base from which they prepare to launch “a summer offensive” in Afghanistan (2006).⁵² According to the Pakistani reporter Intikhab Amir, local Taliban operatives from Miranshah, Bannu, Tank and Dera Ismail Khan confirm continued forays by the Waziristan-based militants into Afghanistan.⁵³

The fact that tribal groups and local madrassa students receive military and terrorist training and have been involved in fighting in the Tribal Areas has led to concern on behalf of the Pakistani authorities. A video allegedly produced by the local Taliban has been widely circulated among tribesmen to instigate people to join their “cause”.⁵⁴ The film features a mob led by armed madrassa students that goes after some persons described as criminals, drug-pushers, bootleggers and extortionists. They are killed and their bodies are hung from lamp posts and trees. In some sequences of film people are beheaded, their bodies tied to vehicles and dragged through city streets. Those leading the massacre described their campaign as enforcement of what they called the “Islamic justice system”. They have successfully mobilized local support to the extent that there is now a highly active Taliban-like movement in the area. Importantly, the movement is attacking the Pakistani security forces, not in the

⁴⁹ Intikhab Amir, “Whose Writ is it Anyway?”, *The Herald*, Vol 37, Number 4, Karachi, April 2006.

⁵⁰ Interview, Maj Gen Shaukat Sultan, Army Spokesperson, Rawalpindi, 7 April 2006.

⁵¹ Syed Saleem Shahzad, “The Taliban’s bloody foothold”, *Asia Times*, 8 February 2006.

⁵² Intikhab Amir, “Waziristan – No Man’s Land?” *The Herald*, April 2006.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Zahid Hussein, “Terror in Miranshah”, *Newsline*, Karachi, April 2006.

name of tribal independence, but fighting for a self-styled Islamic system, proclaiming their own version of Taliban-like measures.⁵⁵

Government officials have expressed concern over a group calling itself the *Pakistani Taliban*. Specifically, the government is afraid that this group may enforce Taliban-style methods in Waziristan. The group is seen as a loosely knit constellation of many militant factions. Haji Omar is believed to be the Emir of the Pakistani Taliban, and the group is now said to control large parts of Waziristan. Allegedly, he remains virtually unchallenged in South Waziristan and he also aims to establish Taliban control in North Waziristan.⁵⁶ Haji Omar served as one of the many ‘lieutenants’ of Taliban leader Mullah Omar until the fall of the Taliban in November 2001. After that he returned to Wana and began organising the Pakistani Taliban in Waziristan. Haji Omar was chosen to lead the Pakistani Taliban after they first declared that their former leader, Nek Muhammed, had been killed. Today, he commands thousands of tribal militants. Based largely in the tribal belt of South and North Waziristan, the Pakistani Taliban is believed to have joined their Afghan counterparts in their battle against the U.S.-backed government of President Karzai.⁵⁷

According to a number of observers, a second Afghan Jihad was established as fighters fled U.S. bombardment of Afghanistan in late autumn 2001.⁵⁸ New housing, training camps and recruitment centres were set up as operational bases for ‘the refugees’. Pakistani officials also allege that a large number of criminals had entered the Taliban ranks in order to make money from Arab and Central Asian fighters seeking refuge in Waziristan.⁵⁹

The Islamists in the area aim for a return to a society based on Islamic rules and principles. According to the above-mentioned group called the Mujahideen Shumali Waziristan, the ultimate goal of their organisation is to launch a jihad reaching from Khorasan (Afghanistan) to Jerusalem.⁶⁰ For groups such as Mujahideen Shumali Waziristan, Afghanistan under the rule of the Taliban is the example of a genuine Islamic state, and they wage armed jihad against the U.S. and its allies in order to force them out of Afghanistan. This includes Pakistan, the key U.S. ally in the region. In the words of the group’s leader: “We treat all American allies as enemy. We have caught many people who were trying to help the Americans, either directly or through Pakistan.”⁶¹ The head of the Taliban in Pakistan’s Tribal Areas warned that there can be no peace in Afghanistan as long as U.S. forces remain in that country.⁶² The Mujahideen Shumali Waziristan is known to have spread leaflets and posters all over the Tribal Areas issuing a general warning to those spying for the Pakistani and U.S. security forces. Hundreds

⁵⁵ Intikhab Amir, “Whose Writ is it Anyway?”, *The Herald*, Vol 37, Number 4, Karachi, April 2006.

⁵⁶ Interview with local journalist, Islamabad, 8 April 2006.

⁵⁷ Intikhab Amir, “Whose Writ is it Anyway?”, *The Herald*, Vol 37, Number 4, Karachi, April 2006.

⁵⁸ The ‘first Afghan Jihad’ is seen as the one against the Soviet Army after their invasion in 1979 .

⁵⁹ Intikhab Amir, “Whose Writ is it Anyway?”, *The Herald*, Vol 37, Number 4, Karachi, April 2006.

⁶⁰ Interview with tribal leader, Kohat, NWFP, Pakistan, 12 April 2006.

⁶¹ Intikhab Amir, “Waziristan – No Man’s Land?” *The Herald*, April 2006.

⁶² Intikhab Amir, “Flashpoint Waziristan”, *The Herald*, April 2006.

of suspected “spies”, often local government representatives, journalists etc., have been killed by the local militants.⁶³

Since 2005 a number of foreign militants have been arrested or killed in the Tribal Areas by the Pakistani Army. In December 2005 senior al Qaeda operational commander Abu Hamza Rabia was killed in a missile attack on Asoray village in Mirali.⁶⁴ Likewise, Abdullah Mehsod, Tahir Yaldeshiv (a Tajik militant), Maulvi Noor Muhammad of Bajaur Agency, and a Tajik widow, who allegedly used to run a training camp for female militants in Wana, have all been arrested during Pakistani Army operations.⁶⁵ Even if al Zawahiri himself was not killed in the attack of 13 January 2006, it was reported that at least four senior al Qaeda commanders, a son-in-law of Al Zawahiri and Midhat Mursi Al Sayid aka Abu Khabab al-Masri, may have been killed.⁶⁶ In connection with a separate set of air strikes, also in the Tribal Areas, it was reported that Abu Obaidah al Misri, al Qaeda’s chief of operations for Afghanistan’s eastern Kunar province, had been killed.⁶⁷ Furthermore, recently, Pakistani officials reported that the al Qaeda militant Abu Marwan al-Suri was killed in a gun battle with Pakistani soldiers in the Tribal Area of Bajaur bordering Afghanistan.⁶⁸ Al-Suri was known as an explosive expert for al Qaeda. In April 2006, one high-level al Qaeda operative indicted for the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings in Africa was believed to have died in a Pakistani military strike in North Waziristan, and, in a separate incident, the Egyptian-born explosives expert Abdul Rahman al-Mujahir aka Muhsin Musa Matwalli Atwah is thought to have been killed along with seven other militants.⁶⁹ The examples show that the areas have been seen as important space also for foreign militants.

The Pakistani army attacks, aimed at preventing the infiltration of al Qaeda and Taliban fighters into Afghanistan, have targeted compounds, alleged training facilities and madrassas. These have all been places suspected of harbouring militants. The ongoing fighting has caused extensive damage to property and shattered the locals’ confidence in the government’s ability to maintain basic law and order. As a result of the continuous fighting, a large number of people had to flee Miranshah, and not all of them have returned home. The missile attacks and the violence that was sparked in and around Miranshah have shocked Pakistani citizens in general, and the residents of North Waziristan in particular. The attacks on compounds are also believed to have killed and injured a number of civilians, something that has increasingly turned the local tribesmen against the Pakistani Army.

⁶³ Intikhab Amir, “Waziristan – No Man’s Land?” *The Herald*, April 2006.

⁶⁴ CNN: “Al Qaeda no. 3 dead, but how?” *CNN Online*, 3 December 2005, URL <http://www.cnn.com/2005/WORLD/asiapcf/12/03/pakistan.rabia/index.html/>.

⁶⁵ E-mail interview local journalists, e-mail dated 12 May 2006.

⁶⁶ Muhammad Amir Rana, “Bajaur – Hub of radical forces”, *Pak Institute of Peace Studies*, April 2006, URL <http://www.pips.com.pk/Pakistan/bajuar.asp>.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ “Al-Suri’s Diary – Families of Al-Zarqawi, Others Received Cash Handouts”, *The Dawn*, Peshawar, 21 April 2006.

⁶⁹ AFP, “Pakistani Official Says Slain Al-Qa’ida Figure Close to Usama Bin Ladin”, Peshawar, 22 April 2006.

The militants have responded with tactics such as kidnappings and abductions. Among those kidnapped are officials from the Tribal Electric Supply Company, local journalists and Frontier Corps personnel. Suspected militants have also fired a number of rockets against security forces, while tribesmen have ransacked the offices of non-governmental organisations and a number of governmental buildings. In March 2006 local Taliban reportedly took control of local schools, government buildings and a telephone exchange, and they started to patrol the streets of Miranshah. In this way they have effectively taken over the important authority functions in the area. While clashes and fierce artillery duels continue between local militants and the Pakistani Army, increasingly explosive devices and landmines have been planted on dirt tracks aiming to make it difficult for the Army to operate in the Tribal Areas. Clashes between foreign militants and local tribesmen have also resulted in casualties, including militants from Middle Eastern, Central Asian and African countries.⁷⁰

The use of roadside bombs has increasingly become a tactic used against the Pakistani forces and their army vehicles. The roadside bombs are intended to keep the security forces away from the Tribal Areas of Waziristan. As a result, government control is limited to the Miranshah Bazaar and the Wana Bazaar, the two official headquarters of South and North Waziristan. Increased capabilities in terms of weapons and funds on the part of the militants have been accompanied with a change of tactics. This directly effects the operations across the border into Afghanistan.⁷¹

Fresh out of local madrassas, many young militants are taking over key law and order positions in the region. Through their campaigns and “enforcement of law and order”, they are scaring many people away from this troubled region in Pakistan. This has resulted in mass migration from the Tribal Areas into cities in adjoining regions. While there are still a lot of questions regarding funding of militant activities, tribal leaders have told the Pakistani press that some of the tribes such as Waziri and Mehsoon, of South Waziristan, are still receiving money from al Qaeda in exchange for protecting foreign militants.⁷² Some of the foreign militants who look like pathans and speak pushto are running drugs and arms smuggling businesses. Allegedly, they have a huge fleet of trucks which transport goods from Dera Ismail Khan to Karachi.⁷³ Widespread illiteracy and unemployment in the area makes it easy for them to recruit followers in large numbers. According to a former militant, “There are unemployed youth who have nothing to do and they are their potential targets for recruitment”.⁷⁴

6 FROM BATTLEFIELD TO PEACE TALKS?

The entry of the Pakistani Army into the semi-autonomous Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) has had wider consequences than the “hunting down of foreign militants,

⁷⁰ Intikhab Amir, “Flashpoint Waziristan”, *The Herald*, April 2006.

⁷¹ Intikhab Amir, “Waziristan – No Man’s Land”, *The Herald*, April 2006.

⁷² E-mail interview with Pakistani journalist working in the Tribal Areas, dated 30 April 2006.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Interview with former militant, Rawalpindi, 13 April 2006.

Taliban and al Qaeda remnants”.⁷⁵ While the authorities have managed to arrest and kill a number of foreign militants, their campaign has also turned a number of local tribesmen against the government and has further radicalised some. Efforts to calm the situation and to initiate “peace-talks” with the tribal leaders may in effect be a result of a realisation that the army was risking a “blow-back” with unintended consequences. The questions to be asked are however with whom was the Accord made and what consequences might this have for a successful curbing of militancy in the area?

What makes South and North Waziristan significant is that the two areas border Afghanistan, especially its Paktia province, where the Taliban and al Qaeda forces already have been regrouping. Due to its proximity to Paktia province and because Taliban and al Qaeda enjoy support amongst the locals, Waziristan can be used as a base for ongoing operations against the U.S. troops in Afghanistan. The U.S. and Pakistan are fully aware of this problem, with the former pressurizing the latter to take decisive action against the militants in the Tribal Areas. As we have seen, however, the casualties have, unfortunately, included local civilians causing severe reactions amongst the local population.

Many of the local and foreign militants view the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan to be an “Afghan Jihad part II”.⁷⁶ In “Jihad part I”, they believe they fought one superpower and now they are fighting another. The predominant conviction is that if they could drive away the Soviets they can do the same to the U.S. Not only are there strong sentiments against the U.S. for its invasion of Afghanistan, but there is also an increasing and visible opposition to Pakistan’s participation in the U.S.-led “war on terror”. Al Qaeda has been exploiting these jihadi sentiments in the tribes for their survival. Arguably, Pakistani religious parties have also used these sentiments in order to gain political support in the wider area.

The al Qaeda and Taliban elements also find it easier to slip into these Tribal Areas, because they have never been under effective control - administrative or legal - either from Islamabad or Peshawar (the nearest administrative capital). Without the active support of the locals, it would be impossible for the security forces to track down the suspects. Al Qaeda seems to have won over these tribes by treating them well and paying them better. In addition, al Qaeda has won over some supporters who serve as al Qaeda’s agents and recruit from the tribes. In fact, the current operation by the Pakistani Army targets those tribesmen in South Waziristan who have been acting as agents on behalf of al Qaeda and the Taliban, either by providing shelter or providing manpower to fight against the U.S. forces in Afghanistan. This creates a climate that sets tribesmen against each other, while it strengthens the militants.

Finally, the militants are increasingly playing the roles of “law and order enforcers”, undermining the marginal local government and assuming authority through tactics of fear. This is creating a context whereby a state may be developing within the state of Pakistan, in

⁷⁵ Interview, Maj Gen Shaukat Sultan, Army Spokesperson, Rawalpindi, 7 April 2006.

⁷⁶ Interview with former militant, Rawalpindi, 13 April 2006, and Raymond Banner, “Tribal leaders in Pakistan Warn the US to Keep Out”, *New York Times*, 25 March 2002.

which parallel structures of authority are allowed to develop because of lack of central control. Furthermore, the Tribal Areas are increasingly in the international limelight as the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan seems to be both reorganised and revitalised. As the number of attacks (and counter-attacks) has risen in the Tribal Areas, observers watch with concern. Waziristan – and the other tribal districts – may thus have become a new ‘free haven’ increasingly capable of both harbouring and exporting local and foreign militants into Pakistan and Afghanistan.

These are all factors that have resulted in pressure on the Pakistani Authorities to deal with an increasingly hostile situation. One consequence of the fierce blow-back seen against the Pakistani Army has been long-term efforts on the part of the Government to initiate talks aimed at calming the situation in the area.

One recent example is the Waziristan Accord of 5 September 2006. The Accord comes five years after Pakistani troops first went after Taleban and al-Qaeda elements on the Afghan border. It is meant to end the continuous violence in the area and is viewed as an implicit admission that the government's military strategy has failed.

Key elements of the Accord were the pledges made by the militants to halt cross-border movement and to stop attacks on government installations and security forces. The Accord consists of 16 clauses and 4 sub-clauses.⁷⁷ The major points include:

- The Government agrees to stop air and ground attacks against militants in Waziristan,
- Militants are to cease cross-border movement into and out of Afghanistan,
- Foreign militants in North Waziristan will have to leave Pakistan but "those who cannot leave will be allowed to live peacefully, respecting the law of the land and the agreement",
- Area check-points and border patrols will be manned by a tribal force. Pakistan Army forces will withdraw from control points,
- No parallel administration will be established in the area. The law of the Government shall remain en force,
- The Government agrees to follow local customs and traditions in resolving issues,
- Tribal leaders will ensure that no one attacks law enforcement personnel or damages state property,
- Tribesmen will not carry heavy weapons. Small arms are allowed,
- Militants will not enter agencies adjacent to the North Waziristan Agency,
- Both sides will return any captured weapons, vehicles, and communication devices,
- The Government will release captured militants and will not arrest them again,
- The Government will pay compensation for property damage and deaths of innocent civilians in the area.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Pazir Gul, "Waziristan Accord signed", *DAWN*, URL <http://www.dawn.com/2006/09/06/top2.htm>.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

Government sources claim that the agreement is “unprecedented in tribal history”.⁷⁹ While various efforts at creating a dialogue with the tribal leaders have taken place, this deal was brokered in a time-frame of a few weeks. The talks have resulted in direct contact between various tribal leaders, representatives of the militants and representatives of the Pakistani Authorities. The agreement was signed between tribal leaders in the restive North Waziristan tribal region and local representatives of the authorities, and brokered by a grand tribal jirga. Initial media reports characterized the Accord as an agreement with the Taliban. The Pakistani authorities have however denied that the Taliban were party to the accord, or that the accord is a deal *with* the Taliban.

In terms of content and pledges, the deal has been widely criticised as over-generous, with no real way to enforce the militants' promise not to enter Afghanistan to attack coalition troops. Other critics see the deal as a sign of weakness by President Musharraf, who is under huge pressure from religious conservatives to curb his US-backed fight against militant groups in Pakistan.⁸⁰

While the immediate feeling was that the Accord had brought temporary peace, many observers felt that it would also give legitimacy to the militants. Furthermore, fear were also expressed that the government with these talks had made the militants into equal partners and legitimate actors, and thus given them confidence. Observers have pointed to similar deals in the neighbouring tribal area of South Waziristan which did stop attacks on Pakistani soldiers but actually strengthened the hand of local Taleban supporters.⁸¹ Two such agreements between the army and local pro-Taliban militants were signed in 2004 and 2005. But as BBC reports: “Since then, various local Taleban groups in South Waziristan have taken over the administration of justice, including imposing fines. They also collect taxes and recruit fighters.”⁸²

The long-term value of the Accord has also been put into question. Afghan government officials say the Accord will have little to say as it only deals with a geographically limited area.⁸³ One of the points in the Accord involves a pledge not to harbour foreign militants, launch cross-border raids or attack Pakistani government troops or facilities. Observers have however pointed out that meeting these conditions could be difficult, as the Taleban has support and sympathy on both sides of the Pakistan-Afghan border. As such the Accord may be too limited to have any value.

⁷⁹ Barbara Plett, “Analysis: Pakistan’s deal with the ‘Taliban’”, *BBC News*, 6 September 2006, URL http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/5320692.stm

⁸⁰ Massoud Ansari and Colin Freeman, “Omar role in truce reinforces fears that Pakistan 'caved in' to Taliban”, *The Telegraph*, 24 September 2006, URL <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2006/09/24/wafg24.xml>.

⁸¹ BBC: “Pakistan ‘Taleban’ in Truce”, *BBC News*, 5 September 2006, URL http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/5315564.stm.

⁸² BBC: “Pro-Taleban militants in tax move”, *BBC News*, 23 October 2006, URL http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/south_asia/6078380.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

The talks and the subsequent Accord have proven a willingness by the Pakistani Authorities to engage with the tribal factions and the militants in the area. Many have seen this as an implicit admission that the government's military strategy in the Tribal Areas has failed. The increase in violence and the fear that the militants would start building up alternative administrative structures has forced the government to find alternative ways of calming the situation. The change of tactic has also been explained as an effective tool to separate the militants from the non-militant tribesmen. Whether this attempt at isolating the militant elements will further ignite and strengthen the militants in the area or bring them into a political process is yet to be seen.