

Drone Strikes in FATA: Impact on Militancy, Social, Economic and Psychological Life

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Abstract

The US invasion of Afghanistan after the 9/11 incident, coerced the high ranking Al-Qaeda leaders to leave Afghanistan and take refuge along the western border of Pakistan. The stateless nature of the region facilitated the militants to recuperate and regroup, enabling them to develop a de facto state pertaining to their ideology in the name of Islam. The growing influence of Al-Qaeda and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) on the western border of Pakistan not only altered the socio-economic and political life of FATA, but also made the western border of Pakistan a focal point for both national and international actors. The US in order to counter the militant leaders taking refuge along the western border of Pakistan, initiated the drone campaign of “target killing”. This research paper focuses on an in-depth and profound analysis of the US drone policy; the drone campaign and the sovereignty of Pakistan; how it’s a violation of international laws; the divided role of Pakistan government; the reaction of the locals of FATA towards the drone campaign; drone campaign and militancy and the impact of drone strikes on the socio economic and psychological life of FATA.

Introduction

The federally administered tribal areas (FATA) for decades have been a site of significant unrest. Since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1970s, FATA on the western border of Pakistan touching Afghanistan has remained the focal point for militancy. Because of the economic backwardness, abysmal literacy rate and

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radicalization, FATA became a hub and breeding ground for militants.

After the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the Taliban and Al-Qaeda leaders fled to the federally administered tribal areas, where they were given refuge by the local sympathizers. The militants regrouped and recuperated in FATA; and from the western border of Pakistan they initiated a guerrilla war against the governments, military and civilians of United States, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

In order to counter the militancy in the tribal areas of Pakistan, the US government under the Bush administration initiated the campaign of target killing against the suspect members of Al-Qaeda, Taliban and other militant groups. The US carried out the first drone strike in June 2004; however, after this strike 53 more drone attacks were reported till January 2009 (under Bush administration). During the Obama administration, this program was further expanded and signature strikes were introduced based on pattern of life analysis. The number of drone strikes reported increased to 292 from 23 January 2009 till September 2012 under the Obama administration. (TBIJ, 2012)

The drone strikes have a dual impact on the militancy in FATA. Some researchers are of the view that the drone attacks mitigated militancy in the federally administered tribal areas. They argue that drone attacks target the high profile militant leaders thus destabilizing the militants by breaking their networks. But on the other hand, there is this school of thought who concludes that drone attacks have amplified militancy in FATA. The drone strikes, especially after the introduction of signature strikes have increased the civilian casualties; breeding antipathy and disgruntlement towards US.

Objective

- The US drone policies towards the FATA
- Pakistani government stance on the issue of drone attacks

- To examine the perception of the locals towards drone attacks
- To analyze the impact of drone attacks on Social, Economic and Psychological Life in FATA

Methodology

The topic “Drone Strikes in FATA: Impact on Militancy, Social, Economic and Psychological Life” is a qualitative study. Exploratory research method has been used for the extensive and thorough analysis of the impact of drone attacks on FATA; the reaction of local towards the drone attacks, the ambiguous attitude of Pakistan government towards drone attacks and also to see the impact of drone strikes on the social, economic and psychological life of FATA. Primary data collected through interviews backed with secondary data collected from news articles, journals, analysts and civil society reports, documentary sources and government documents has been used to explore the topic.

US Policy towards Drone Attacks in Pakistan

The US drone campaign has been an integral part of US counter terrorism policy against Al-Qaeda and other militant groups since the incidence of September 11, 2001. The US drone campaign is cardinally run by the Pentagon, however, in Pakistan the drone campaign is exclusively run under the command of CIA (central intelligence agency). However, this might alter in the future: as White House announced its decision on 22 March 2013 to ask for the transfer of drone campaign from CIA to Pentagon (Bennett, 2013). Moreover, the US authorities reckon drone campaign as a vital tool to counter and combat militants without putting human life at risk. US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta on 2 February 2013 during an interview with *AFP* revealed the importance of drone strikes to counter militancy. He stated:

"It's been an important part of our operations against Al-Qaeda, not just in Pakistan, but also in Yemen, in Somalia and I think it ought to continue to be a tool we ought to use where necessary,"
(AFP.com, 2013)

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The United States, under the Bush administration, initiated drone campaign of target killing to counter Al-Qaeda and other militant groups. United States, under the supervision of CIA carried out the first drone attack in Afghanistan in February 2002 near ZahawarKili base, where three suspected militants were killed.(Sifton, 2012) Likewise, the United States from 2002-2004 used 'Predator' drones to monitor the federally administered tribal area, as it was believed that after the US invasion in Afghanistan; particularly after the famous fight of Tora Bora, the militants have fled to the western border of Pakistan, and were given refuge and support by the local sympathizers enabling the militants to regroup and recuperate their network in FATA. From the mountainous region of FATA, the militants initiated and commenced the insurgent activities against the governments, military and civilians of both Pakistan and United States. So in order to counter the insurgent activities and dismantle the militant networks, in June 2004, the US set off its first strike in Pakistan against Nek Muhammad, head of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP), who announced his support for Al-Qaeda two months prior the strike. Although the Pakistani military primarily denied any involvement of US in the killing of Nek Muhammad, it rather took the credit for the operation. However, it was later confirmed that Nek Muhammad was killed in a drone strike. (Hudson, Owens, & Flannes, 2011).

The Bush administration, focused on target killings based on personality strikes, targeting high profile leaders of Al-Qaeda and other militant leaders like Salim Sinan Al-Harethi and Nek Muhammad. During the Bush administration, from June 2004 till 2009 the total number of drone strikes against the militants groups was 45 according to the New America Foundation; while the Bureau of Investigative Journalism reported that during the same time period from 2004-2009, the US carried out 52 drone strikes in Pakistan (Bergen & Tiedemann, 2010). However, when Obama came to power in 2009, the drone strikes escalated enormously; the same year witnessed more drone attacks than the total number

of drone strikes against militants during the Bush administration from June 2004-2009. According to the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, there have been a total of 377 drone strikes in Pakistan, of these 52 were carried out during the Bush administration, while 326 (including the one that killed Hakimullah Mehsud) have been carried out till 1 November, 2013, during Obama administration (TBIJ, 2013).

The core reason behind the escalation of drone strikes during Obama administration is the introduction of “*signature strikes*” based on the patterns of life analysis. These strikes are based on the targets “*group of people bearing certain traits and features associated with the militant groups*” but whose identities are not known. The defining features for target strikes have never been made public (DailyMaverick, 2012). In the tribal culture, almost every adult carry ammunitions and if locals move or sit together in groups, which is very common in the tribal areas, make them vulnerable to drone strikes.

Criticism on Drone Strikes

The target killing of Al-Qaeda, other militant leaders and the escalated number of civilian casualties in Pakistan and other countries by the drone strikes has inflamed criticism from human right groups and other US allies. They consider the drone campaign as violation of international laws and breaching of Pakistan’s sovereignty. The human right groups and other actors called upon US to ensure transparency, accountability and legality for the US drones policies. They demanded from US “the memorandum” from the department of Justice, outlining legal basis for target killing and “*signature strike*” in the federally administered tribal areas of Pakistan. They also asked US to make sure the availability of procedures for selecting a target, especially in case of *signature strikes* to the general public and other stakeholders; the compliance of mechanism with the international law; which laws are being applied; the nature of investigation into civilian deaths and injuries; and mechanism in place to track, analyze and publically recognize civilian casualties (ICG, 2013).

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Likewise, the efficiency and accuracy of the drone strikes ought to have serious scrutiny. The accuracy of drone strikes largely depends upon the information obtained from the intelligent agents, on the basis of which the target is selected. The target decision is based on the information acquired from the asset and informants on the grounds. The accurate video although makes it much easier to identify the target, however, the accuracy is ensured only when the intelligence information goes into them. The intelligence information obtained with the help of locals in Afghanistan and Iraq has caused a serious concern for the reliability on the intelligence agents who are responsible for target killing decisions. Sometimes, the opportunist informants provide false and fraudulent information to achieve their political or sectarian agendas or to acquire financial rewards due to the apprehension of falling prey to the perilous terrorist. This has resulted in increased number of civilian casualties in the region. An unknown US official quoted by Tom Junod in his August 2012 Esquire article acknowledged that:

“You get information from intelligence channels and you don’t know how reliable it is or who the source was. The intelligence services have criteria, but most of the time the people making the decision have no idea what those criteria are”. (Nation.com, 2013)

However, on the contrary, the US believes the drone campaign to be most effective and efficient tool to mitigate militancy. Likewise, the American constitution empowers the president to protect the nation from any imminent threat. The White House supported and bolstered President Obama’s authority to use drone strikes against the militants after a Justice Department memo argued that leaders in Al-Qaeda can be killed even if the intelligence failed to provide evidence of devising and plotting a terrorist act against the United States. President Obama’s counterterrorism Chief John Brennan revealed that:

“Broadly speaking, the debate over strikes targeted at individual members of Al-Qaeda has centred on their legality, their ethics,

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the wisdom of using them, and the standards by which they are approved,”(Tribune.com, 2012).

The above statement illustrates that the US perceives drone campaign in the western border of Pakistan as legal, wise and the most effective tool available to dilute militancy in FATA. Moreover, the US domestic laws also empower the US president to use any kind of force to protect the US citizens from any imminent menace.

Pakistan Approach Towards Drone Attacks

The Pakistani government stance on the drone attacks has been ambiguous. The Pakistani government does not have a clear policy towards the drone strikes. On one hand, the Pakistani government officials denounce and condemn the US drone strikes in the western border of Pakistan; however, on the other hand there is abundant evidence of Pakistani authorities’ involvement and consent in drone campaign since its first strike in June 2004 (ICG, 2013). Likewise there is no official agreement on drone attacks in federally administered tribal areas between the US and Pakistan, but, there has been political understanding between the two countries regarding drone strikes. Initially, from 2004-2007 the Pakistani government claimed responsibility for the attacks in FATA, thus denying any involvement of US. In 2009, the then prime minister of Pakistan, Sayed Yousaf Raza Gilani publically rejoiced and celebrated the killing of Baitullah Mehsud and took the credit of killing of the blood thirsty leader of TTP Pakistan who was believed to be involved in the assassination of the former prime minister of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto, and launching of terrorist attacks within Pakistan, however, later on it was revealed that it was an outside job (SSL&NYSL, 2012).

Pakistani government bolsters and supported the drone campaign, by providing both logistic as well as intelligence support to the US in order to combat militancy in the western border of Pakistan. Shamsi airbase and Shahbaz airbase were given to US to carry out the drone strikes in the federally

administered tribal areas (FATA) (ICG, 2013). In fact, the Pakistani government wanted more control over the use of drone, if not direct responsibility then a right to concur on targets. During a meeting between former president Zardari and the Senator Patrick Leahy, Chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee in May 2009, the president of Pakistan clearly demanded the drone technology from US. *“Give me the drones so my forces can take out the militants from Pakistan and we cannot be criticized by the media or anyone else for actions our Army takes to protect our sovereignty”* (ICG, 2013). This clearly demonstrates Pakistan’s consent regarding drone campaign and it also illustrates the hypocrisy of Pakistan politicians who although publically denounce the US drone campaign in the western border of Pakistan, but in reality bolstered the drone campaign by providing both logistic and intelligence support to the US.

The UN Special Rapporteur, Philip Alston bolsters the target killing of militants in FATA, by calling it as self defense and explains it as:

“A targeted killing conducted by one State in the territory of a second State does not violate the second State’s sovereignty [where] . . . the first, targeting State has a right under international law to use force in self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter, [and] the second State is unwilling or unable to stop armed attacks against the first State launched from its territory.” (Orr, 2011).

This law pertains to the situation of Pakistan and portrays that US can use drones against Pakistan in the federally administered tribal areas as there are armed non-state actors who pose serious threat to not only US, but to the international community and the Pakistani authorities are unable to counter the militants taking refuge in the tribal areas. This implies that US unmanned aircrafts although kill militants by surpassing western border of Pakistan, but according to the United Nation Security Council, the US can take military action against the militants’ posing imminent threat to US. As Pakistan has failed to combat terrorism and insurgency

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along its western borders, therefore Pakistan cannot counter any aggression from US drones against Al-Qaeda and other militant groups. More importantly United States is conducting the drone campaign in the federally administered tribal areas with the consent of the Pakistani government.

However, due to the enormous escalation of drone strikes during the Obama administration, the opposition from Pakistani citizens towards drone campaign in the western border of Pakistan also amplified. In 2011, three distinct events further exacerbated the animosity and hatred among the Pakistani public against the US: the public killing of two Pakistani citizen by CIA agent Raymond Davis (SSL&NYSL, 2012), the May raid of compound and killing of Osama bin Ladin in Abbottabad, and the martyr of 24 Pakistani soldiers by US attack at Salala post (Tribune.com, 2011). As a consequence, these three distinct events deteriorated the bilateral relationship between the US and Pakistan, and the Pakistani government impeded their logistic as well as intelligence support to US and asked US to halt the drone campaign in the tribal areas. As a result, the US although stopped drone strikes in tribal areas for few weeks, but later on the drone strikes again became common in the western border regions of Pakistan. This shows the inability of Pakistan government to impede the drone campaign in the tribal areas of Pakistan.

For most of the time, the Pakistani government officials have often condemned and denounced the drone strikes as the violation of international law and sovereignty of the country. They raised their voice in the National Assembly of Pakistan but seemed frustrated due to the inability of the government to counter the drone strikes. Karim Khundi, the deputy speaker National Assembly, whose constituency borders on FATA's South Waziristan Agency, said "*not a single political party supports drones. But what can we do aside from ordering our air force to shoot them down? This would mean declaring war on a superpower*" (ICG, 2013).

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Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan Tehreek-I-Insaf (PTI) although seriously denounced the drone strikes during their election campaigns, however, after winning the elections, no concrete and tangible steps have been taken by the newly formed government to impede drone attacks. Recently although a resolution was passed in the Punjab Assembly to impede the drone campaign in the western border regions of Pakistan, but it proved futile. Likewise, the US Secretary of State, John Kerry, during his last visit to Pakistan revealed that in near future the US will halt the drone campaign. He stated:

"I think the programme will end as we have eliminated most of the threat and continue to eliminate it," (Tribune.com, 2013).

John Kerry's statement was a positive initiation from US and was expected to not only help in strengthening the bilateral relationship between the two nations, but also facilitate the newly formed government in initiating the peace talks with Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan. However, the continuous drone strikes in the tribal areas, particularly the killing of Hakeemullah in a drone strike destroyed the peace process between Pakistani government and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan. The government of Pakistan seriously denounced the drone strike particularly the one that killed Hakimullah Mehsud. The interior minister Chaudhry Nisar revealed that *"This is not just the killing of one person; it's the death of all peace efforts,"* (BBC.com, 2013). Likewise, the majority of the political parties except Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) and All Pakistan Muslim League (APML) seriously denounced and condemned the killing of Hakeemullah Mehsud as an act to derail the peace process. However, there are some groups in Pakistani establishment who considered Hakeemullah Mehsud as a major hindrance to pursue the peace talks, as some of his pre-conditions were so harsh that they were impossible to be met by the government of Pakistan.

The Perception of Locals towards Drone Strikes

The local perception towards impact of drone attacks on FATA is shaped and influenced by the fear of both military and militants. The majority of people residing in FATA, although condemn and denounce the drone campaign initiated by the Bush administration to counter terrorism along the western border of Pakistan, however, they often mute their criticism due to the apprehension of being called as pro-Taliban. Only a minute population of FATA inhabitants support the drone strikes, but they also refrain from giving their opinion due to their dependence on patronage and protection from particular militant groups (Khan, 2013).

Before the introduction of the *signature strikes* by Obama administration, the US image among the general public was satisfactory. This implies that the civilian casualties were minimal and most importantly, the killing of top militant commanders resulted in weakening of the militant groups in FATA, portraying a positive image of US among the locals. In 2009, according to the research finding focusing on North Waziristan, South Waziristan and Khurram agencies, 52% of respondents taking part in the research believed that the drone strikes carried out by the US authorities are precise and accurate; and another 60% of the respondents believed that drone strikes have weakened the militants groups operating in Pakistan.(AIRRA, 2009).

Likewise, it was enunciated during Peshawar declaration in February 2012 that was concluded after a major rally in Peshawar led by the Amman Tehreek (peace movement); an extensive coalition of major political parties and civil society that the opponents of militants and insurgents in North Waziristan compare the drones to “Ababeel” (Swallows - holy birds, which according to Quran, helped in defending Mecca from aggressors by dropping stone from their beaks) (LUBPAK.com, 2011).

However, after 2009, the locals seriously denounced the drone campaigns and US image was badly affected. According to a

research conducted in the Federally Administered Tribal areas, the support for drone strikes has sharply declined from 2010 to 2011. People who believe that “*drone strikes are accurate and cause minimal casualties*” was 24% in 2010, but in 2011 it was reported to be 4.3%. The majority of opposition came from North Waziristan, the most targeted agency and the reason most probably was the introduction of “*signature strikes*”. The survey also reported an enormous support for drone strikes from the “*Shia community*” in the lower Khurram agency, who believed that they were dealing with “*Sunni extremist*” Talibanization phenomenon that had taken the entire population of the federally administered tribal areas as hostage (Shinwari, 2011).

However, according to the research conducted by New American Foundation in collaboration with Terror Free Tomorrow, three quarters of FATA inhabitants oppose the drone campaign in the western border of Pakistan. Approximately half of the inhabitants believed that; although drone strikes do target the militants, but civilian casualties have amplified due to the introduction of “*signature strikes*” under Obama administration. However, half of the respondent revealed that they will support drone campaign only if they were conducted under the supervision of the Pakistani military (ICG, 2013). Moreover, FATA Research Centre conducted a profound and exhaustive analysis of militancy in FATA and found that the locals of FATA consider the US forces as the core cause for the intensified insurgency in FATA. 89% of the locals, who were interviewed, were of the view that the militancy in FATA will mitigate only after the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan, as the militants can no longer justify the jihad they are performing in the name of Islam. Similarly, 78% of the respondents who were interviewed during the research revealed that negotiation is the better way to dilute and mitigate militancy from the region, rather than drones strikes and military operation (FRC, 2013).

The opinion of locals of FATA towards the drone strikes has altered enormously during the last few years. Initially they

supported and bolstered the drone strikes; in North Waziristan people even compare drones with “*Ababeel*”. But now the situation is other way round due to the increased number of drone strikes particularly “*signature strikes*” and “*double taped strike*” which have not only aggravated the civilian casualties, but have also derogated the socio-economic and psychological life of the region. Moreover the involvement of foreign actors in the region has also deleterious impact on the life of FATA and the role of foreign elements were denounced and condemned by the locals as they play an integral part in inflaming insurgency by providing weapons and ammunition to the sectarian groups.

Impact of Drone Strikes on Militancy in FATA

The US drone campaign has dual impact on militancy. It is believed to curb militancy in short run; however in long run it has exacerbated militancy.

Short Run

The notion that drone attacks have diluted militancy on the western border of Pakistan is although dubious; however, it is believed to have curbed and alleviated militancy in the short run. The killing of major leaders of militants has enabled US and Allies in breaking the networks of militants; making the militants weak and helpless against the drone strikes. Twenty out of thirty top Al-Qaeda leaders have been killed from 2009 to 2012 both in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Likewise according to the New American Foundation reports, only in Pakistan 52 militant leaders were killed, out of them 28 were high profile militant leaders from 2004 till 2013 (ICG, 2013).

The high accuracy of drone strikes have made them effective and efficient tool to combat the guerrilla war against TTP, Al-Qaeda and other militant groups. During a speech in the National University of Defense in Washington D.C., President Obama revealed that the drone campaign has helped the US and Allies in

dismantling and combating Al-Qaeda and other militant groups (NYTimes.com, 2013).

In August 2009, Baitullah Mehsud, a high profile militant and leader of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan; who was also believed to be involved in the assassination of the former prime minister of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto, was killed in a drone attack; Wali Mohammad Tufan, head of the Tehreek-e-Taliban suicide wing was killed in a drone strikes on 6 January, 2013; on 2 January, 2013 Maulvi Nazir Wazir another high profile militant leader was killed in a drone strike; on 24 August, 2012 Badruddin, the leader of Haqqani Network fell prey to drone missile; Illyas Kashmiri, head of Harakatul Jihad ul Islami also a senior operative of Al-Qaeda was killed in a drone strike (ICG, 2013). The killing of such high profile militants in drone campaign has deleterious impact on the militant and insurgent groups, debasing their ability to conduct the most destructive attacks against military and civilians.

In 2013, an empirical analysis of the impact of drone strikes on militancy in Pakistan was done. The results revealed a negative relationship between drone attacks and the improvised explosive device. Moreover, the results also portrayed a negative co-relation between drone strikes and suicide attacks. This means that the drone strikes have alleviated the IEDs and suicide bombing during the past few years in Pakistan from 2007-2011(Johnston & Sarbahi, 2013). These finding portray that drone attacks have been effective and efficient way to counter and dilute militancy during the last few years in the federally administered tribal areas; the militants' networks have been dismantled, widening the communication gap and coercing the high profile, proficient and expert militant leaders to hand over the operation responsibilities to the lower ranked militants.

Similarly, drone strikes have coerced militants to dilute the insurgent activities. Another research conducted in 2012 revealed that, drone have certainly hindered some of Taliban's operation and killed hundreds of its low level militants and a number of high

level commanders. Besides this, the hovering of drones has also disrupted the ability of armed non-state actors to gather and organize within FATA in general and Waziristan in particular (NYTimes.com, 2013).

The menace of drone strikes, especially in case of “*signature strikes*” has coerced the militants to refrain from regrouping or using cell phones; coerced a number of militant leaders to leave FATA and take refuge in the urban areas of Pakistan. Due to which the communication and command has been undermined, leading to dismantling of militant network. A senior Pakistani journalist, who has a profound and exhaustive knowledge of militancy in FATA revealed during a research that militants only fear drone strikes (ICG, 2013).

Long Run

Drone strikes have dual impact on militancy. Drone attacks on one hand are believed to curb and mitigate militancy in the short run by dismantling militant groups, but on the other hand in the long run, drone strikes are counterproductive and can possibly intensify and exacerbate insurgency on the western border of Pakistan. Likewise, the militancy in FATA symbolizes an ideology and is enormously bolstered by the religious clerics of Pakistan, considering it a defensive jihad against the Jews. So the use of drones or military force is not adequate to dilute insurgency, rather a profound and comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy needs to be devised to counter the issue. Moreover, the collateral damage incurred by the drone attacks plus the increasing number of civilian casualties further aggravates the hatred and animosity towards US and NATO forces. During a seminar organized by the FATA Research Center at Hillview Hotel Islamabad, Members of National Assembly of Pakistan were of the opinion that drones strikes have exacerbated militancy in the region and is a mere violation of Pakistan’s sovereignty. Shehryar Afridi, Member National Assembly revealed that the global perception towards FATA should be changed. The people of FATA are the main stakeholder in the war against terrorism; unless and until they are

brought to mainstreaming it is impossible to curb militancy rather it will exacerbate. He stated that:

“The more we will suppress them the more they will retaliate”
(FRC, 2013).

Likewise, drone attacks coerce the militants to shift their operations to new locales, where they feel safe or cannot be distinguished altogether. This may further aggravate the militant activities in the new locale just as the insurgency and militancy in FATA aggravated significantly towards the end of 2001 when the Afghan Taliban regrouped on the western border of Pakistan after an intensified military operation against militants by the NATO forces in Afghanistan. The drone attacks are limited to FATA only, which means that there is enough space for militants to take refuge elsewhere in Pakistan. This implies that although drone attacks can be effective in the short run, but in the long run the militants will regroup and further intensify the militant activities. For example in North Waziristan, Wali Ur Rehman, the second in command of TTP, was killed in a drone strike; right after that the militants intensified reprisal insurgent attacks in various cities of KPK (Tribune.com, 2013). Bruce Rachel a counterterrorism expert and the former CIA analyst, is of the view that the drone attacks exacerbate militancy and terrorism in FATA. He stated, *“the hive will always produce more bees”* (Newyorker.com, 2009).

Indeed, US drone campaigns have exacerbated militancy on the western border of Pakistan and the overall militancy in Pakistan has also amplified as an upshot of drone strikes in the federally administered tribal areas. The US drone strike on a religious seminary in Bajaur agency on 13 January 2006 that killed 80 innocent civilians including 69 children (Tribune.com, 2011). The killing of innocent civilians in this particular drone strike fuelled hatred and animosity among the locals towards US. Thus allowing the militants to legitimize their so-called jihad against the US and help them establish their militant network in the region.

A quantitative research conducted on the US drone campaign in FATA revealed a positive correlation between drone strike and militant attacks from 2004-2009 (Hudson, Owens, & Flannes, 2011). This illustrates that the militant retaliation attacks have amplified due to the increase in the number of drone strikes from 2004-2009. Likewise, in 2009 a group responsible for detonating the Pakistani police academy revealed that it was a retaliation act against the collaboration of Pakistani authorities with US drone campaign in the federally administered tribal areas (BBC.com, 2009) This portrays that the drone campaign in the federally administered tribal areas has amplified during the past nine year.

Similarly, Faisal Shahzad who tried to blow up a car bomb in Time Square revealed that his planned act terrorism was an effort of retaliation against the killing of innocent people by drones in the federally administered tribal areas (washingtonpost.com, 2010).

Thus it can be said that the militants in short run, due to the apprehension of drone attacks, will not regroup. But the militant leadership vacuums are not left unfilled for long. For example on 22 August 2011, Atiyah Abd al Rehman, Al-Qaeda number two was killed in a drone strike in North Waziristan. But on 4 June 2012 less than a year later, US drone strike targeted Al-Qaeda new number two commander, Abu Yahia al Libi. Back in January 2008, Al-Qaeda third in command Abu Laith al Libi was killed in a drone strike; and two years later another drone attack killed his successor, Mustafa Abu al Yazid (ICG, 2013). This portrays that the killing of militant leaders can mitigate militancy in the short run, but to abolish militancy just target killing is not enough. Drone strikes can kill a militant leader but after a few years another low level militant will take his place. Moreover, to abolish militancy from the western border of Pakistan, it's vital to understand the ground realities of FATA. The situation on western border of Pakistan is very confounding and perplexing and needs to be understood before treating the menace of militancy in the region. Unlike Afghanistan, it's not only Al-Qaeda who is operating in the region; rather there are more than thirty-two

groups with different militant networks operating under the umbrella of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan.

Socio economic and psychological impact of Drone Strikes

Drone attacks have badly affected the socio-economic and psychological life of FATA. The continuous hovering of drone, collateral damage and escalating civilian casualties has badly affected the social, economic and psychological life of FATA.

Psychological Issues

The psychological impact of drone strikes is profound and has badly affected the people of FATA in general and the youth in particular, who are considered to be the backbone for the success and prosperity of any society. The attenuation of recreational activities, shrinking of economic activities plus the risk of being killed in drone attack has certainly amplified stress and depression among the locals of FATA. According to a report, around 80% of the people living in Waziristan are faced with psychiatric issues and approximately 5% of the native population is facing the dilemma of post-traumatic stress disorder (Thefrontierpost.com, 2012).

The exacerbating psychological issues in the western border of Pakistan as an upshot of unremitting hovering of drone and fear of being killed in a drone strike has coerced parents to impede their siblings from going to school. A researcher during an interview revealed “*parents don’t send their children to school due to the fear of drone strikes*”(Khan G. , 2013). Thus exposing the vulnerable youth of FATA facing the trauma of drone strikes to radicalization, creating an opportunity for the militants to persuade the youth and recruit them in their so-called defensive Jihad against US.

Moreover, the killings of innocent people in drone attacks are of a serious concern for the locals of FATA. The element of revenge, loss of a body part, family member, friend, breadwinner

and relatives has certainly increased psychological problems in the tribal regions particularly in North and South Waziristan. A respondent from Waziristan during an interview revealed, “*the irritating noise of Manganna (local name for drone) is always on our minds. We can’t sleep at night. It seems that we are the next targets. Drones have made our life hell on earth.*” (Mehsud, 2013). This portrays how badly the drones’ strikes are affecting the psychological life of the people residing in FATA. The ferocious noise of drone, the scattered body parts and the annihilated human dwellings have given birth to certain psychological issues. A psychologist from Peshawar during an interview revealed, “*Drone strikes have been a root cause for the increasing psychological issues in FATA. The phobia of drones strikes, sad mood and avoiding social gatherings has leads to behavioral changes ultimately leading to OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder), schizophrenia and post-traumatic stress disorder*”(Khan K. , 2013). This shows that drones have badly disrupted the daily life in FATA, particularly Waziristan, making them powerless and unsafe. Recreational activities and social gatherings are considered to be effective tool for alleviating psychological issues, but the continuous drone strikes have coerced the local of FATA to avoid such activities thus making them more vulnerable to psychological dependencies.

Moreover, the killing of close relatives in drone strikes severely affects the psyche of locals, particularly the children and women. Those who witness their love ones being killed in a drone strikes are considered to be more vulnerable to *post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)*, a severe mental disease. Madiha Asghara, psychology professor in Islamia College Peshawar during a seminar organized by FATA Research Center in Peshawar on 17 September 2013 revealed that as a consequence of drone strikes around 5% of the locals of FATA are facing the dilemma of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Similarly, a Pakistan mental health expert shared her concern and anxiety about the long-term consequences of such psychological shock on children. She stated that

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“The biggest concern I have as a [mental health professional] is that when the children grow up, the kinds of images they will have with them, it is going to have a lot of consequences. You can imagine the impact it has on personality development. People who have experienced such things, they don’t trust people; they have anger, desire for revenge . . . So when you have these young boys and girls growing up with these impressions, it causes permanent scarring and damage” (SSL&NYSL, 2012).

From the above statement, one can conclude that the people of FATA especially children and women are going through a period of time where they are besieged with psychological dependencies. More importantly, more than 50% of the FATA’s population consists of children, who can play an integral part in framing the future of FATA and if these children continue to face the trauma of militancy and the ferocious drone strikes, in few years they will face a dilemma and a number of psychological issues. In this respect, the government of Pakistan with the help of international community should take positive steps to counter the psychological issues emerging as a consequence of drone strikes in FATA, however, the role of government up till now in countering such issues in this war ravaged region has been below par.

Economic Issues

Drone strikes have also badly affected the economic life in FATA. Although the federally administered tribal areas of Pakistan have been and are still one of the most underdeveloped region in the country with 60% of its population living below the poverty line and an unemployment rate ranging between 60-80% stemming from the poor governance and unending conflict which kept the region in a perpetual state of poverty, instability and isolation (Thereboot.org, 2013) however, the unremitting drone strikes in the tribal areas further aggravated the economic miseries of locals and deteriorated the already annihilated infrastructure,

agriculture, livestock and the increasing unemployment in the region. A respondent from Waziristan when interviewed revealed that:

“We cannot go to markets as they (drones) are always hovering over the head. The markets usually remain close and people are shifting their businesses to cities due to drone phobia” (Khan G., 2013).

This shows that continuous drone strikes on the western border of Pakistan have seriously hampered the economic activities, especially the increasing unemployment has exacerbated frustration and distress especially among the youth.

Drone strikes have created severe economic hardships for the locals by damaging their properties, killing the breadwinner plus the economic cost involved in caring for the drone survivors. According to a research, it was revealed that drone strikes have made life miserable in the tribal areas and people have stopped coming to the local markets due to apprehension and fear of drone attacks. According to a respondent *“we are living miserable lives; we just barely get by with what we make in the shop, we cannot go to our fields we are scared of drones”* (Sher, 2013). This deteriorated and derogated economic situation has coerced the residents of FATA to rely on the militant for economic support, in the deficiency of functioning state, customary tribal structure and civil society that have been annihilated by insurgents. A FATA analyst is of the view that the main reason behind recruitment is not the ideological basis, rather economic and political marginalization (InternationalCrisisGroup, 2009). The economic depravity due to continuous drones plus the desire for revenge coerce the locals of FATA, especially the youth to join the militants thus aggravating the insurgency in the western borderlands of Pakistan.

To counter militancy and to promote economic development in the tribal region, the US and other international organizations

had pledged to provide 2.46 billion dollars, but up till now very little of it has materialized for the rehabilitation of the region. Similarly, the Pakistani government gave contract to an Australian company to exploit mineral resources in Waziristan, but unfortunately due to excessive drone strikes in the region the firm had to stop the work (IPS.org, 2009). This shows that drone strikes have deteriorated the economic life of the tribal area. Both the US and Pakistani government acknowledge the civilian casualties and on several occasions promised to financially bolster the affected families. But unfortunately, up till now none of them have materialized their promises.

Social Issues

Likewise, drone strikes have deteriorated the social life of FATA. Due to the fear of being killed in a drone strike, people of FATA refrain from participating in activities like wedding, funerals and other recreational activities. People refrain themselves from gathering in groups or receive guest in their homes because they believe that sitting in groups or receiving guest make the house more vulnerable to the drone strikes. During a survey conducted by the Stanford University, a respondent whose house fell prey to a drone strike was of the view that:

“There are scarcely any guests who come anymore, because people are petrified and people refrain their children from going to other people house when they have a guest.”(SSL&NYSL, 2012)

Drone strikes particularly “signature strikes” have adversely affected the social institution i.e. the joint family system, Pakhtunwali, *gudar (social gathering of tribal women near spring or tube well)* and Jirga system which are the basic social institutions in FATA. For instance in March 2011, a Jirga was targeted where more than 42 people were reported to have been killed. Likewise, the continuous drone strikes in FATA have coerced the natives to leave the region and take refuge in the urban areas of Pakistan, thus badly affecting their social life

(latimes.com, 2013). This delineates that US drone campaign has made life miserable on the western border of Pakistan and has certainly inflamed militancy not only in FATA but all over Pakistan. A New York Times journalist, who was abducted by the Taliban in FATA, explained that the drone attacks have made life miserable in FATA and reckon it as “*hell on earth*” (Rohde, 2012).

The youth who are the future of FATA and whose role is very crucial in shaping the future and mitigating militancy in the region are badly affected socially, economically and psychologically by the drone attacks; making them more vulnerable to the militants.

Conclusion

There is this general perception that the drone campaign has alleviated militancy on the western border of Pakistan, however, after a profound and in-depth analysis of the impact of drone strikes on the life in FATA, it can be said that contrary to what we think, drone strikes have not only amplified militancy but have also made life miserable in the federally administered tribal areas. Drone campaign has although alleviated militant activities in the short run as many of the high profile militant leaders have been killed in drone strikes; however, in the long run drones have aggravated the militant activities. Moreover, drone attacks have made FATA a hell on earth by giving rise to the economic miseries and shrinking economic activities; disrupting the social life and have also inflamed the psychological despondencies during the last few years.

Therefore, both US and Pakistani authorities needs to sit together and devise a profound and exhaustive counterterrorism policy for long run in order to counter militancy and extremism in the tribal areas of Pakistan.

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