
Multiple Factors Behind Extremism and Militancy: A Case Study of Swat, Pakistan



Regional Studies
Vol XXXIV, Issue 2
pp.94-109
© Author(s)
<http://irs.org.pk>
P-ISSN: 0254-7988
E-ISSN: 2959-5459
Date of Acceptance: 1 February 2016

Murad Ali*

Introduction

The main aim of this paper is to investigate the primary factors responsible for the rise of religious militancy through a case study of Swat, one of the seven districts of the Malakand Division in the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province of Pakistan. The paper challenges the assumption that poverty or underdevelopment is the main cause of extremism and militancy. Although this study concurs that extreme poverty, underdevelopment, or unavailability of basic amenities of life can play a stimulating or catalytic role in the escalation of insurgency; it is aided by several diverse dynamics that together can aggravate situations beyond control. It presents the case of Swat region as a typical example in this context.

Key dynamics behind the rise of unprecedented insurgency during the year 2009 in Swat Valley are investigated here. To this end, primary and secondary data was collected during the fieldwork in a series of interviews with informed stakeholders in the case study area. The paper argues on the basis of the collected evidence that the crisis of militancy was not the product of a single factor as is commonly pointed out. The analysis shows that various ideological, political, constitutional, judicial, and administrative factors paved the way for the intensification of religious extremism and militancy in the Swat Valley. Among the ideological factors, the first Afghan War as well as the on-going 'war on terror' greatly

* Dr. Murad Ali is Assistant Professor at the University of Malakand. He acknowledges the financial support from an award of the Research Competitive Grants Program under Pakistan Strategy Support Program, funded by USAID.

fuelled militancy in the region. Concerning political, judicial, and administrative factors, the incomplete merger of the former princely state of Swat with Pakistan and lack of good governance and judicial reforms over a long period of time also increased frustration among the local population which was tactfully exploited by militants and their sympathisers. While the government was inefficient and ineffective to act on time and curb militancy; militants continued to bring untold miseries for the local population by targeting government installations and private property, and destroying hundreds of educational and health facilities. The study argues that after the decisive operation by the military to purge the area of religious militants in 2009, there is now a need to accelerate efforts for restoration of long-term peace and stability in the region. While the study focuses on Swat district in Pakistan, this research has broader implications in relevant settings of weak governance and fragile situations where central governments are unable to establish their writ and authority and address the grievances of local population.

The paper first gives a general overview of the area by focusing on its history, geographic significance, and socio-economic and demographic profile. After giving an account of Swat district, the paper examines key factors that led to the rise of religious extremism in this once very peaceful region. Following this, the study gives an account of the repercussions of militants' insurgency for the residents of the region.

Swat: A brief historical overview

Swat has a distinct identity because of its rich history. It has retained eminence "as a centre of cultural diffusion and a cradle of civilization and witnessed encounters of formidable armies and civilizations."¹ The archaeological history is roughly traced back to 2,500 years when Swat was known as 'Udyana'.² In the second century BC, Swat became one of the significant components of Gandhara civilization. When Fa-Hsien, a renowned Chinese pilgrim, visited Swat in 403 AD, there were more than 500 monasteries across the region.³ Hence, the inhabitants of ancient Swat were the followers of Buddhism for several centuries.

Islam as a religion was introduced in this area in the 9th century. However, Swat came under the Muslim rule during the

reign of Mahmood Ghaznavi when he conquered the region in 1001 AD. The arrival of Yusufzai Afghans, a prominent tribe of Pashtuns, in the 16th century marked a turning point in the history of Swat. By the end of the century, the Yusufzais had gained control of Lower Swat thus pushing the original Swatis to Kohistan and Hazara districts.⁴ With the passage of time, they extended their control to the entire Swat region including Buner and parts of Dir. Although different Mughal emperors from Babur to Aurangzeb made attempts to conquer Swat and subdue the Yusufzais, they could not succeed in their endeavours and “failed to incorporate Swat in their domain.”⁵

After the end of the Mughal rule in India, Swat as a princely state under the British had an interesting history. It was founded as a princely state in 1915 when a “Jirga of a section of the right bank Swat valley”⁶ got rid of the rule of the Nawab of Dir and established the youngest of all the princely states of the British India. Swat was one of the three princely states of the Malakand Division along with Dir and Chitral. It was a prosperous and peaceful state in the Malakand region because there existed reasonably developed infrastructure and basic facilities such as “schools, hospitals, roads, and communication systems.”⁷ Similarly, during its existence as a princely state, “there was generally peace and order” throughout the valley.⁸ Referring to the reign of the last Wali of Swat, Miangul Jahanzeb (1949-1969), Fleischner asserts, “[Jahanzeb] sought to build on his father’s achievements by providing improved access to higher education, hospital facilities, and modern roads in order to promote economic and social development.”⁹ Besides physical infrastructure, Swat as a state (until 1969) had an impressive system of justice that was less expensive, expedient, and accessible to all.¹⁰

Besides, the princely state of Swat had established a remarkable system of administration. The authority was centralized in the hands of the ruler called Wali. From 1915 to 1969 a total of three Walis ruled over Swat. These included Abdul Jabbar Shah (1915-17), Mian Gul Abdul Wadud (1917-49) and Mian Gul Jahanzeb (1949-69), who was the last Wali of the Swat State. While there is no proper record of the rule of the first Wali (Abdul Jabbar), the reign of the subsequent two rulers—Mian Gul Abdul Wadud and his son Mian Gul Jahanzeb—witnessed an organized

administrative system. Before the partition of India and the creation of Pakistan in 1947, the Swat state was dependent for currency, foreign affairs, and telegraph and postal services on the British government.¹¹ After the independence of Pakistan in 1947, the state became dependent on the government of Pakistan concerning the above issues, while remaining autonomous regarding the internal administration of the state. The rulers had centralized powers and primogeniture was the principle of succession. The important ministers were the Minister of State, Minister of Finance, and the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. There was a proper system of taxation, an organized police force, administrative hierarchy, and an efficient judicial system in which all kinds of disputes would be resolved in a speedy manner without any court charges or lawyers' fees to be paid by petitioners.¹²

In 1969, the Swat state merged with Pakistan. Like several other states in different parts of the country that had amalgamated into Pakistan, Swat was converted into a district. Swat was one of the three princely states of the Malakand Division, besides Dir and Chitral. Hence, in the case of these three former princely states, special status was retained under Article 246(b) of the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan through designation of these three districts as Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA).¹³ On account of special status under the constitution, these districts—unlike other districts of the country—are governed by a different set of rules and regulations which are promulgated by the governor of KP with the approval of the president of Pakistan.¹⁴ Hence, under the PATA regulations, “the provincial assembly cannot legislate for Swat unless the President approves a legislation to be implemented there.”¹⁵ This issue is later discussed in the context of incomplete merger of the former princely state which resulted in numerous administrative problems eventually contributing to the upsurge of extremism and militancy in the area.

Geographical significance and socio-economic and demographic profile of Swat

Rome has appropriately summed up the geographical significance of Swat Valley by stating that Swat “is situated in a geo-strategic region of the world where the significant regions of Asia—South Asia, China and Central Asia meet.”¹⁶ It means that

the Swat Valley has an immense geo-strategic significance on account of its geographic location. Similarly, according to Rehman, “the strategically located Swat Valley in Pakistan’s far North West is surrounded by Chitral, Gilgit, Kohistan, Shangla, Buner, Malakand and Lower and Upper Dir.”¹⁷ Thus, another reason for the geographical significance of this area is that its boundaries are directly linked with all the other districts of Malakand Division. Thus, Swat district enjoys a significant strategic value as it forms the core of the Malakand Division. The district headquarters of Swat is Saidu Sharif while the main town in the district is Mingora which is the only urban settlement in the district and the main centre of trade, commerce, education, health, and public administration. It is also a kind of a transit city for businessmen, traders, and tourists who go up the valley to other towns and villages. The city is situated at a distance of about 169 km from Peshawar, the provincial capital of KP, and is located at a distance of about 253 km from the federal capital Islamabad.¹⁸

The total population of the district was about 1.8 million in 2009.¹⁹ The district has a total area of about 5,337 square kilometres. According to the 1998 census, the last the country had, Swat’s literacy ratio was 28.75 per cent—43.16 per cent for males and 13.45 per cent for females.²⁰ In 2009, the overall literacy rate was estimated to be 47 per cent in the district—68 per cent for males and 24 per cent for females.²¹ However, officials in the district education department claim that current literacy rate is about 67 per cent.²²

Factors responsible for the rise of militancy in Swat

This paper argues that the rise of militancy in the Swat Valley was the product of various factors, events, and processes. It posits that it will be naïve to attribute the escalation of religious insurgency in this once peaceful region to just one cause or factor. Issues such as underdevelopment or sense of deprivation coupled with lack of good governance and administrative reforms as well as ideological and political factors played due role in the exacerbation of situation. All these factors are discussed in some detail in the following sections.

The nexus between poverty and militancy

Alongside various other factors, research has shown that underdevelopment or widespread poverty is one of the most potent causes of extremism or violence.²³ However, as stated above, poverty was not the sole reason behind militancy in the context of Swat as there were administrative and judicial anomalies as well. Nevertheless, coupled with these factors, extreme poverty and sense of deprivation can also be critical in the rise of militancy. For example, focusing specifically on Swat, Peracha et al. have explored the socio-economic backgrounds of 135 male children exposed to militancy, who were being treated in a rehabilitation centre.²⁴ They discovered that 52 per cent of them came from a very low socio-economic class. Their findings illustrate that “poverty, poor quality of life, large family size, illiteracy, and lack of supervision can serve as potential demographic risk factors in making children vulnerable to militancy.”²⁵ Hence, additional factors such as those prevalent in Swat, i.e., administrative and judicial problems, extreme poverty, and underdevelopment can exacerbate the situation to a point of no return.

However, as stated above, there is no doubt that underdevelopment or poverty can play a critical role in the rise of militancy, particularly when other factors also exist such as lack of good governance, lack of access to cheaper and speedy justice, and political alienation etc. This paper argues that under-development, poverty, or the inability of the government to provide basic amenities of life to its citizens is not wholly and solely the cause of extremism or militancy. In their unorthodox research on the relationship between poverty and extremism in Pakistan, Blair et al. have challenged the conventional assumption that poor people are more susceptible to the appeal of militant groups.²⁶ According to these authors, as far as the nexus between poverty and extremism is concerned, “there is little evidence to support this contention...particularly in the case of Islamist militant organizations in Pakistan.”²⁷ The spread of militancy in Swat has origins in the overall increase in militant movements across Pakistan. Hence, it is difficult to separate the rise of militancy in Swat from what was already happening in other parts of the country, particularly in KP and the Federally Administered Tribal

Areas (FATA). If Swat was alien to religious extremism before its amalgamation with Pakistan in 1969, so was the case with the rest of the country. Hence, there are other factors that need to be investigated and this study is an attempt to explore those factors.

Impacts of Iranian Revolution and First Afghan War on the rise of extremism in Pakistan

According to eminent historian and South Asia specialist, Ayesha Jalal, “for all the lip service paid to Islam, Pakistan remained a relatively liberal and moderate Muslim state until the 1970s.”²⁸ Therefore, as mentioned earlier, like in the case of Swat, the radicalization of the Pakistani nation and society is not a very old phenomenon. Two events played a significant role in the spread of militant ideologies and have had detrimental impacts on the state and society of Pakistan. To quote Jalal again, “the critical change in the role of religion in Pakistan came in the wake of the Iranian revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.”²⁹ Thus, these two events have had enormous impacts on the way religion occupied a more central role in the affairs of the state.

Among these two critical events, the coming of the Cold War to the backyard of Pakistan in the form of the First Afghan War (1979-1988) was a watershed episode. Domestically, the Islamization drive of former president of Pakistan General Zia-ul-Haq was also a significant factor that helped in the rise of strict Sunni form of Islam. The result was the appearance of an unprecedented number of religious seminaries or *madrassas*, not only to impart teachings of Islam free of cost but also to create “the Mujahideen to fight back the 140,000 Soviet ‘infidel’ troops who by then had occupied Afghanistan.”³⁰ The ultimate outcome was the spread of intolerance over religious and sectarian issues and extremist interpretation of the teachings of Islam. Coupled with General Zia’s (1977-88) strict Islamization drive to prolong his own dictatorial regime, the number of *madrassas* increased with unprecedented pace during this period aided by ample funding from certain Arab monarchs. At the time of Pakistan’s creation, the country had a few hundred religious seminaries but in the 1990s the total number had crossed 8,000.³¹ According to Rashid, “in 1971 there were only 900 *madrassas*, but by the end of the Zia era in 1988 there were 8,000 [registered] *madrassas* and 25,000

unregistered ones, educating over half a million students.”³² It is believed that in 2001-02, there were nearly 60 religious political parties and over 20 well-armed militant groups, largely known as ‘*jihadi*’ groups having connections with different *madrassas* across the country.³³ Thus, Murphy has appropriately stated that prior to this particular period, Pakistan was not “receptive to extremism and violence perpetuated in the name of Islam.”³⁴ However, the scenario was markedly different after the culmination of the war in neighbouring Afghanistan that left Pakistan faced with “the proliferation of weapons, drugs, terrorism, sectarianism and the black economy.”³⁵ Hence, it can be assumed that the climax of the Cold War in the form of the Afghan War, which was staged in the backyard of Pakistan, transformed Pakistan from a relatively liberal and tolerant society to a somewhat fundamentalist society. Therefore, it is difficult to isolate the rise of militancy and religious extremism in Swat from its overall development in the rest of Pakistan.

The ‘war on terror’ and its impact on the rise of militancy

Like the jihad of the 1980s against the Soviets, the ongoing turmoil in neighbouring Afghanistan has negative spill-over effects for Pakistan. Following the US-led ‘war on terror’ as a consequence of the events of 9/11, the Taliban regime was toppled in Afghanistan in late 2001. After the fall of their regime, Taliban exploited the extremely inhospitable terrain and semi-autonomous nature of the border areas, and also made good use of their old contacts with the tribal people that had been established during the Afghan jihad. As a result, many of their leaders as well as Al-Qaeda operatives escaped from Afghanistan and sought shelter in Pakistan’s tribal belt along the border with Afghanistan. After regrouping inside Pakistani territory, Taliban started attacks against the US and their allied forces in Afghanistan. With the escalating severity of such attacks inside Afghanistan, Pakistan—and particularly its tribal areas—increasingly came to be known as ‘safe havens of Al-Qaeda’. Consequently, the administration of former US President George Bush exerted significant pressure on General Musharraf, the then President of Pakistan, to take action against Taliban and Al-Qaeda and destroy their sanctuaries in tribal areas of Pakistan. Seeing himself caught between the devil and the deep sea,

Musharraf had no other option. Hence, as Hussain asserts, it was an unprecedented move by the government of Pakistan to mobilize troops in this inhospitable and hitherto alien region.³⁶ As a result, the government deployed a military of over 100,000 men along the 2,500 km long Pak-Afghan border to subdue Al-Qaeda and Taliban-linked militants. Nevertheless, the presence of the US and ISAF troops in Afghanistan, perceived by the Taliban and their sympathizers “as part of a global offensive against Islam led by the US,”³⁷ and the deaths of countless innocent civilians in the ongoing Afghan insurgency considerably aided the rise of militancy in Pakistan. Hence, rather than eradicating militancy, the influence of the Taliban and their extremist ideologies mainstreamed from FATA to various districts of KP, including Swat. In the tribal areas alone, hundreds of pro-government tribal leaders were targeted and killed by the Taliban.³⁸ With the passage of time, militant organizations started to unite against the state of Pakistan which according to them was a stooge of Washington. Consequently, on 14 December 2007 some forty militant leaders commanding around 40,000 fighters gathered in South Waziristan to form a unified front under the banner of Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), announcing Baitullah Mehsud as their leader.³⁹ Among notable Taliban leaders were Hafiz Gul Bahadur from North Waziristan Agency, Mullah Nazir from South Waziristan Agency, Faqir Muhammad from Bajaur, and Maulvi Fazlullah from Swat. Therefore, in Swat as well as in the rest of Pakistan, along with underdevelopment, illiteracy, unemployment, and ineffective governance; the rise of current militancy can be attributed to the Afghan War of the 1980s, coupled with General Zia’s Islamization programme in that period as well as the ongoing Afghan conflict across the border. All these factors have helped in preparing the ground for Pakistan’s home-grown extremists, ultimately resulting in the formation of the TTP against the Pakistani state.

Incomplete merger with Pakistan: An administrative and political anomaly

Although all the above factors contributed to the rise of militancy in Swat in one way or the other, there is another major cause of religious extremism and insurgency peculiar to Swat, i.e., its incomplete merger with Pakistan. According to Aziz, “the main

cause of the problem of Swat lies in its incomplete merger and integration into Pakistan after the state was merged in 1969.”⁴⁰ The author further states that although the state was officially merged with Pakistan, “there was no plan how it was to be transformed from a princely state where all the power was vested in a ruler to a district working under normal laws.”⁴¹ Hence, after the promulgation of PATA regulations, neither the people of Swat nor their representatives in the provincial legislative assembly had a role in formulating and implementing policies. In the words of Aziz:

“Only the President is authorized to approve the passage of legislation in the form of a regulation for Swat...Thus, even after 40 years after the merger of Swat into KP, it is still ‘Viceroy’s territory’ and continues to be a special area. The full writ of the superior courts does not prevail and fundamental rights are not available. In other words, the region is kept as a *marginalized* part of Pakistan.”⁴²

Consequently, incomplete merger and discriminatory regulations over a long period of time resulted in “poor governance, weak dispensation of justice and lack of reform to mainstream Swat into KP [that] helped militancy.”⁴³ Thus, if the local population in Swat initially welcomed the Taliban, it was because of the less expensive, speedy, and uncomplicated procedure of justice provided by the Taliban.⁴⁴ The judicial system established by Maulvi Fazlullah resolved numerous cases that were pending in the local courts for many years. It is interesting to note that most of the cases pertained to land disputes. According to Rome, Taliban in Swat “decided cases and disputes quickly without bearing any costs by the parties; solved some age-old disputes and issues; tried to effect conciliation among enemies; and stressed upon women’s right to inheritance.”⁴⁵ Rome told the author during an interview that due to ineffective and weak governance resulting in poor delivery of services, the Taliban filled the vacuum left by local administration.

There is no doubt that like the rest of Pakistan, Swat was alien to extremism before its merger with Pakistan in 1969. Hence, it is argued that the merger of Swat with Pakistan created a number of constitutional and administrative problems that gradually developed frustration among the local population. This resulted in issues such as lack of good governance, failure in the delivery of

services in health and education, and lack of further developmental works. According to Khattak:

“After the merger of the state of Swat with Pakistan in 1969, there was little further development in the valley. Few, if any, schools were constructed, and the justice system, in which civil and criminal cases alike were delayed for years, caused frustration among the people.”⁴⁶

Lack of a quick and speedy justice system has also been mentioned by Rome. Comparing the judicial system at the time when Swat was a princely state and then the post-state era, Rome argues, “before the merger of Swat State, whether just or unjust, decisions were quick and cheaper...decisions were properly executed and implemented. With the merger, the position took a U-turn.”⁴⁷ Similarly, according to Zafar, although lack of economic opportunities “may not have been a main driver of conflict in Swat, the underdeveloped judicial system and ineffective local government certainly created social cleavages and played a major role in the rise of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan.”⁴⁸ Zafar further states that the sluggish pace of judicial proceedings and “long delays in resolving even straight forward civil claims made people nostalgic for the *sharia* or Islamic system of jurisprudence that had existed prior to the dissolution of the princely state.”⁴⁹ This factor was also observed by the author during his field visits to Swat. People, who have had the opportunity to witness the regime of the last Wali of Swat, become visibly nostalgic when narrating issues related to judicial and administrative systems prevalent in Swat prior to its merger with Pakistan. The same factor has been mentioned by Fleischner that “inefficiencies in the judicial system and problems with service delivery progressively degraded the quality of governance to which the people of Swat had become accustomed.”⁵⁰ However, according to Rome, “the judicial system in Swat was not Islamic as is commonly believed,”⁵¹ but was mainly based on customary codes of conduct.

It can be concluded from the whole discussion that there is no single factor responsible for the rise of militancy in Swat or even Pakistan in general. To borrow from Sultan-i-Rome again, the Swat issue was not the product of any solitary factor but was exacerbated by constitutional, judicial, administrative, political, and ideological factors along with the failures of the government and intelligence

agencies to fathom the nature of the problem and act on time. Thus, it can be concluded that various factors over a passage of time contributed to the growth of extremism in Pakistan in general and Swat in particular. When Taliban militants were in control of Swat from 2007 to 2009, they made every possible effort to silence their opponents and destroy government infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, bridges, as well as private property such as houses, shops, markets, and orchards belonging to local landlords. The impacts of militancy and subsequent military operation in Swat are discussed in the following section.

Impacts of militancy and military operation in Swat

Taliban in Swat, under the leadership of Maulvi Fazlullah, known as ‘Mullah Radio’ for his illegal FM station broadcasts, continued to strengthen their position during the government of Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA)—a coalition of religious parties in power from 2002 to 2007 in KP—considered sympathetic towards them.⁵² However, it was between 2007 and 2009 that they carried out the most heinous acts of violence to intimidate and terrorize not only their opponents but local population in general as well. Rather than taking a firm and decisive action against the militants, government of Pakistan was trying to resolve the issue peacefully through negotiation. To this end, the government signed a peace agreement with the Taliban in March 2009 and accepted their demand concerning the implementation of the Nizam-e-Adl Regulation; an act that was supposed to establish a kind of *Shariah* law in the Malakand region. With this, the government effectively ceded the control of Swat to the local Taliban faction led by Maulvi Fazlullah.⁵³ Taliban did not stop there though. By April 2009, they moved to neighbouring Buner district at which stage their venture was portrayed by national and international media “as being on the verge of a siege of Islamabad.”⁵⁴ In the post-peace agreement period, another event occurred which created unprecedented uproar not only within Pakistan but also abroad. “A video of a teenage girl being flogged by a Taliban commander emerged and sparked outrage within Pakistan and around the world as a symbol of a situation that had gone out of control.”⁵⁵ Although a year later the government claimed that the video-clip was fake, at the time of its release “both the national and international media took this video-

clip at hand, and propagated highly against the peace agreement.”⁵⁶ With each passing day, the situation was going from bad to worse and the residents of Swat were at the mercy of the Taliban militants with the government virtually non-existent.

Eventually, under heavy pressure from the international community, the military began an intense and decisive security operation against militants in May 2009. After the launch of military operation against Taliban militants in Swat, nearly three million people from Malakand Division were forced to flee their homes and became internally displaced persons (IDPs).⁵⁷ Such an unprecedented mass exodus led to one of the biggest humanitarian crises in the history of the country.

Prior to the rise of militancy, Swat Valley was “a popular vacation destination known for its great natural beauty, pristine rivers and the Malam Jabba ski resort.”⁵⁸ The area was “often compared to Switzerland for its natural beauty and picturesque landscape.”⁵⁹ On account of the vibrant tourism sector, thick forests with abundant timber available for construction and furniture, fertile lands and orchards, and a developed service sector, Swat had “a more productive economy than other parts of” the province.⁶⁰ However, the economy was severely affected by Taliban’s insurgency. For example, “more than 400 hotels and restaurants were shut down after the militants moved into the district in 2007.”⁶¹ As a result, tourism in Swat “ceased entirely because of security concerns.”⁶² According to Khaliq, militants destroyed 67 hotels completely while another 107 were severely damaged by the 2010 floods.⁶³ Overall, more than 800 hotels were affected during the militancy and floods, which had employed around 20,000 people. The impact was not only on those directly dependent on the tourism industry but also on people whose livelihood was linked to tourism indirectly such as transporters, shopkeepers, farmers, and fruit growers and sellers. Thus, Swat was no longer the same after militancy.

Besides tourism, education also suffered massively at the hands of the Taliban as they frequently targeted educational institutions. The extent of the damage caused by the rise of militancy can be measured from the fact that in 2008, when the crisis had not reached its climax, overall literacy rate in Swat was 53 per cent, which reduced to 47 per cent in 2009.⁶⁴ The reduction

in literacy rate was because of the ban Taliban had imposed on girls' education and their terrorist activities against both boys' and girls' educational institutions. There were a total of 1,576 schools in Swat, many of these built during the era of the Swat state, out of which more than 400 were blown up or badly damaged by the Taliban. According to the latest statistics, there are a total of 1,664 schools in Swat, out of which 1,088 are for boys and 576 for girls.⁶⁵ A total of about 397 schools were destroyed by the Taliban, including 184 boys' and 213 girls' schools.⁶⁶ According to a district education official, current literacy rate in Swat is 70 per cent for male and 30 per cent for female. These figures indicate that there has been some improvement in the overall literacy rate in the district, because in 2008-09 male literacy rate was 68 per cent while female literacy rate was 24 per cent.⁶⁷ Hence, the impact on the education sector was very clear and alarming as most of the students had to drop out or had to acquire education in rented buildings or in the open. While most of the schools have been reconstructed with funds provided by different donors, work is in progress on the rehabilitation and reconstruction of many schools, particularly those located in the remote and hilly areas.⁶⁸

There is no doubt that Taliban regularly targeted government buildings and installations including schools, health facilities, and bridges. Hundreds of houses, hotels, shops, and fields of standing crops were destroyed in the conflict. Infrastructure such as bridges, health facilities, water supply / irrigation schemes, public office buildings, roads, electricity / gas networks, and hundreds of schools were totally or partially damaged.⁶⁹ According to the detailed post-conflict survey conducted jointly by the Government of Pakistan, and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank (WB), the crisis of militancy cost the Malakand region over \$1 billion. The study also found that out of the five districts of the Malakand Division, Swat was the most affected district in terms of human losses and damage to infrastructure. Out of the total 664 destroyed or damaged schools in all the five district, 447 schools were destroyed or damaged in Swat district alone. According to the same study, out of the total 63 health facilities fully or partially damaged in Malakand Division, 18 were in Swat. Similarly, out of the total 58 bridges completely destroyed or damaged in Malakand region, 43 were located in Swat.

In the same way, out of the total 1,329 km road segments affected during the conflict, 663 km were badly affected in Swat.⁷⁰

It becomes evident from the preceding discussion that Swat and its residents suffered enormously during the Taliban insurgency. The people of Swat suffered in terms of fatalities as well as damages to properties and loss of incomes as the conflict dealt an unprecedented blow to the economy, physical and social infrastructure, tourism, natural resources, and local administration of the area. After the end of the military operation in July 2009, most of the IDPs returned to their homes to restart their lives. To address the immediate needs of the returning IDPs as well as to restore their confidence in the government, the government of Pakistan also spearheaded an early recovery process by facilitating the return of the IDPs through provision of cash grants of Rs.25,000, transport, and basic food and non-food items. However, there is a need for a sustainable and long-term reconstruction plan to rebuild infrastructure and revive the local economy.

Conclusion

This paper has investigated the key dynamics behind the unprecedented rise of militants' insurgency in Swat district of Pakistan. Before discussing the main factors giving rise to religious insurgency, the case study area and its geographic significance as well as its socio-economic and demographic features have been dealt with in detail. After giving an account of the case study area, the study has examined key factors that led to the rise of religious extremism in this once very peaceful region. It has been explored that various ideological, constitutional, judicial, administrative, and political factors paved the way for the escalation of religious extremism and militancy in the Swat Valley. To sum it up, along with ideological factors, lack of judicial reforms, and bad governance were mainly the key causes that developed frustration among the people who were accustomed to a completely different mode of judicial and administrative system during the era when Swat was a princely state. The paper has illustrated that it was an entirely different scenario after the end of the status of Swat as a princely state. The simple but efficient administrative setup of the princely state—particularly the dispensation of rapid and reasonably cheap justice—was replaced with a cumbersome and expensive one.

Thus, all these factors together were responsible for the rise of extremism and militancy in this region.

Notes and References

- 1 S. Rome, "Mughals and Swat," *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 50, No.4, 2002, p.39.
- 2 K. Aziz, "Swat: The Main Causes of the Breakdown of Governance and the Rise of Militancy," Peshawar: Regional Institute of Policy Research and Training (RIPORE) and Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2010, p.14.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Rome, "Mughals and Swat."
- 5 Ibid., p.44.
- 6 "Administrative System of the Princely State of Swat," *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan XXXXIII*, No 2, 2006, p.181.
- 7 D.K Khattak, "The Battle for Pakistan: Militancy and Conflict in the Swat Valley," Washington, DC: New America Foundation, 2010, p.1.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 J. Fleischner, "Governance and Militancy in Pakistan's Swat Valley," Washington, D.C: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2011, p.2.
- 10 S. Rome, *Swat State (1915-1969): From Genesis to Merger - an Analysis of Political, Administrative, Socio-Political and Economic Developments*, Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- 11 "Administrative System of the Princely State of Swat."
- 12 Ibid.; "Judicial System, Judiciary and Justice in Swat: The Swat State Era and Post State Scenario," *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Research Society* 49, No.4 2001.
- 13 "Crisis and Reconciliation in Swat," *Pakistaniat: A Journal of Pakistan Studies* 3, No. 1, 2011. Aziz, "Swat: The Main Causes of the Breakdown of Governance and the Rise of Militancy."
- 14 International Crisis Group, "Pakistan: Countering Militancy in Pata (Asia Report No 242)," Islamabad/Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2013.
- 15 Aziz, "Swat: The Main Causes of the Breakdown...", p.58.
- 16 Rome, "Crisis and Reconciliation in Swat," p.53.
- 17 K.U Rehman, "Swat Valley: The Strategic Cap-Stone," *The Dialogue* VI, No. 4, 2011, p.356.

- 18 Centre for Public Policy Research, "District Swat: Socioeconomic Baseline and Displacement Impact 2010," Peshawar: Centre for Public Policy Research, 2010.
- 19 Asian Development Bank and World Bank, "Preliminary Damage and Needs Assessment: Immediate Restoration and Medium Term Reconstruction in Crisis Affected Areas," Islamabad: Asian Development Bank and World Bank, 2009.
- 20 Government of Pakistan, "Population Census Organisation," Islamabad: Federal Bureau of Statistics, 1998.
- 21 Government of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, "Literacy Rate in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Population 10 Years and above)," Peshawar: Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, 2013.
- 22 Author's personal communication with Assistant District Officer, Department of Education, Mingora, Swat.
- 23 Aziz, "Swat: The Main Causes of the Breakdown of Governance and the Rise of Militancy."; DFID, "Fighting Poverty to Build a Safer World: A Strategy for Security and Development," UK: Department for International Development (DFID), 2005; A. S Hashmi, "Pakistan: Politics, Religion and Extremism," New Delhi: Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, 2009. F. N. Peracha, Khan, R. R., Ahmad, A., Khan, S. J., Hussein, S., Choudry, H. R., "Socio Demographic Variables in the Vulnerable Youth Predisposed Towards Militancy (Swat, Pakistan). Psychiatry, Psychology and Law, 19(3), pp.439-447," *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law* 19, No.3, 2012.
- 24 "Socio Demographic Variables in the Vulnerable Youth Predisposed Towards Militancy (Swat, Pakistan). Psychiatry, Psychology and Law, 19(3), pp.439-447."
- 25 Ibid., p.439.
- 26 G. Blair, Fair, C. C., Malhotra, N. A., Shapiro, J.N., "Poverty and Support for Militant Politics: Evidence from Pakistan," *Americal Journal of Political Science* 57, No.1, 2013.
- 27 Ibid., p.30.
- 28 A. Jalal, "The Past as Present," in *Pakistan: Beyond the 'Crisis State'*, ed. M. Lodhi, London: Hurst & Company, 2011, p.14.
- 29 Ibid., p.15.
- 30 E. Murphy and A. R. Malik, "Pakistan Jihad: The Making of Religious Terrorism," *IPRI Journal* IX, No.2, 2009, p.26.
- 31 S.V.R. Nasr, "The Rise of Sunni Militancy in Pakistan: The Changing Role of Islamism and the Ulama in Society and Politics," *Modern Asian Studies* 34, No.01, 2000.
- 32 A Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, New Haven and London: Yale Universtiy Press, 2000, p.89.

- 33 H. Abbas, *Pakistan's Drift into Extremism: Allah, the Army, and America's War on Terror*, New York: M. E. Sharp, Inc., 2005.
- 34 E. Murphy, "Combating Religious Terrorism in Pakistan," in *Doomed to Repeat? Terrorism and the Lessons of History*, ed. Sean Brawley, Washington, DC: New Academia Publishing, 2009, p.133.
- 35 Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, p.215.
- 36 Z. Hussain, "Battling Militancy," in *Pakistan: Beyond the 'Crisis State'*, ed. M. Lodhi, London: Hurst & Company, 2011.
- 37 Murphy, "Combating Religious Terrorism in Pakistan," p.149.
- 38 A Rashid, *Descent into Chaos: How the War against Islamic Extremism Is Being Lost in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia*, London, New York: Allen Lane, 2008.
- 39 Hussain, "Battling Militancy."
- 40 Aziz, "Swat: The Main Causes of the Breakdown of Governance and the Rise of Militancy," p.5.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Ibid., p.57.
- 43 Ibid., p.66.
- 44 Government of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and FATA Secretariat, "Post Crisis Needs Assessment," Peshawar: Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA Secretariat, 2010.
- 45 Rome, "Crisis and Reconciliation in Swat," p.66.
- 46 Khattak, "The Battle for Pakistan: Militancy and Conflict in the Swat Valley," p.3.
- 47 Rome, "Judicial System, Judiciary and Justice in Swat: The Swat State Era and Post State Scenario," p.95.
- 48 R. Zafar, "Development and the Battle for Swat," *Al-Nakhlah: The Fletcher School Online Journal*, 2011, p.2.
- 49 Ibid., p.3.
- 50 Fleischner, "Governance and Militancy in Pakistan's Swat Valley " p.5.
- 51 Rome, *Swat State (1915-1969): From Genesis to Merger - an Analysis of Political, Administrative, Socio-Political and Economic Developments*, p.319.
- 52 Aziz, "Swat: The Main Causes of the Breakdown of Governance and the Rise of Militancy."
- 53 Fleischner, "Governance and Militancy in Pakistan's Swat Valley."
- 54 Ibid., p.1.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 Rome, "Crisis and Reconciliation in Swat," p.71.

- 57 International Crisis Group, "Pakistan: Countering Militancy in Fata,"
Islamabad: International Crisis Group, 2009.
- 58 Fleischner, "Governance and Militancy in Pakistan's Swat Valley," p.1.
59 Rome, "Crisis and Reconciliation in Swat," p.53.
- 60 International Crisis Group, "Pakistan: Countering Militancy in Fata,"
p.12.
- 61 Ibid.
- 62 Government of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and FATA Secretariat, "Post
Crisis Needs Assessment," p.24.
- 63 F. Khaliq, "Reviving Tourism: Aid Rekindles Hope among Swat
Hoteliers," *The Express Tribune*, 12 January 2011.
- 64 Government of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, "Literacy Rate in Khyber
Pakhtunkhwa (Population 10 Years and above)."
- 65 Author's personal interview of Assistant District Officer, Department
of Education, Mingora Swat.
- 66 Ibid.
- 67 Ibid.
- 68 Ibid.
- 69 Asian Development Bank and World Bank, "Preliminary Damage and
Needs Assessment: Immediate Restoration and Medium Term
Reconstruction in Crisis Affected Areas."
- 70 Ibid.