

Causes, Challenges and Solutions of Terrorism in Newly Merged Districts: A Critical Appraisal

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Abstract: There is no part of the world that is not affected by broad effects of global terrorism which is as old as the entire civilization of man. But the expansion of modern warfare and the technological field has increased the magnitude and the level of complexity of terrorism making it not only includes conventional terrorism but also nuclear terrorism, chemical terrorism, biological terrorism and cyber terrorism. The consequences of the Global War on Terrorism have greatly impacted Pakistan and more importantly the individuals of the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The structure of this paper is four-fold. The first part is the introduction of the study including the research methodology. The second part examines how the respondents have an idea of such concepts like militancy and terrorism and how the traditional systems of governance including the Malik and Jirga systems and the Political Administration were helpful in service delivery and combat of terrorism before the 25 th Amendment of the Constitution of Pakistan (1973). The third part focuses on the work of the District Administration, the District Police and the Pakistan Army in terms of delivery of services and in the programs of counter-terrorism after 25th Amendment. The last section shows the root causes of militancy, major policy suggestions and conclusion of the study.

Keywords: Global Terrorism, Pakistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Fata, Militancy, Counter-Terrorism, Traditional Governance, Jirga System, 25th Amendment, Security Policy, Service Delivery, Regional Instability.

Introduction

The vast impacts of global terrorism, which is as ancient as the civilized mankind, have managed to invade no part of the globe. However, terrorism has not only been aggravated owing to the developments in modern war and technology but also widened in its complexity. In the present world, the activities of terrorism not only have the usual aspects but are evolved to nuclear, chemical, biological, and cyber varieties. The impact of the Global War on Terrorism on Pakistan has been tremendous, especially to the citizens of the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Government of Pakistan, 2017). These areas, as a result of geography and socio-political processes, have been especially susceptible to terrorism and militancy as indicated by recent mapping and administrative results (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment, n.d.).

The paper has four major sections. The former introduces the study together with the method of research (Khosro, et al., 2024; Sultana & Imran, 2024; Ahmad, Bibi & Imran, 2023). The second one discusses whether the respondents know about the notions of militancy and terrorism and how the traditional systems of governance, the Malik and Jirga system and the Political Administration, helped in providing service as well as counter-terrorism before the 25th Amendment to the Pakistani Constitution (1973). This third section discusses the roles of District Administration, District Police as well as Pakistan Army in service provision and anti-terrorism programs pursuant to the 25th Amendment. The last part focuses on the causes that lie at the origin of militancy, issues the most important recommendations, and ends the research study (Danish, Akhtar & Imran, 2025; Mankash, et al., 2025; Hafeez, Yaseen & Imran, 2019). The key is to put these dynamics within the wider context of the national security system of Pakistan that has been defined as paradoxical, formed under the influence of strategic limitations, security concerns, divergent policy priorities (Khan, Jaspal, & Yasmin, 2017).

It is astonishing that past regimes and local Elders (Maliks) did not bother to take pain by introducing necessary amendments in that law to make it up to the Constitution of Pakistan, International Human Rights Conventions, International Law, International Humanitarian Law and above all according to the customs and changing circumstances of the time.

Table-I NMDs in various Divisions

S. No	Division	NMDs
1	Bannu	North Waziristan
2	Dera Ismail Khan	South Waziristan

3	Kohat	Kurram
		Orakzai
4	Peshawar	Mohmand
		Khyber
5	Malakand	Bajaur

The Seven Newly Merged Districts have been divided into twenty Tehsils for administrative purpose.

Table-2 Tehsils in NMDs

S.No	NMD	Tehsil
1	North Waziristan	Mirali
		Miranshah
		Razmak
2	South Waziristan	Ladha
		Serwekai
		Wana
3	Kurram	Central Kurram
		Lower Kurram
		Upper Kurram
4	Orakzai	Lower Orakzai
		Upper Orakzai
5	Mohmand	Central Mohmand
		Lower Mohmand
		Upper Mohmand
6	Khyber	Bara
		Jamrud
		Landi Kotal
		Mola Gori
7	Bajaur	Khar
		Nawagai

Source: Local Government, KP

Literature Review

- ❖ **Terrorism Worldwide can Evolve.** Terrorism has grown well beyond its traditional basis and it has become more complicated with the entry of the terror nuclear, chemical, biological, and cyber (Author, Year -placeholder). In Pakistan and specifically in former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), this transformation has taken the form of greater susceptibility to violence perpetrated by militants, which has been reinforced by demographic

mapping and census data that designate these regions as security hotspots (Government of Pakistan, 2017; Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment, n.d.).

- ❖ **The Place of Traditional Governance.** Tribal governance had been dependent on traditional institutions like Malik and Jirga until the Constitution Amendment 25. Although these local mechanisms carried out key conflict-resolution roles, they were mostly non-effective in dealing with organized militancy (Ahmad & Mohyuddin, 2013; Mahmood, Shaukatullah, & Ashfaq, 2018). This deficiency in governance capacity corresponds to the indictment of the archaic regulation of the Frontier Crimes (FCR 1901) that could not help meet the modern security and human rights demands (Hussain, 2012; Rahman, 2004).
- ❖ **Post Merger Institutional Reforms.** The 25th Amendment was an attempt to modernize the rule making with the district administration, provincial police, and Pakistan army a part of the newly merged districts (NMDs). Empirical data of the study however reveal far reaching dissatisfaction of the populace with the quality and results of service provision and peace-building efforts, an indication that institutional revision may not do enough to serve the needs of the community and alleviate the forces of militancy (Ansari, Akhtar & Hafeez, 2024; Akhtar, et al., 2021).
- ❖ **Homotymy Drivers of Militancy.** The analysis of the study explains the existence of militancy with the help of several interconnected factors:
 - Psychosocial claims to war and marginalization (Hussain, 2012),
 - Historical underdevelopment-based sociopolitical neglect (Government of Pakistan, 2017),
 - Exclusion on legal grounds (F CR restrictions, 2012), (Hussain, 2012),
 - Cultural considerations, which include reciprocity norms implanted in Pakhtunwali (Ahmad & Mohyuddin, 2013),
 - Lack of education, and low rates of literacy, which do not improve (Ashfaq, 2021).
 - These are elements of more general analysis dealing with structural deprivation and systemic disenfranchisement of conflict persistence.

- ❖ **The Use of Youth Engagement as a Counter-Terrorism Tool.** Since young people form a large percentage of the Pakistan population, more than 64% being below 30 years, youth are central to the peacebuilding aspect (United Nations Development Programme, 2021). Nevertheless, the problem of youth unemployment is still considerable (Statista, n.d.), and the inability to participate in civic affairs also contributes to radicalization (The Express Tribune, 2020). The recommendation of the study on the idea of youth councils and collaboration with the security areas is consistent with new research on the need to empower the youth as a viable approach to counter extremism (Azhar, 2024; Azhar & Imran, 2024; Azhar, et al., 2022).

Research Methodology

This study is mainly based on Integrated Approach to data collection composed of Primary Sources Data and Secondary Sources Data. For former, the structured questionnaire – consisted of both close-ended and open-ended questions – has been designed through Google Form and send to various educated people through WhatsApp (electronic source of sharing link of the document) who further forwarded and shared with their fellows. The sampling for this study is stratified random sampling in the sense because only educated class randomly has been selected. However, majority of the selected sampling is youth so as to get ascertain firsthand information from them and this study more objective by avoiding subjectivity. There was no bar on gender. All genders were allowed to respond to the questions set out in the questionnaire. In addition, books and research articles constitute secondary sources of data. Moreover, the study has been tried to make more scientific and logical by relying mixed method – quantitative method and qualitative method – by incorporating statistics. In addition, analytical method is used for data analysis.

Discussion

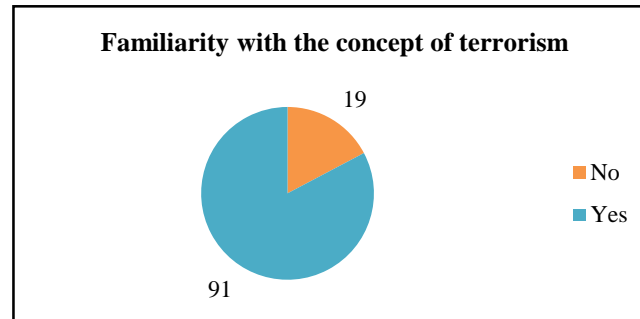
Familiarity with Concepts of Terrorism and Militancy

The concept of terrorism and militancy are technical in nature; and familiarity with these concepts is essential to understand the causes and remedies of terrorism. That is why such questions have been added for the respondents.

- ❖ **Familiarity of the Respondents with the concept of terrorism**

Majority of the respondents are familiar with concepts of terrorism. Out of 110 respondents, 91 expressed their cognizance with concept of terrorism, while 19 were unaware about it (Chart-I).

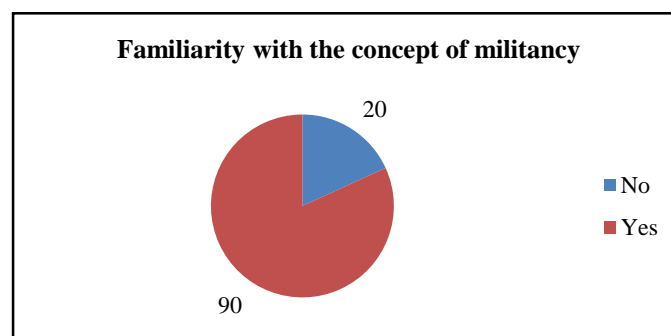
Chart-I



❖ Familiarity of the Respondents with the concept of militancy

Majority of the respondents are familiar with concepts of terrorism. Out of 110 respondents, 90 expressed their understanding of concept of terrorism, while 20 expressed unawareness about it (Chart-2).

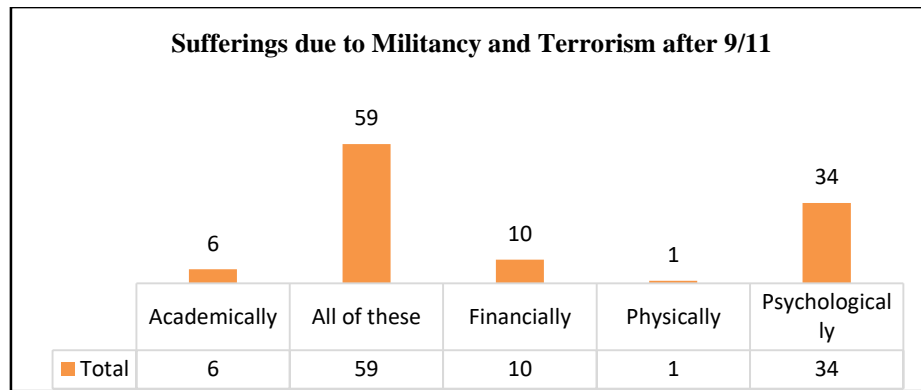
Chart-2



❖ Personal Sufferings from militancy and terrorism after 9/11

All the 110 respondents responded that they have been suffered academically, financially, physically and psychologically (Chart-3).

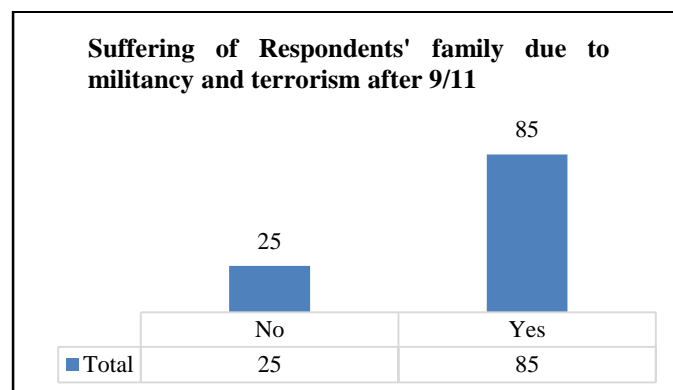
Chart-3



❖ **Have your family been suffered due to militancy and terrorism after 9/11?**

Out of 110 respondents responded, 85 respondents expressed their view that their families have been suffered, while the 25 respondents answer was 'no' (Chart-4).

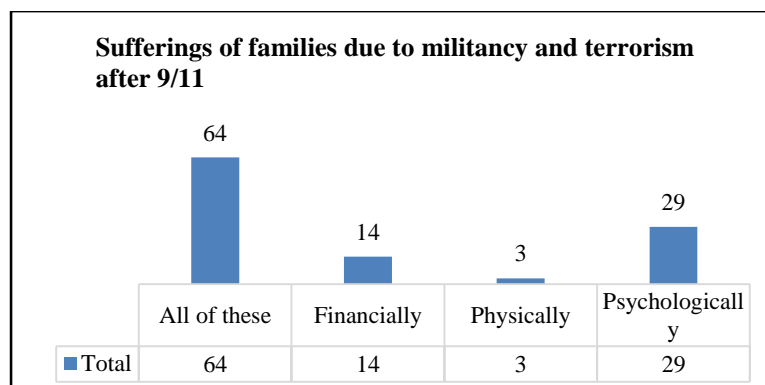
Chart-4



❖ **Sufferings of Family from militancy and terrorism after 9/11**

Out of 110 respondents responded, all respondents' families have been suffered. Some are suffered financially, physically and psychologically (Chart-5).

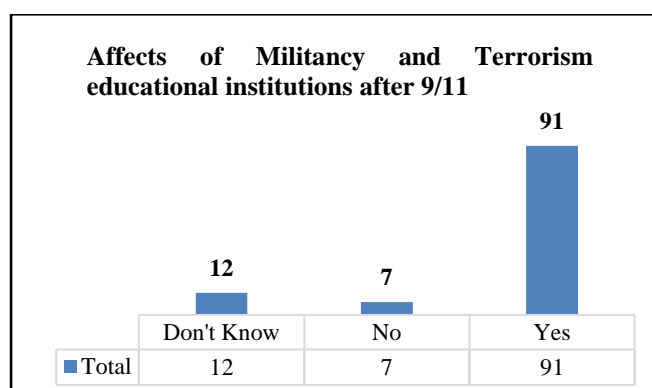
Chart-5



❖ **Impact of militancy and terrorism on educational institutions**

Out of 110 respondents responded, 91 respondents are of the view that militancy and terrorism have affected educational institutions in their areas (Chart-6).

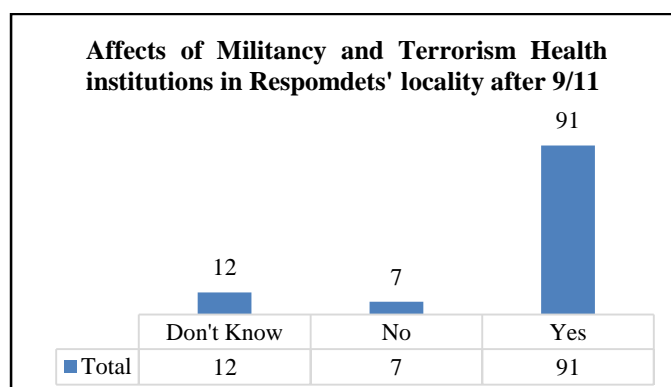
Chart-6



❖ Impact of militancy and terrorism on health institutions

Similarly, 91 out of 110 respondents responded that militancy and terrorism have affected health institutions in their areas (Chart-7).

Chart-7



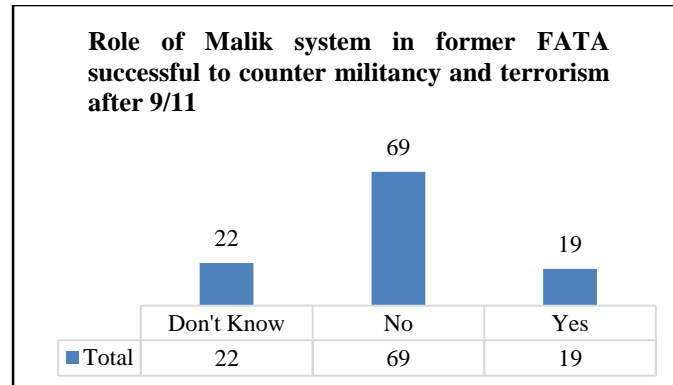
Role of Traditional Institutions like Malik and Jirga in Countering Terrorism

Pakhtoonwali is Pakhtoon Code of Conduct which governs the routine affairs of the Pakhtoon community especially in former tribal areas wherein the people has strong reverence for their socio-cultural values. For detailed insights into traditional leadership roles in tribal society, see Ahmad and Mohyuddin (2013). Similarly, the Jirga system as a conflict resolution mechanism in FATA has been comprehensively analyzed by Mahmood, Shaukatullah, and Ashfaq (2018). These both institutions remained very influential and powerful in governing the daily affairs of the local people. Local people derives authority from local elder. He provides direction. He was the link between his people and political administration. Political Agent and his administration controlled locality through these local elders.

❖ Role of Malik system in former FATA successful to counter Militancy and Terrorism

The survey shows that local people are not satisfied with the performance of in restoration of peace and countering of militancy and terrorism in former FATA. Majority of the respondents declared their role as unsatisfactory (Chart-8).

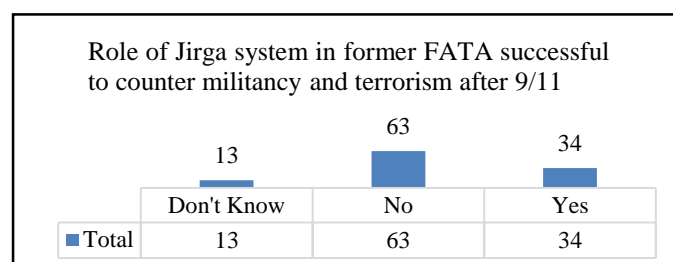
Chart-8



❖ Effectiveness of Jirga system in former FATA to counter militancy and terrorism

Every society, the people constituted some sort of mechanism for dispute resolution and running the day to day affairs by mutual consultation. Pakhtoon community has also Jirga System (Consultative System) to discuss various issues of mutual interests and to arrive at some doable solutions to those problems. Keeping in view the significance of Jirga System, some questions have been raised to evaluate its role to counter terrorism and militancy. The survey shows that majority of the respondents declared their role as unsatisfactory in restoration of peace by countering of militancy and terrorism in former FATA. However, 34 respondents declared as satisfactory (Chart-9).

Chart-9



❖ Role of Political Administration Before 25th Amendment

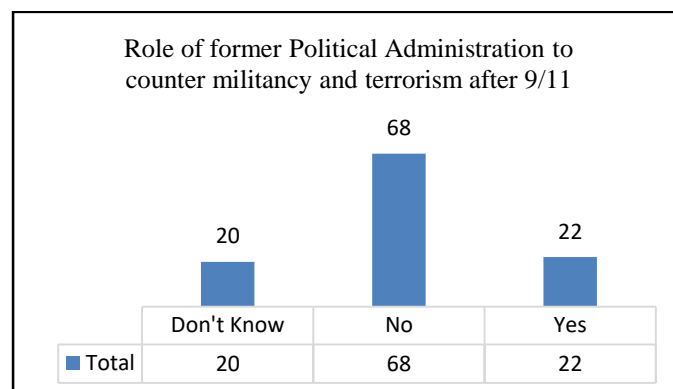
In addition to traditional institutions, this study also took into account British-oriented institutions in the shape of Political Administration under Political Agent and his staff. The Political agent was the most power official in former FATA. He derived his powers from Frontier Crimes Regulations, 1901 (FCR, 1901). For an in-depth examination of the Frontier Crimes Regulation and its reform process,

see Hussain (2012). Prior to 25th Amendment, the people of former FATA were ruled under FCR, 1901. Under these Regulations, the Political Agent enjoyed unbridled powers to run the affairs of former FATA.

➤ **Effectiveness of Ex-Political Administration to counter militancy and terrorism after 9/11.**

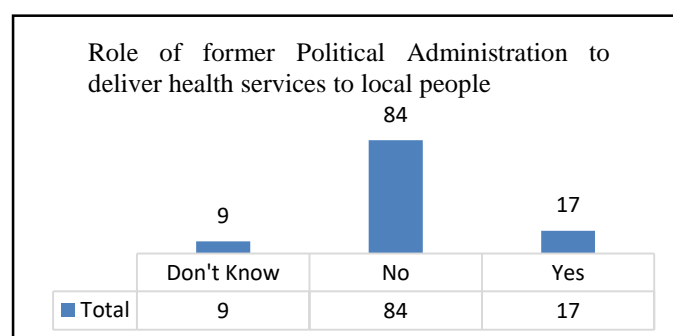
The survey shows that 68 of the respondents declared the role of former Political Administration as unsatisfactory in restoration of peace by countering of militancy and terrorism in former FATA. However, 22 respondents declared as satisfactory (Chart-I0).

Chart-I0



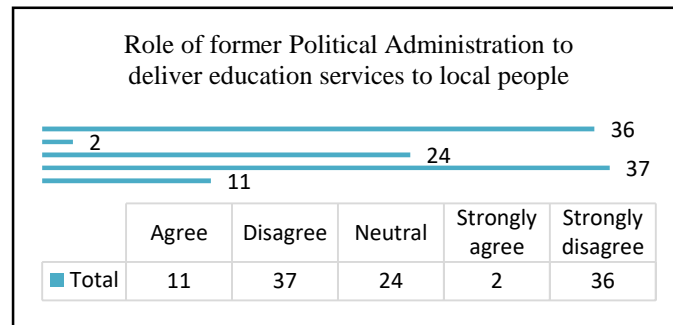
➤ **Role of Ex-Political Administration to deliver health services to local people.** The survey shows that 84 of the respondents declared the role of former Political Administration in delivering of health services in their localities as unsatisfactory in former FATA. However, 17 respondents declared its role as satisfactory (Chart-II).

Chart-II



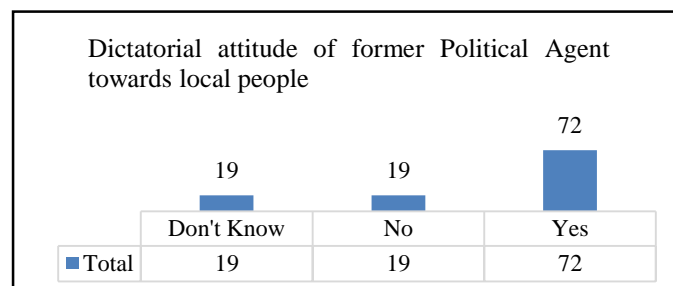
- **Role of Political Administration to deliver education services to local people.** The study shows that majority of the respondents are unsatisfied with the role of former Political Administration in provision of educational services in their localities in former FATA. However, 11 respondents declared its role as satisfactory (Chart-I2).

Chart-I2



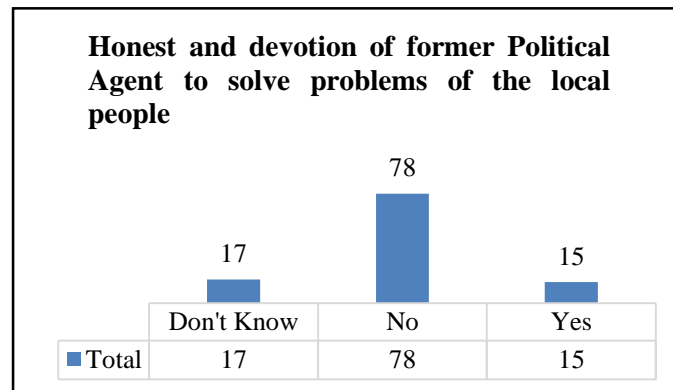
- **Attitude of Political Agent towards local people.** The survey shows that former Political Agent was dictatorial in nature. Seventy-two of the respondents declared attitude of former Political Administration as autocratic rather than democratic. However, 19 respondents declared as non-dictatorial (Chart-I3).

Chart-I3



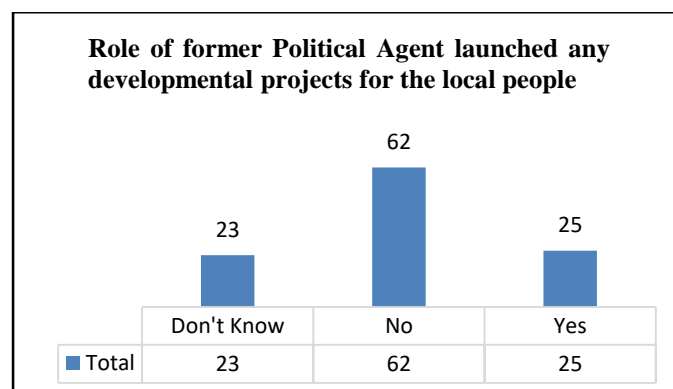
- **Nature of Political Agent to solve problems of the local people.** The survey shows that 84 of the respondents declared former Political Administration as dishonest, corrupt and not devoted to resolve their problems. However, 15 respondents declared as him as honest and devoted. (Chart-I4).

Chart-I4



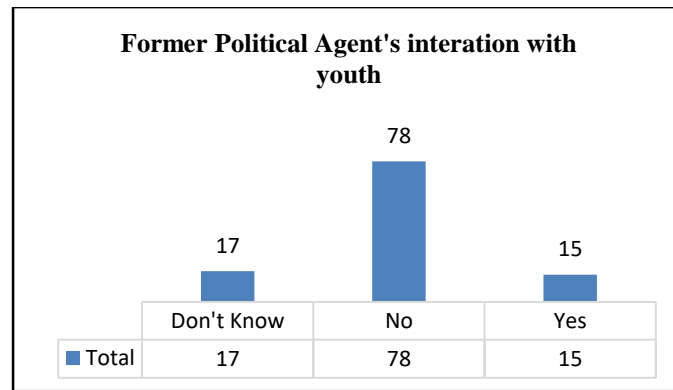
- **Has former Political Agent launched any developmental projects for the local people?** The survey shows that 62 of the respondents declared the role of former Political Agent in launching of developmental projects in their localities as unsatisfactory in former FATA. However, 25 respondents declared it as satisfactory (Chart-I5).

Chart-I5



- **Political Agent and Youth interaction.** The survey shows that 78 of the respondents declared the role of former Political Agent with respect to interacting with the youth as pessimistic; while 15 respondents declared as optimistic (Chart-I6).

Chart-I6

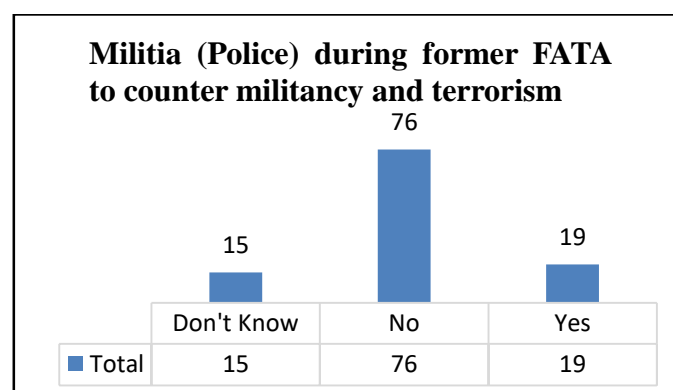


Role of Militia (Police) during Political Administration Before 25th Amendment

Police prior to 25th Amendment, The Political Agent monopolized all powers – executive and judicial. He had special police force namely, Khasadar Force or Militia to control the locality. The British law like Civil Procedure Code (CPC) and Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) were not applicable in former FATA. For further details on the historical context and challenges of mainstreaming FATA, see Shad and Ahmed (2018).

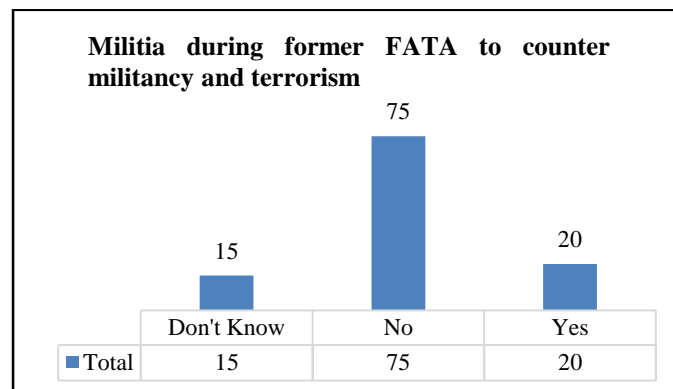
- ❖ **Effective of Militia (Police) during former FATA to counter militancy and terrorism.** The survey shows that 76 of the respondents declared the role of former Militia in countering terrorism and militancy as unsatisfactory in former FATA. However, 19 respondents declared its role as satisfactory (Chart-I7).

Chart-I7



- ❖ **Capability of Militia during former FATA to counter militancy and terrorism.** The survey shows that 75 of the respondents declared the capability of former Militia in countering terrorism and militancy as unsatisfactory in former FATA. However, 20 respondents declared its role as satisfactory (Chart-I8).

Chart-I8



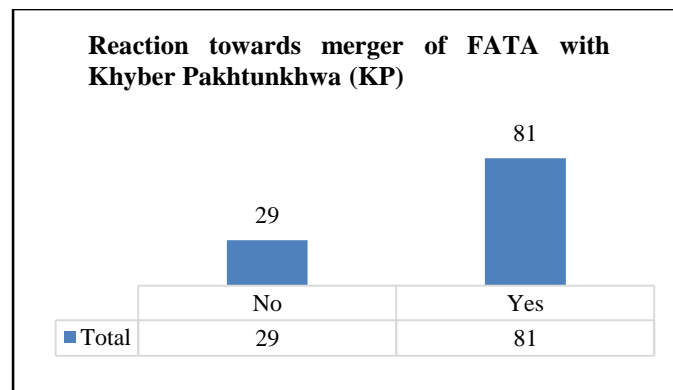
Post 25th Amendment Scenario:

❖ **Role of District Administration after 25th Amendment.** In addition to many changes, 25th Amendment of the Constitution replaced Political Administration and Political Agent with District Administration as was prevailed in the rest of districts of Pakistan. No doubt, it has also colonial-orientation but there is some kind of accountability under this system. In this section of the paper, the approach of the respondents especially youth towards merger and performance of the District Administration under Deputy Commissioner, Additional Deputy Commissioners and Assistant Commissioners. For an in-depth historical analysis of British policy in the tribal areas, particularly Waziristan, see Rahman (2004).

❖ **Approach towards merger of FATA with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)?**

The majority of the respondents demonstrated their positive response towards merger of former FATA with KP. However, 29 respondents showed their unwillingness in this regard (Char-I9).

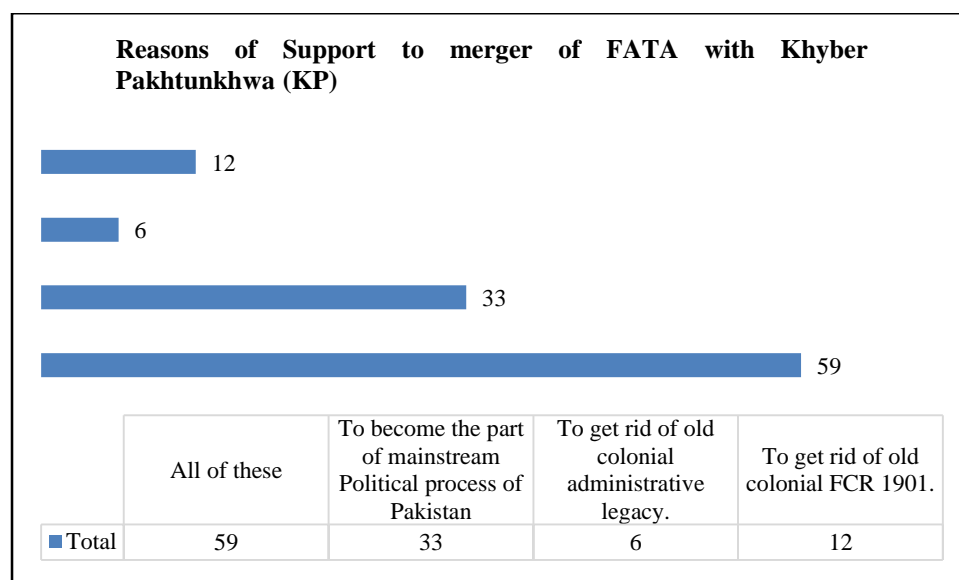
Chart-I9



❖ **Approach towards merger of FATA with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)**

The majority of the respondents demonstrated their positive response towards merger of former FATA with KP (Char-20).

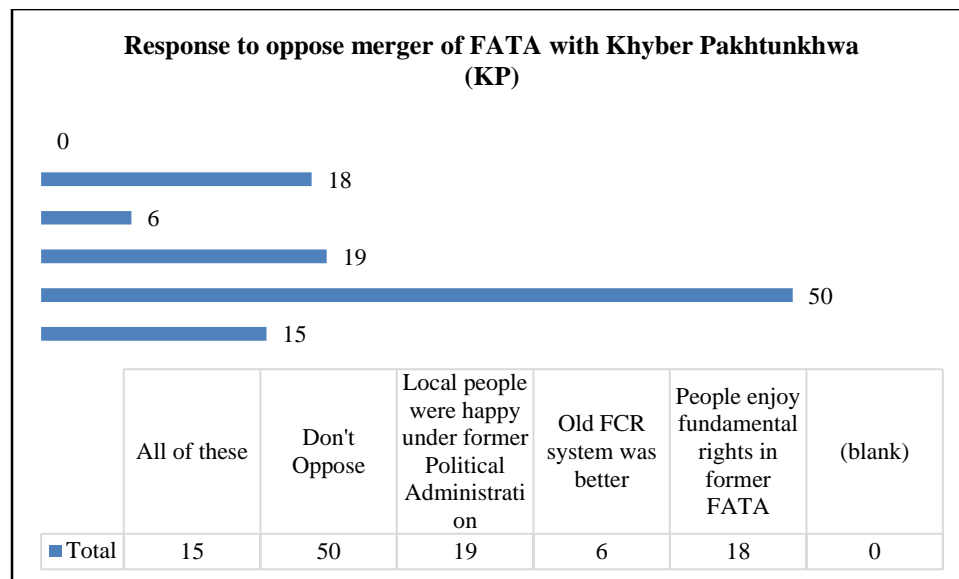
Chart-20



❖ **Why do you oppose merger of FATA with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)?**

The majority of the respondents demonstrated their positive response towards merger of former FATA with KP. However, 29 respondents showed their unwillingness in this regard (Char-21).

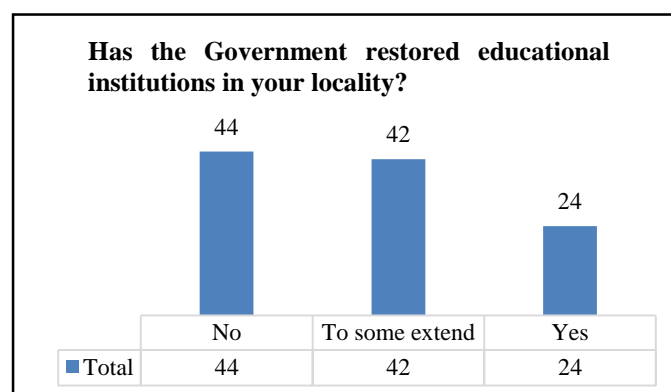
Chart-21



❖ **Has the Government restored educational institutions in your locality?**

Education including Higher Education is a provincial subject after 18th Amendment of the Constitution. It is the responsibility of the provincial governments to provide educational services to people. The education sector in former FATA was very miserable. Many schools were dismantled by the militants especially girls' schools. Enrolment of students dropped in many parts of former FATA. In the post 25th Amendment of Constitution, the government has delivered some satisfactory health services. However, 44 respondents showed their satisfaction in this regard (Chart-22).

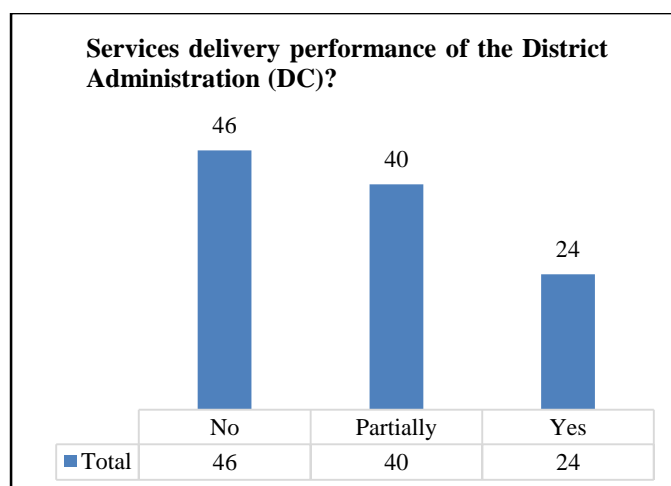
Chart-22



❖ **Services delivery performance of the District Administration (DC)**

The study shows that majority of the respondents are unsatisfied with the performance of the District Administration in services delivery in their localities in NMDs. However, 24 respondents declared its role as satisfactory (Chart-23).

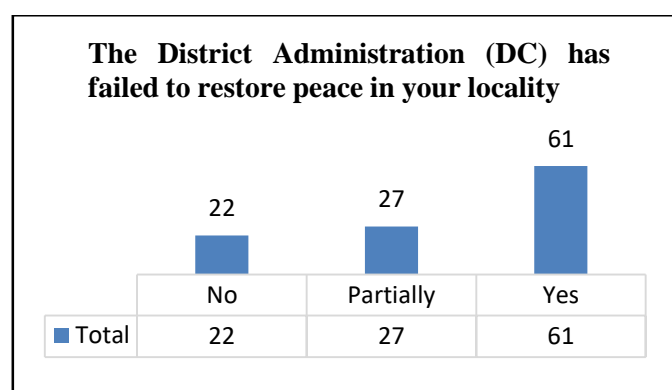
Chart-23



❖ **Role of the District Administration (DC) in restoration peace in your locality**

The study shows that majority (61) of the respondents declared the role of District Administration as failed in restoration of peace in NMDs. However, 11 respondents declared its role as satisfactory (Chart-24).

Chart-24

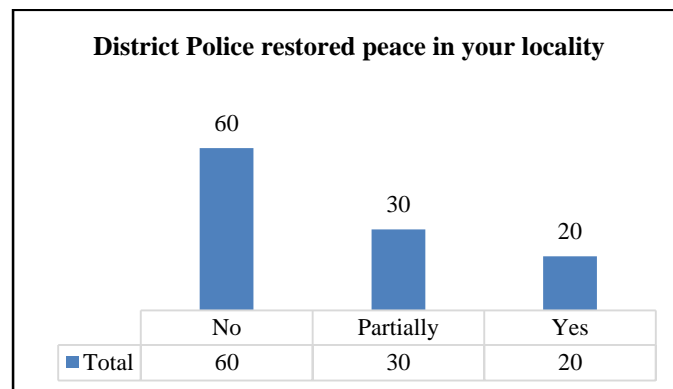


Role of District Police after 25th Amendment (Merger of FATA)

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police after to 25th Amendment gained jurisdiction in NMDs. The law like Civil Procedure Code (CPC) and Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) are now equally applicable in NMDs. Now the whole province including NMDs are under the control of Central Police Office headed by Inspector General of Police of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Each Division is under control of Regional Police Officer. Each district is under control of District Police Officer. No doubt, the people of Pakistan has inherited colonial legal system. However, the post 25th Amendment scenario witnessed uniformity of laws and their applications across the province.

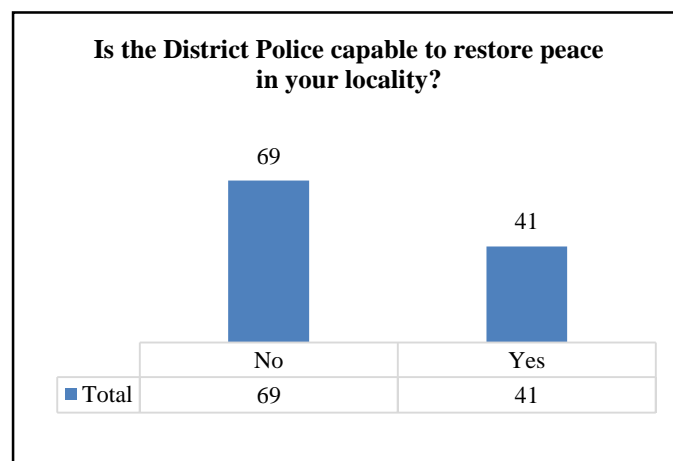
❖ **Role of District Police in restoration of peace.** The survey shows that majority of the respondents declared the police as unsatisfactory in countering terrorism and militancy as unsatisfactory in NMDs. However, 20 respondents declared its role as satisfactory (Chart-25).

Chart-25



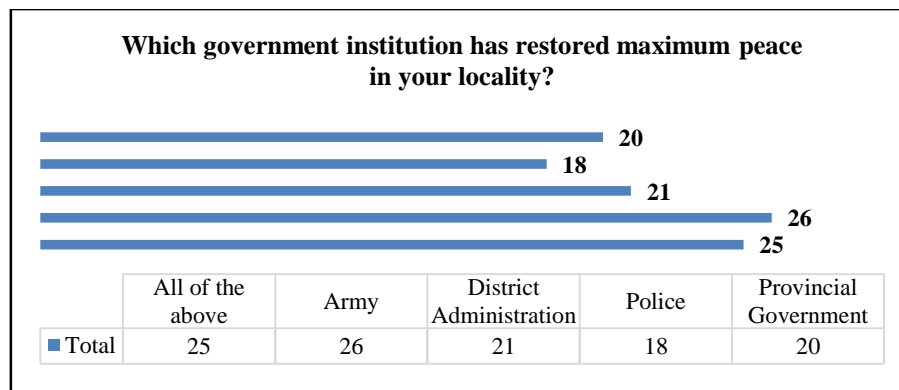
- ❖ **Capability of District Police capable to restore peace.** The survey shows that majority of the respondents declared the police as incapable in countering terrorism and militancy as unsatisfactory in NMDs. However, 41 respondents declared its role as satisfactory (Chart-26).

Chart-26



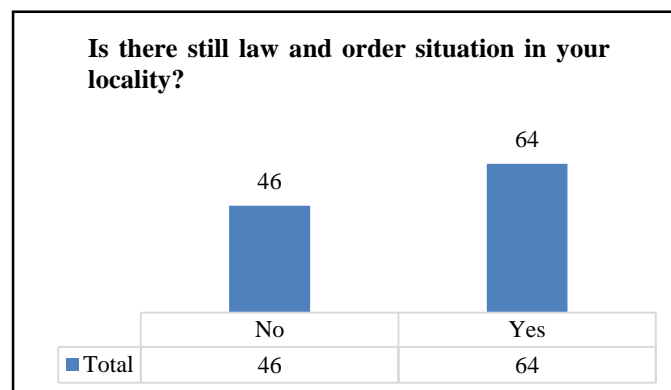
- ❖ **Appraisal of Government institutions to restore maximum peace .** To ascertain the opinion of the local respondents about the role and performance of various security agencies and governments, the below question was posed on them. Majority of the respondents applauded the role of Pakistan Army in restoration of peace in their respective localities. In addition, they also expressed their satisfaction on provincial government, district government and police (Charts-27).

Chart-27



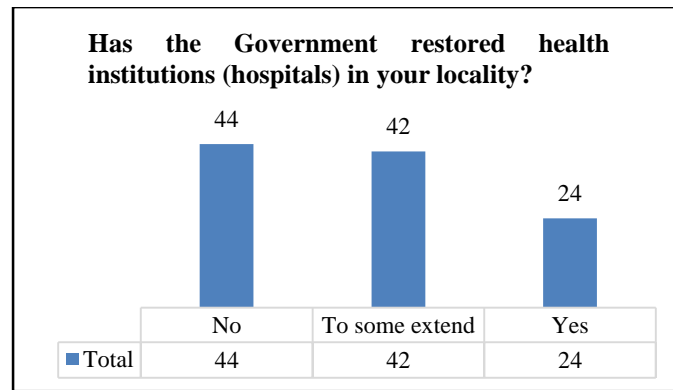
- ❖ **Existing law and order situation in NMDs.** The survey shows that in most of the parts of NMDs, there is still law and order situation (Chart-28).

Chart-28



- ❖ **Role of Government in restoration of health institutions (hospitals).** Health is a provincial subject after 18th Amendment of the Constitution. It is the responsibility of the provincial governments to provide health services to people. The health sector in former FATA was very miserable. There were no well-equipped hospitals in former FATA. In the post 25th Amendment of Constitution, the government has delivered some satisfactory health services. However, 44 respondents showed their satisfaction in this regard (Chart-29).

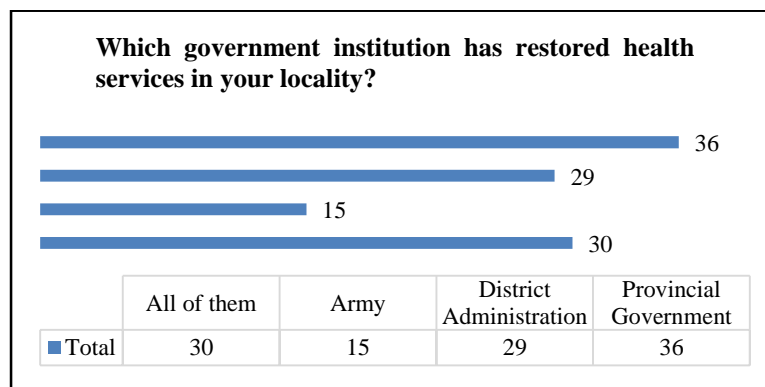
Chart-29



❖ **Which government institution has restored health services in your locality?**

As earlier stated that health is a provincial subject after 18th Amendment of the Constitution. In the post 25th Amendment of Constitution, the government has delivered some satisfactory health services. Majority of the respondents acknowledged the services of various institutions including Pakistan Army in this regard (Chart-30).

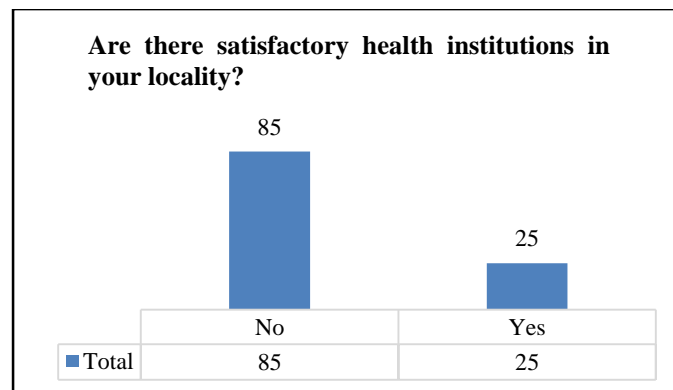
Chart-30



❖ **Are there satisfactory health institutions in your locality?**

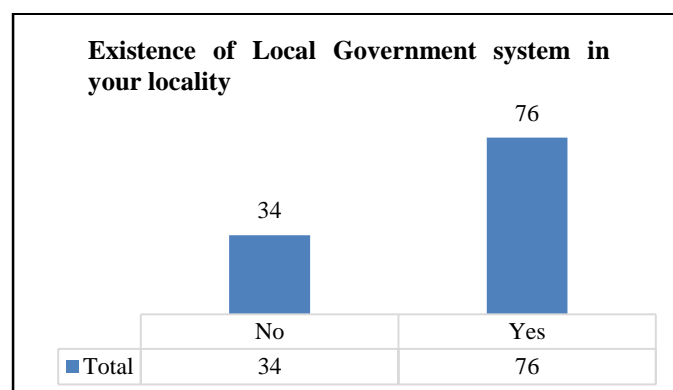
Majority (85) of the respondents expressed their view on the unsatisfactory conditions of the health institutions in their localities in NMDs (Chart-31).

Chart-31



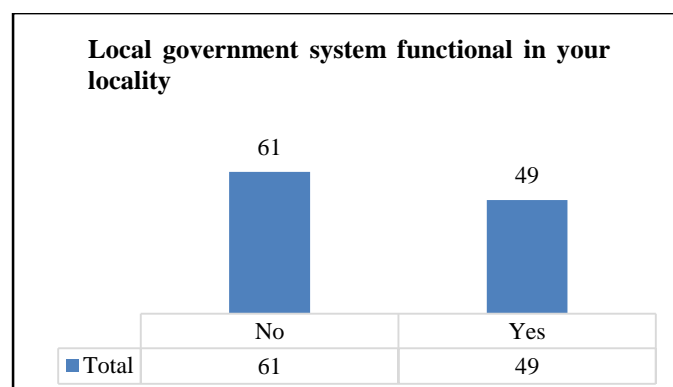
- ❖ **Existence of Local government system.** Majority (76) of the respondents acknowledged existence of local government system in their localities; while 34 said 'no' (Chart-32).

Chart-32



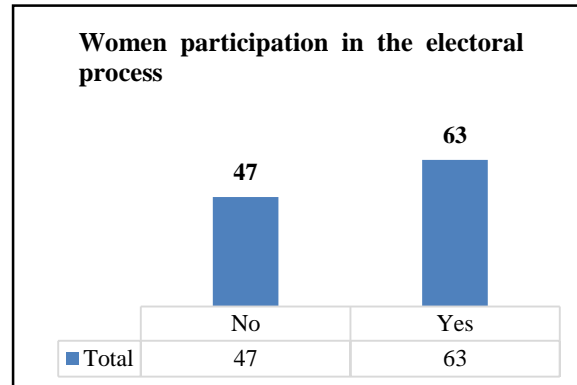
- ❖ **Performance of local government system functional.** Majority (61) of the respondents have expressed their opinion that local government system is not functional in their localities; while 49 said that it is functional (Chart-33).

Chart-33



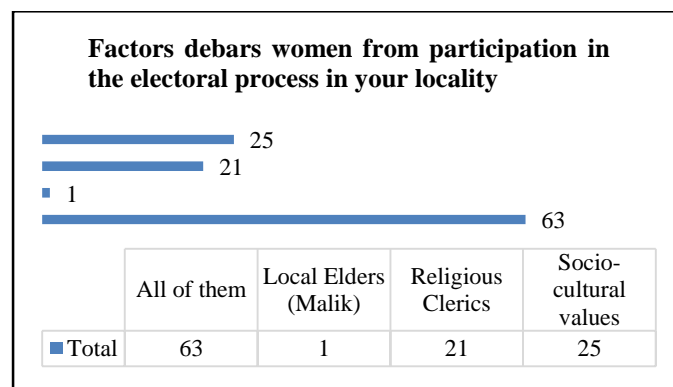
- ❖ **Status of women participation in the electoral process.** The study shows that 63 of the respondents are of the opine that women have participation in the electoral process; while 47 said 'no' (Chart-34).

Chart-34



- ❖ **Factors debar women from participation in the electoral process.** The study shows that various factors like Malik system, religious and socio-cultural values hinder the participation of women in political and electoral process of the area as demonstrated by the responses of the respondents (Chart-35).

Chart-35



Role of Youth in countering terrorism and extremism

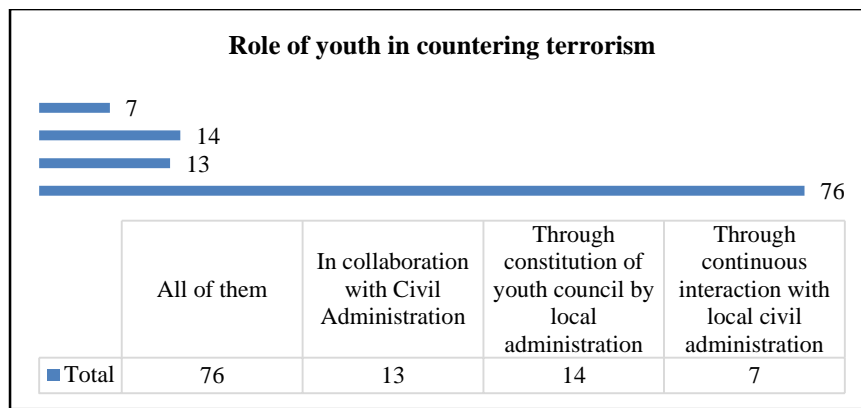
The demographic balance also matters in formulation and evaluation of national security policy. Youth contributes in development and prosperity of a country. In Pakistan, youth constitutes the lion share of the population. The study shows that in 2022, 36.57% of the population constituted of age 0-14; while 59.16% of age 15-64; and 4.27 of age 65 and above.(Statista. (n.d.),2025). It is also reported that 30% of the youth are illiterate and 77% quit education and starting working to earn bread and butter for their families. The youth unemployment ratio reached to 5.79%. In addition, 90% of the youth have no access to recreational facilities like libraries, parks, etc. Besides this, 48%, 15%, 8% and 68% of the youth have access to Mobie Phones, Internet, Radio, and Television respectively. The rate of

unemployment raised from 0.76% of 1999 to 6.42% in 2022. The Federal Government of Pakistan launched the Kamyab Jawan — National Youth Development Program (2019-2023) on collaboration with several UN agencies with the following six thematic areas 1) Mainstreaming of Marginalized Youth; 2) Economic Empowerment; 3) Civic Engagement; 4) Social Protection; 5) Health and Wellbeing, and 6) Youth-focused Institutional Reforms. Pakistan National Human Development Report revealed that young people below under age of 30 constituted 68% of the population and around 27% is between the ages of 15 and 29.

Juvenile empowerment is seen to play a key role in the development approach of Pakistan. As the largest proportion of the Pakistan population (more than 64 per cent) is of an age that is below 30, it is crucial to pay attention to the needs of young people, their aptitudes and occupations to be able to stabilise the country socio-economically (United Nations Development Programme, 2021). The UNDP underlines that empowerment of youth does not simply mean education, but the ability to make decisions politically, economically and even in decision-making scenarios (United Nations Development Programme, 2021). Nevertheless, the big hangover exists in the form of endemic unemployment of which the current figures indicate a fluctuating and yet very high rate of unemployment in young Pakistanis (Statista, n.d.). The need to exclusively implement youth policies has also been reported by media outlets like The Express Tribune that emphasized that Pakistan would waste a demographic dividend unless explicit interventions were enacted (The Express Tribune, 2020).

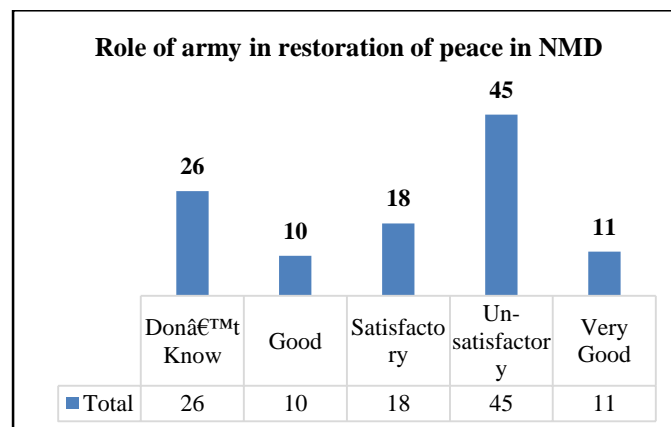
❖ **Strategy for youth to play role in countering terrorism.** The role of the youth cannot be ignored in national development. The study shows that youth through various means like collaboration with civil administration, constitution of youth councils in NMDs and periodical interaction with local civil administration the menace of terrorism can be countered. (Chart-36).

Chart-36



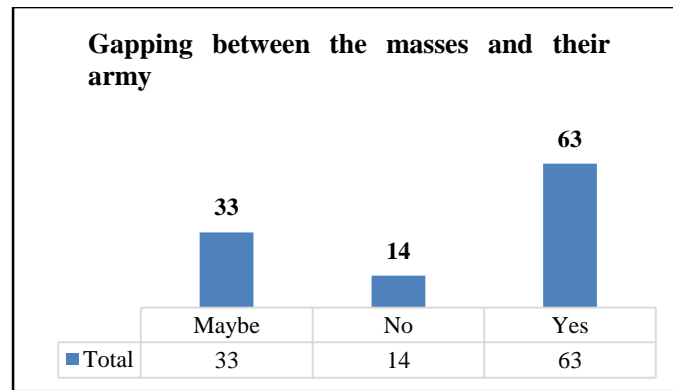
- ❖ **Role of army in restoration of peace in NMD.** It is felt essential to pulse the feelings and aptitude of the local people especially youth towards their guardians – Pakistan army and security agencies – regarding countering terrorism and restoration of peace. The study shows that 45 respondents has expressed their dissatisfaction on the role of army in restoration of peace in NMDs. However, 10, 18 and 11 respondents declared good, satisfactory and very good role of army in this regard. In addition, 26 respondents showed their ignorance on this issue (Chart-37).

Chart-37



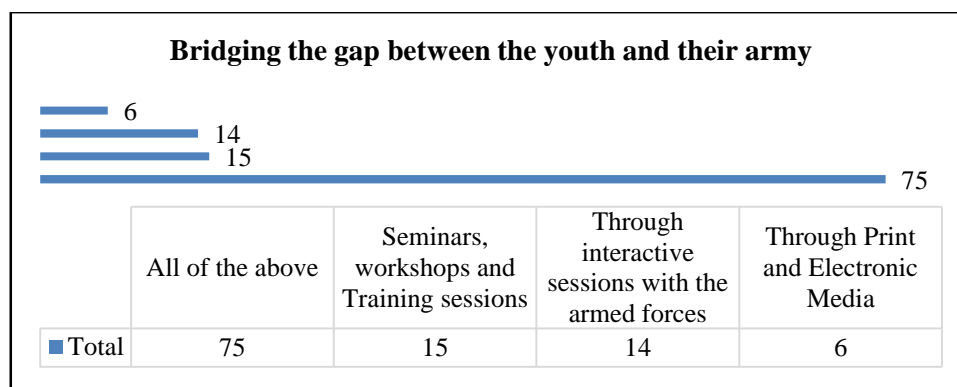
- ❖ **Gapping between the masses and their army.** It is also essential to know the prevalence of any gap between local people and Pakistan army in NMDs. The study shows that 63 respondents has expressed that there is such gap in NMDs. However, 14 respondents say 'no'; while 33 respondents show doubts (Chart-38).

Chart-38



❖ **Gapping between the youth and their army.** Physical and communication gap renders misunderstanding and sometimes clashes. It is, therefore, felt necessary to know the approach of the local people to bridge the gap between the youth and Pakistan Army. The study shows that majority of the respondents suggested holding of seminars, holding of training workshops, interactive sessions with Pakistan Army, and using of print and electronic media for highlighting the achievements of Pakistan Army to bridge the gap between local masses especially youth and their army (Chart-39).

Chart-39



Drivers or Causes

The causes of terrorism are multi-faceted and complex. However, in the light of survey study one can enlist some prominent factors which contributed and still remain the causes of disturbance in NMDs. Some of these are briefly highlighted in subsequent discussion.

First, the most important fundamental causes of terrorism, extremism, or radicalization is psychological in nature. The tribal people remained at forefront in the WoT and faced sufferings. These people had grievances, but with no appropriate forum to redress those grievances. As study shows, the

colonial heritage Political Administration was least bother to address their grievances. This has created psychological alienation and hatred among the minds and hearts of people war-torn tribal areas.

Second, the historical factors cannot be ignored. Historically, these areas were kept backward socially, economically, industrially, politically, and educationally. Simply, for more than a century these areas remained backward in all sectors of life. This also created frustration among these people.

Third, legal-political Factors cannot be neglected. NMDs were governed under FCR 1901 for more than a century. In the post 25th Amendment, these NMDs are going through transition period. Earlier these areas had no share in mainstream political system except in Senate. So there was no political education. There were no local bodies. President Musharraf introduced FATA Local Government Regulations 2002 but it remained ineffective. Because these areas were mainly governed through Traditional Socio-Cultural Institutions like Malik and Jirga. Malik system was least bother to resolve the local problems of their people. Majority of them were less educated, less acquainted with the changing political and security dynamics of the region and world (Azhar, 2024; Azhar & Imran, 2024; Azhar, et al., 2022). Fourth, socio-cultural factors also contribute in fomenting extremist and terrorist tendencies in the people of NMDs. People adheres to old socio-cultural values. For centuries, Pakhtunwali (Pakhtoon Code of Conduct) rules their day to day life. Shelter is one of the fundamental principles of Pakhtoon Code of Conduct. People gave shelter to Afghan warriors during Soviet-Afghan war, even after 9/11 they still provide shelter to militants being part of their culture. This created severe security issues for the law enforcing agencies. In addition, women constitute a major chunk of the society in NMDs. Majority of the women are illiterate, and have no political role which hinders their role in grooming of their children (Malik, et al., 2025; Hameed & Akhtar, 2023; Hashmi, et al., 2021). The modern youth as earlier stated has exposure to modern technology (internet, social media) wherein different literature exists and news circulates which influences the young minds. The number of illiterate people in North Waziristan is 55.5%, in Orakzai 55.2 per cent, in Mohmand 54.2 per cent, in Bajaur 54 per cent and in Khyber 50.8 per cent, in South Waziristan 61.2% and in Kurram district 37.7%. According to official figures of the elementary and secondary education department, there are 4,952 government primary schools including 2,116 for girls in the merged areas. However, the government has so far established only 551 middle schools including 213 for girls in the tribal districts. Recent reports reveal a concerning state of literacy in Pakistan's tribal districts, with indicators showing persistently low education levels (Ashfaq, 2021).

Fifth, the lacking of proper mechanism to bring youth in political spectrum of the country, lack of recreational facilities, lack of standard educational institutions (except one Razmak Cadet College at

that time) also caused radicalization to NMDs. The growth of youth during War on Terror, pessimistic approach and Negative Propaganda of political parties, pessimistic role of Nationalist Elements in Academia against Pakistan Army and ISI, lack of political culture in NMAs, lack of Political will and indifferent attitude of provincial and Federal bureaucracy also added fuel to fire and caused resentment in the minds of youth.

Sixth, the prevalence of traditional and Madaris-Oriented education system also promoted radical tendencies in NMDs instead of providing a generation with a balanced enlightened generation to society. Lastly, external causes like non-cooperative attitude of incumbent Taliban Regime, involvement of Afghan nationals in various crimes and terrorist activities are major causes of terrorism in various parts of Pakistan especially in NMDs.

Challenges

The challenges are also multi-dimensional but inter-connected. These challenges are political, economic, social, cultural, legal, institutional, and external in nature.

First, political factors like lack of sincere political leadership, exploitation of sentiments of the local population by political leadership for political gains and to broaden vote bank of political party, lack of democratic culture within political parties, dynastic politics, and lack of political training and education are major challenges. Second, the unsatisfactory role of district administration and district police is also challenge to address the causes of militancy, extremism and terrorism in NMDs. Third, socio-cultural values especially providing shelter to militants as earlier stated sometimes create hurdles in the way of law-enforcing agencies to catch militants. In addition, unsatisfactory primary, secondary, and higher education and poor health institutions, poor infrastructure facilities, etc are major social problems and challenges in way of countering militancy and terrorism.

Fourth, the economic factors like high unemployment rate, lack of sound industrial zone, lack of mechanism to provision skills, etc are some major challenges to address the wave of terrorism and address the radical sentiments among the local people of NMDs. In addition, resentment and frustration among youth is also an alarming situation. Besides internal factors, external factors non-cooperative attitude of incumbent Taliban Regime, involvement of Afghan nationals in various crimes and terrorist activities.

Recommendations

Social, legal, institutional and political reforms are required to halt the terrorism, militancy, extremism in NMDs. Firstly, the traditional Malik System and Jirga System need to be replaced with local government system. Youth must be given opportunities to become part of the local political and social system through establishing Council of Youth. Similarly, women need to be made part and parcel of the political process. Moreover, building academic institutions, health institutions, construction of roads, etc must be ensured.

Secondly, legal and institutional initiatives like implementation of Cyber Crimes Laws to deter negative propaganda against Pakistan Army and security agencies and against ideology of Pakistan, strengthening of policing system through allocation of appropriate budget and advance modern training system including tactical warfare skills with modern sophisticated weapons, introduction of local government system so as to engross democratic cultural values in NMDs, making district administration as public-service oriented institution, etc must be taken to counter terrorist and radical tendencies in NMDs. Moreover, the radical elements in academia must be brought to book.

In addition, foreign policy needs to be revisited with respect to Afghanistan. Diplomatic channels must be used to counter Tehrek-e-Taliban and other terrorist groups involved in terrorist activities in Pakistan.

Conclusion

For more than a century, the tribal people have been delineated from the mainstream political system and democratic cultural values and processes at all levels of politics – macro (federal and provincial) and micro (local government). Neither the politicians nor the bureaucrats bother to overhaul the colonial legacy in tribal areas. There was worst governing system which could not meet the modern governance requirements and security challenges.

Tribal people witnessed Afghan Jihad era during US-Soviet War wherein a generation grew up. During that period, transportation of sophisticated weapons and mobility of warriors of the routine of the day. Kalashnikov culture took place. Heroin business was common among these areas. Smuggling of goods across the border was also daily routine. Simply, black money became a culture therein. These areas became safe havens not for only criminals but also for Afghan Mujahideen (warriors). Later on, in the post 9/11 a generation breathed in a two-decades prolonged War on Terrorism who witnessed an anarchical environment around it where bombardment, drone attacks on homes, schools and mosques, suicide-bombing, killing of terrorists, martyrdom of local elders and armed forces Jawans and officers, dismantling of their homes, migration from their areas, psychological trauma, academic losses due to demolition of educational institutions, and financial losses, etc. During War on Terror, enemies were

undefined because many foreign agencies and their protégés inside the country were involved in terrorism and militancy.

In the nut shell, the aforementioned causes and challenges cannot be achieved without sincere, dedicated and devoted efforts of all stake holders of the society. Simply, a holistic approach is needed to counter militancy and terrorism in Pakistan including NMDs because a sole individual or institution cannot cope with this menace. It can only be countered with a sense of 'Divided we fall, united we stand'.

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