

Fida Bazai\*, Ruqia Rehman\*\* Kalsoom Hanif\*\*\*

An Assessment of Pakistan's responses to the US demands against the Afghan Taliban

**Abstract**

*This paper illustrates Pakistan's responses to the demands of the United States against the Afghan Taliban doesn't depend on its security calculation against India as neo-realism predicts, but on other factors like military capability, the presence of threat from India and lack of strategic incentives. Pakistan's responses can precisely be explained by neo-classical realism that stresses upon the roles of elites' perception, military capability and domestic politics. One of the key reasons for the lack of cooperation between the US and Pakistan on the issue of the Afghan Taliban is the capability of the Pakistani army. If Pakistan's army has to do a military operation against the Afghan Taliban to remove their sanctuaries in FATA and Balochistan under the doctrine of counter-insurgency, it has to deploy its forces in the Taliban's influenced Pashtun's belt of Pakistan. While keeping the threat from India in perspective, it is not numerically possible for Pakistan's army to deploy its forces in the entire Pashtun's belt; therefore, it has to sequence its operation first against the Pakistani than Afghan Taliban. Secondly, for counter-insurgency operation it has to change its force structure and weapons system from conventional army to counter-insurgency one. It is not possible as long as the Indian threat is there; therefore, Pakistan has to develop a new counter-insurgency army. Thirdly, the average age of a successful counter-insurgency campaign is 14 years, whereas, the track record of south Asian forces is not that good against insurgency. These three operational constraints on Pakistan's army capability played an important role in delaying the military operation in North Waziristan.*

**Keys words:** Counter Insurgency, the Afghan Taliban, Military capabilities, Pashtun belt

**1. Introduction:**

When President Barrack Obama came into power in January 2009, one of the key agendas of his administration was to win the war in Afghanistan. President Obama considered the war in Afghanistan as the war of necessity and the one in Iraq as war of choice; therefore he shifted the United States' personnel, attention and resources from the later to the former (Haass, 2011) (Haass, 2010) (Walt 2012). The Obama administration called upon two strategic reviews of the United States' objectives, goals and strategies in Afghanistan in 2009. Bruce Riedel along with Richard Holbrooke and Michele Flournoy headed the first one and President Obama himself chaired the second one to devise a strategy for the US war in Afghanistan (Clinton, 2014, p151). There were agreements in both strategic reviews on three principle points; the lack of US forces in Afghanistan, the governance problems in Kabul and the Taliban's sanctuaries in Pakistan (Woodward, 2010, Aid 2012, Gate, 2014, Clinton 2014, Panetta, 2014).

To address the first problem, the Obama administration sent 55,000 US troops to Afghanistan for counter-insurgency operations against the Taliban, and increased the number of Afghan National Army (ANA) from 70,000 to 230,000 in six years to hold areas after the withdrawal of the US forces (CRS, 2011). For the second problem related with the governance in Kabul, the administration put unprecedented pressure on the Karzai government to reduce corruption and increase the writ of state beyond Kabul to enhance legitimacy of the government in Kabul. The third component of the United States policy was to remove the Taliban's sanctuaries from Pakistan's tribal areas adjoining Afghanistan especially in FATA. According to the Pentagon, the existence of militant sanctuaries inside Pakistan's FATA represents "the greatest challenge to long-term security within Afghanistan" (New York Times, 4<sup>th</sup> August, 2008). The Commander of the US and NATO forces in Afghanistan, General David McKiernan, and his aides, assert that Pakistan's western tribal regions provide the main pool for recruitment insurgents who fight in

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\* Dr. Fida Bazai is Assistant Professor in Department of International Relations, University of Balochistan. He did his PhD from University of Glasgow, Scotland, UK.

\*\* Dr. Ruqia Rehman has recently completed her PhD from Department of Disaster Management and Development, University of Balochistan.

\*\*\* Dr Kalsoom Hanif, History Department, LCWU, Lahore

Afghanistan, and that infiltration to Afghanistan has caused a 30% increase in number of militant attacks in eastern Afghanistan over the past year (US, department of Defence, June 2008).

The United States basically made two major strategic demands from the Pakistani government in order to remove the Taliban's sanctuaries in FATA. The first demand was to increase the writ of state to North Waziristan, which was a little empire of the Haqqani network: a key Taliban's faction that has strong links with Al-Qaeda, preferably through a military operation. The second demand of the United States was to allow the US drone fleet in Pakistan to target the Afghan Taliban high rank and middle tiers leadership in North Waziristan and Quetta. It is important here to mention two other developments against the Afghan Taliban; the cooperation between the United States and Pakistan on the Pak-Afghan border management and bringing the Taliban on the negotiating table. There was a considerable level of cooperation on the border management, but it did not have any significant effect on the insurgency in Afghanistan. Whereas, the political aspect of the US strategy in Afghanistan that was strongly supported by the Office of US Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, which was aimed to bring the Taliban on the negotiation table for political settlement of the dispute, did not materialise due to stiff opposition from the Pentagon. Therefore, this paper confined Pakistani responses to two demands of the United States: the demand of military operation against the Haqqani network in North Waziristan and permission to expand and increase the US drone strikes in FATA.

This paper consists of ten sections. The first section introduces the topic of Pakistan's responses to the US demands against the Afghan Taliban. The second one is about the existing literature on Pakistan's responses. The third part of the paper is about theoretical framework, which is neo-classical realism. The fourth section discusses Pakistan's military capabilities. The fifth one is about Counter Insurgency (COIN) Operations in Pakistan. The sixth section is highlights Pakistan's present strategy of low intensity conflict doctrine. The seventh one illustrates the prospect of Indian factor. The eighth one is about COIN in FATA. The ninth one analysing the lack of strategic incentives for Pakistan and the tenth one is conclusion of the paper.

## 2. Literature Review:

The existing scholarships on the subject of Pakistani responses to the US demands against the Afghan Taliban are generally focused on the geo-strategic explanation of the Pakistani responses. For example, Ahmed Rashid (2008, 2012), Ashley Tellis (2008, 2011), Barnett R. Rubin (2007) are of the opinion that Pakistan's policy towards Afghanistan is under the control of its security establishment, which is India-centric. They believe that the existing dispensation in Afghanistan is pro-India and the Afghan Taliban are pro-Pakistan forces in Kabul, therefore, the military establishment doesn't accept the US demands to do military operation against the Afghan Taliban. According to Ashley Tellis, "Pakistan's Afghanistan policy is determined by the Army. This policy, for a long time now, has been to support the Afghan Taliban as a means of extorting concessions from Kabul. Unless the Pakistani military comes out as the decisive loser in the current crisis — an outcome that is difficult to imagine — Pakistan's Afghanistan policy will stay the same" (Tellis, 2012). Barnett Rubin is of the view that 'Pakistan's military establishment has always approached the various wars in and around Afghanistan as a function of its main institutional and national security interest: first and foremost, balancing India, a country with vastly more people and resources, whose elites, at least in Pakistani eyes, don't fully accept the legitimacy of the Pakistan's existence' (Rubin, 2007, p69).

Similarly Seth Jones says in reference to the Taliban's insurgency in Afghanistan, 'Insurgent groups have been successful at leveraging assistance from external states – especially in Pakistan. Pakistan's motives have largely been geostrategic. Pakistani dictator General Zia-ul-Haq once remarked to the head of the ISI, General Akhter Abdul Rehman that 'the water [in Afghanistan] must boil at the right temperature. The Pakistan government's strategy has for decades been to balance India and keep a foothold in Afghanistan' (Jones, 2007, p17). Frederic Grare even puts the blame of global terrorism on the Pakistani army in his report, "*Rethinking Western Strategies towards Pakistan*". He claims,

'This report makes the case that the Pakistani state bears responsibility for the worsening security situation in Afghanistan, the resurgence of the Taliban, terrorism in Kashmir, and the growth of jihadi ideology and capabilities internationally. At the core of the problem is the Pakistani military, which has dominated Pakistan's politics since 1958 and has developed over the years nationalism based more on its own delusions of grandeur rather than on any rational analysis of the country's national interest' (Grare, 2007, p5).

Christine Fair further stretches the utility of the militant groups as proxy beyond India and Afghanistan to domestic politics. She argues that 'Indeed, Pakistanis say that their concerns in Afghanistan stem from their fear of India and that if Pakistan's issues with India (Kashmir) could be resolved, their need for Afghan Taliban would abate. However, a counter argument can also be made: until Pakistan is ready to give up its commitment to instrumentalising Islam for domestic and external purposes, Pakistan will never be able to resolve its existential and neuralgic issues with India. Because neither a durable resolution with India nor abandonment of Islam as an instrument of policy is on the horizon, Pakistan is likely to continue using militant and Islamist groups to manage an array of domestic and external challenges' (Fair, 2011, p97).

### **3. Theoretical Framework:**

As the key objective of this paper is to determine Pakistani responses to these three demands of the United States against the Afghan Taliban, it claims that the Pakistani government responses depended on three factors. The first one was a perception in Pakistan's security establishment that the United States could not defeat the Afghan Taliban militarily. Therefore, it avoided to do military operation against the Afghan Taliban, because they are not only considered as pro-Pakistan forces in Afghanistan against India, but also a political reality on the other side of the border.

The second factor was the operational constrains on Pakistan's military capability to do military operations against Pakistani and Afghan Taliban at same time in the presence of a constant security threat from India. The third factor was the pressure from the right wing political parties and madrassas network, which would have created serious security problems for Pakistan, if it did military operation under the pressure from the United States without public support. The finding of this chapter validates the claims of neoclassical realism that stresses upon the role of the perception of policy elites, domestic politics and capability of a state in determining its foreign policy. As neo-classical realism doesn't deny the importance of neo-realism, this chapter also doesn't ignore the importance of the Indian factor in determining Pakistan's policy towards Afghanistan, but it claims that Pakistan's policy towards the Afghan Taliban is more the product of policy elites (army) perception of the United States commitment to Afghanistan, the capability of Pakistan's army to do several military operations at the same time in the presence of threat from India and the pressure from right-wing political parties and Madrassah networks.

### **4. Military capability of Pakistan's army:**

Most of the literature assessing Pakistan's policy towards the Taliban is focused on the intentions of Pakistani army, the ISI and its government and did not pay any attention to the capability aspect of the problem. It is true that Pakistan's army is a disciplined and professional force, but there are constraints even on the world best armies as per as counter-insurgency operations are concerned. For example, The United States' experiences in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan, the Indian experience in Kashmir, French failure in Algeria and Israeli experience in the West Bank show that counter-insurgency operation are complicated and costly.

According to Daniel Byman, 'counterinsurgency is difficult for even the best militaries. It requires not only remarkable military skill but also a deft political touch. The soldiers on patrol must be a fighter, policeman, an intelligence officer, a diplomat, and an aid worker. Not surprisingly, even well-trained, well led, and well-funded militaries such as those of the United States, Britain, and Israel have foundered when facing insurgent movements' (Byman, 2006, Lalwani 2009). This section of the paper argues that if Pakistan's army has to give up its strategic doctrine of "good and bad" Taliban and embrace the doctrine of counter-insurgency as the United States has been demanding then there will be serious constraints on the capabilities of the Pakistani army<sup>1</sup>.

There are three formidable challenges to Pakistan's army for counter-insurgency operations against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. The first and foremost one is the number of troops required for successful counter-insurgency operations in line with the doctrine of counter-insurgency. According to the Quinlivan's "Force requirement in Stability Operation" calculation there has to be 20-25 soldiers per 1000 people in the areas for a successful military operation

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<sup>1</sup> Currently Pakistan army does not go against the Taliban and other extremists groups who are not involved in terrorist activities inside Pakistan. Pakistan army considered them as good Taliban and allegedly assist them, especially against the Indian activities inside Afghanistan.

(Quinlivan, 1995-96)<sup>2</sup>. The main objectives of such high number of deployment are, 'the ability of the COIN forces to gather intelligence and to separate the populace from the insurgents, thus negating the insurgents' two main advantages. Troop ratios are therefore calculated relative to the population the COIN force is attempting to control and protect, rather than the insurgents that they are trying to defeat. The ratio is relatively high because the best intelligence-gathering instruments in such a campaign remain the eyes and ears of COIN forces, despite advances in signal and imagery intelligence' (Krause, 2007).

If we just consider this one aspect of counter-insurgency (the ratio of troops to population) along with the threat from India while neutralizing other important factors like anti-Americanism in Pashtun belt of Pakistan, the influence of religious forces, topography of the area, tribal cultural and highest number of guns per capita in FATA, which clearly favor the Taliban's insurgency, the data shows that Pakistan army does not have the required number of troops for counter-insurgency in the Taliban-influenced areas.

### **5. Counter Insurgency Doctrine:**

There are two broad strategies to defeat an insurgency in any area; counter-insurgency doctrine and traditional low intensity conflict strategies like divide and rule, crown the warlord, decapitation and extreme brutal repression. Counter-insurgency is defined as "comprehensive civilian and military efforts taken to simultaneously defeat and contain insurgency and address the root causes" (FM 3-24, 2006). The main objective of the counter insurgency doctrine is to win the support of the population. It is also called "population centric approach to the insurgency". According to David Galula; who is considered the father of modern counter-insurgency, the first principle of counter-insurgency is to win the support of the population, "What is the crux of the problem for the counterinsurgent? It is not how to clean an area. We have seen that the (state) can always concentrate enough forces to do it, even if he has to take some risk in order to achieve the necessary concentration. The problem is how to keep an area clean so that the counterinsurgent forces will be free to operate elsewhere" (Galula, 1964, p55). Therefore, the United States army considered winning hearts and minds of the people one of the key objectives of its counter-insurgency strategy in Iraq and Afghanistan. If the population stop cooperating with the insurgents or start cooperation with the security forces, even if it is a small minority, it will be very useful for human intelligence on insurgents' where about. To achieve this objective the counter-insurgency forces have to avoid collateral damages even at the expense of enemy escape (McCrystal, 2012). The first principle to avoid collateral damages is to prefer ground force over air power (Kilcullen, 2009). The counter-insurgent army has to detach smaller commando units to villages and town to protect the population from the insurgents. It increases the vulnerability of the forces to insurgent attacks, but are useful for acquisition of 'human intelligence from the local population to "clear" out insurgents, the use of patrols to "hold" cleared areas, and the enablement of civilian provided development assistance to build and win over the population' (FM 3.24, 2006 p5-18 , Lalwani, 2009, p6).

### **6. Low Intensity Conflict doctrine:**

The other approach to defeat an insurgency is called low intensity conflict or small foot print approach. This is enemy-centric approach, targeting enemy without giving close consideration to the collateral damage as the counter-terrorism forces don't have many people on ground to collect intelligence, clear areas from the insurgents, patrol streets to hold it or assist the civilian administration to build them. In this approach, the counter-terrorism army gives ultimatum to civilian of the areas to leave their houses and let the army to move decisively against the insurgents in the areas. Once the civilian leave the area then it starts a military operation considering everybody as potential insurgent (ISPR, 2014). The ground force occupation of the area is usually preceded by air strikes on the militants' strong holds to soften the target (Dawn, 2014).

This approach reduces the risk of army casualties but at very high price to the civilians of the areas (McChrystal, 2012). Pakistan has been using low intensity conflict approach to the military operations in Swat, South Waziristan and Bajour which produced more than 3.5 million refugees from the areas (Rashid, 2012, Khattak, 2010, Fair & Jones, 2012).

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<sup>2</sup> There are differences on the number of forces required for a successful counter-insurgency. It success definitely depends on more factors than simply the number of forces deployed an area, but General Petraeus also quoted Quinlivan's number for successful counter-insurgency operation.

According to Lalwani, 'In 2009, Pakistan employed conventional military method, although instead of attempting a cordon and search, it tried to clear out the Taliban by calling on residents to flee, leaving behind vast fire zones where it could freely target militants. Of course, this angered the newly minted refugees, many of whom subsequently were recruited by the Taliban instead of supplying intelligence to the Pakistani military' (Lalwani, 2009, p9).

David Kilcullen called them "The Accidental Guerrilla". If Pakistan's military does similar type of operation against the Afghan Taliban, it will not help to defeat the insurgency in Afghanistan (Fair & Jones, 2012).

As David Gulala said,

'If it is relatively easy to disperse and to expel the insurgent forces from a given area by purely military action, if it is possible to destroy the insurgent political organizations by intensive police action, it is impossible to prevent the return of the guerrilla units and the rebuilding of the political cells unless the population cooperates' (Gulala, 1964, p55).

Pakistan army has to adopt the doctrine of counter-insurgency to win hearts and minds of the people in areas bordering Afghanistan where the Afghan Taliban enjoys sanctuaries (Fair & Jones, 2012, Mallick, 2009, Lalwani, 2009, Rashid, 2009).

#### **7. Indian Factor in Pakistani Calculation:**

To examine Pakistan's army capability to adopt doctrine of counter-insurgency against the Taliban, it is necessary to determine the number of forces required at eastern border with India in case of crisis. Ambassador Aziz told me in an interview that it is almost impossible for Pakistan to ignore the threat from India especially at the time when terrorists have strong potential to precipitate a war between the two nuclear-armed countries by conducting spectacular attack on the pattern of Mumbai one in 2008. Any deterrence either it is Pakistan's nuclear weapons or the United States presence in the region will prove less effective if there is another major terrorist attack in India originate from Pakistan (Khan, 2014). Hillary Clinton said that when she visited India after the Mumbai terror attacks, she was "very struck" by how the then government said it was very difficult to exercise restraint. "I don't think any government could say anything differently." (Clinton, 2014). Therefore, one of the key objectives of the Pakistan's army is to protect its mainland, especially Punjab from the Indian invasion in case of any crisis between the two states.

According to Lalwani, "The Unfortunate geography of Pakistan forces it to defend nearly every part of its territory, but it concerns about the Punjab's vulnerability is acute because the region's communication lines, industrial centres, and major cities all lie fairly close to border that has few major strategic impediments to an Indian tank invasion across the desert and plain" (Lalwani, 2009, p42). There are no natural barriers like Himalayan heights between Pakistan and New Delhi. So Pakistan's army needs a minimum number of forces at every time to protect its core interest. General Malik told me that Pakistan will not reduce the minimum number of forces required to counter Indian invasion on its eastern border even if the United States offers security guarantee to it (Malik, 2014).

There are two mechanisms to measure the minimum number of forces on border: face-to-face ratios and force to space ratio. There are different opinions on the minimum number of forces required in face-to-face ratio. Some scholars believe that 1:3 defense to offense ratio is enough to prevent the breakthrough in the line of defense, whereas other believes that even 1:1.5 ratio would be vulnerable to offensive breakthroughs (Epstein, 1988, Mearsheimer, 1982). In December 2001, when there was an attack on the Indian Parliament, it brought the two countries at brink of a nuclear war second time after the Kargil in 1999. India deployed 700,000 troops on border and demanded Pakistan to hand over the 20 suspects of the Parliament attack. Pakistan deployed 300,000 troops on border to counter an Indian invasion (GlobalSecurity.org). It seems that Pakistan would adopt 1:2.3 defense ratios in anticipation of a full scale clash between India and Pakistan (Lalwani, 2009). In the presence of nuclear weapons and good relationship with the United States, Pakistan can safely rely on the above mentioned ratios. It is important to mention here that the United States has always played an important role in diffusing the tension between India and Pakistan from late 1990s to the Mumbai incident in 2008.

## 8. Counter Insurgency in FATA:

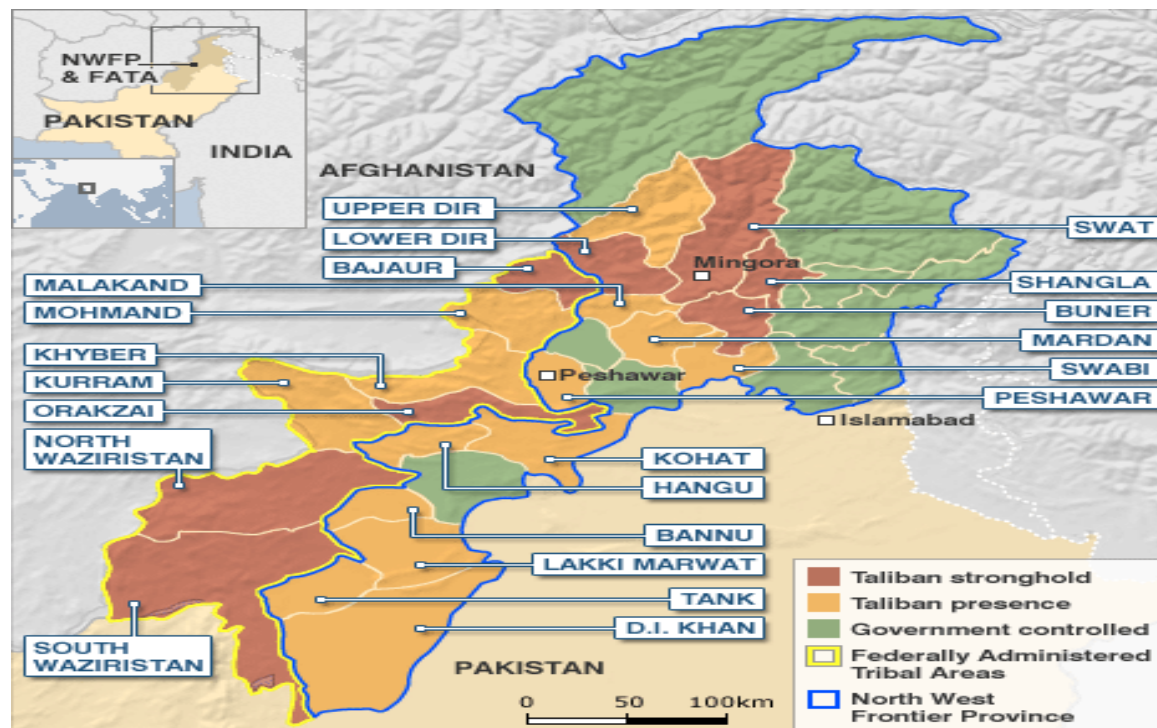
The total strength of Pakistan's army is approximately 550,000 active-duty personnel and another 500,000 reservationists (Fair and Jones, 2011). It has nine corps and a Strategic Force Command that is responsible for the protection of nuclear weapons, sometimes called "tenth Corps" (Fair & Jones, 2011). Out of the nine corps, six are deployed in Punjab to protect it from the Indian invasion and the other three are deployed in the remaining three provinces; Karachi, Quetta and Peshawar Corps (Haider, 2013). The total number of Pakistani force on the Indian border is 19 divisions of 58 brigades. Meanwhile, India has about 20 divisions on the same border and six divisions in its southern command that could be quickly moved to the border with Pakistan (Lalwani, 2009, p44). One division is approximately consists of three brigades and 20,000 men (GlobalSecurity.org). Pakistan needs 21-29 brigades on its eastern border with India according to the 1:2.3 ratios, which is an extremely conservative estimate (Lalwani, 2009, p44). It doesn't allow Pakistan to adopt 'offensive defense' strategy, but still manage to counter Indian's attack to release army from other areas at time of crisis<sup>3</sup>.

This strategy would release around 25 brigades probably consists of 160,000 troops. However, Pakistan's army has already deployed 55,000 troops in Malakand division for a military operation in Swat in 2009 (Nawaz, 2009). Pakistan's army cannot draw any force from the Karachi and Quetta division, because if it starts military operation against the Afghan Taliban, then there are strong possibilities that the Afghan Taliban will activate their sleeping cells in Quetta and Karachi for suicide bombing, because of a large number of Afghan refugees, militant madrassas network, religious militant organisations and the influence of Quetta Shura of the Taliban. It means Pakistan's army has extra 105,000 troops to implement counter-insurgency in FATA and Khyber Pukhtunkhawa (KPK). There are different opinions on the ideal number of force for successful counter-insurgencies. The United States' Army and Marine Field Manual for Counter-insurgency considers 20-25 per 1000 people the ideal number to create conducive environment for military operations to collect intelligence on the insurgents and separate them from the population (FM 3-24, 2006).

General Petraeus says, "No predetermined, fixed ratio of friendly troops to enemy combatants ensures success in COIN. The conditions of the operational environment and the approaches insurgents use vary too widely. A better force requirement gauge is troop density, the ratio of security forces (including the host nation's military and police forces as well as foreign counterinsurgents) to inhabitants. Most density recommendations fall within a range of 20 to 25 counterinsurgents for every 1000 residents in an area. Twenty counterinsurgents per 1000 residents are often considered the minimum troop density required for effective COIN operations; however as with any fixed ratio, such calculations remain very dependent upon the situation." (Petraeus, December 2006). Pakistan's army has currently 150,000 troops in FATA and Malakand division against the Pakistani Taliban (The Military Balance, 2013). There are different estimates regarding the total population of the FATA ranges from 3.5 million to 7 million. According to Shuja Nawaz FATA is home to of 3.5 million Pashtun tribes man and 1.5 million refugees from Afghanistan, which requires 100,000 troops for COIN operation (Nawaz, 2009, Lalwani, 2009). It shows that if Pakistan's army embraces standard doctrine of counter-insurgency (20-25 troops per 1000 people) against the Pakistani and Afghan Taliban then it has the capacity to counter the Taliban's insurgency only in FATA, but the Taliban influence extends much beyond the tribal areas to settled areas of Khyber Pukhtunkhawa and Pashtun Belt of Balochistan as shown in the following map.

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<sup>3</sup> Offensive-defense is Pakistan strategy to against the Indian aggression. It is actually based on the philosophy to deploy three infantry division at the front to slow the Indian aggression, while attack the Indian border on other point to occupy its territory, which will be swapped later for Pakistani one occupied by the India. It is important to remember that India defense budget and equipments are much higher than the Pakistan one. The force number is just one aspect of the military conflict; there are other important ones like air superiority, missile ranges, number of tanks, and quality of weapons. The Indian are slight outnumbering Pakistan in every field.



As the above map shows that the influence of the Afghan Taliban extends from FATA to KPK province that would add another 4.8 million people to the Taliban influenced areas (BBC, 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 2009, The Long war Journal, 21<sup>st</sup> October 2009). It is also important to remember that the key faction of the Afghan Taliban; the Quetta Shura led by Mullah Omar, is based in the Pashtun's belt of Balochistan. So any counter-insurgency operation against the Haqqani network in North Waziristan would also unleash insurgency in the Pashtun's belt of Balochistan. So Pakistan's army also has to take that into consideration as well. The current population of only Quetta city is around 1.5 million excluding all other districts where the Taliban have greater influence (FAFEN, 2013). If Pakistan army has to deploy minimum number of force (10 troops per 1000 people) according to the doctrine of counter-insurgency only in Khyber Pashtunkhwa and FATA against the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban even then it falls short of 150,000 troops.

Along with this, there are other constraints like rotation, training and forces for other contingencies like Earthquake, flood or any other natural calamity. According to Pakistan's Secret White Paper, 'we have a 500,000 strong army. Total deployment on the Western Border (Afghanistan) is approximately 150,000 and an additional 80,000 is on the Eastern Border (India). Being the largest contributors in UN peacekeeping we have 10,000 troops in current UN missions. The deployment totals upto 230,000. Given the teeth to tail ratio, the need of rotation and training, only 30 % of a force is normally deployable but we have more than 40% of the army deployed. Besides economic affordability, the army is stretched in deployment. To maintain the present, our soldier serves in the operational area for 30 months as compared to 6 months of most ISAF soldiers' (White paper, 2010). In such a situation Pakistan has to rely either on police, frontier constabulary and Lashkar (local militia) or it has to reactivate its reserve force. It is essential here to know the magnitude of the United States demands from Pakistan before assessing its political will. This study is primarily focused on the security aspect of the problem. The Pakistani government also has to take the economic cost into consideration of such a massive military operation against the Afghan Taliban.

According to the Economic survey 2014,

“Losses sustained by the country due to the war on terrorism in the outgoing fiscal year stood at \$6.7 billion losses – \$3.3 billion or one-third less than the previous fiscal year, highlighting a gradual recovery...This year's losses also pushed the total cost of the 13-year war above \$102.5 billion, approximately two times more than the government's proposed total budget of Rs3.9 trillion for fiscal year 2014-15” (ET, 2014).

The other two significant factors that influence Pakistan's policy to deploy forces on such large scale against the Taliban are changes in the structure of the army and the average length of counter-insurgency particularly in South Asia. For Pakistan's army, it is not enough to deploy its regular 400,000 troops in FATA, KPK and Balochistan to counter the Taliban's insurgency, but it has to retrain its army on counter-insurgency lines. As a force that is trained for conventional war against a traditional enemy is not good enough for counter-insurgency operations similarly a force for COIN is not good for conventional wars. The Israeli Defense Force (IDF) experience against the Hezbollah in 2006 war makes states more cautious of this problem (Lalwani, 2009, p46). According to Matt M. Mathews, "prolonged counter-insurgency in the Palestinian occupied territories left the once indomitable IDF ground forces tactically unprepared and untrained to fight against a determined Hezbollah force that conducted what was, in many ways, a conventional, fixed-position defense." (Mathew, 2008). There will be stiff resistance from the Pakistan's army to change its structure to a counter-insurgency force while keeping the threat from India in perspective.

Ijaz Haider told me in an interview that Pakistan's army has always been using the Indian factor for the domestic support and larger share in the country economy (Haider, 2014). According to Gallup survey in 2014, "Despite this recent drop, the percentage of Pakistanis saying they have confidence in the military remains considerably higher than the percentage saying they have confidence in any other institution" (survey, 2013). If it has to change to a counter-insurgency force, deployed in FATA to patrol streets, it will significantly reduce its public esteem. According to Shuja Nawaz,

'Despite Pakistan's complaints that the US has not provided adequate equipment and weapons support, a key factor hindering Pakistan's ability to fight insurgents has been its own forces' lack of training and indoctrination necessary for fighting an insurgency within its own border. Still clinging to its self image as conventional army, Pakistan's military has not fully nor speedily accepted the need to change to Counter-Insurgency doctrine' (Nawaz, 2009).

## **9. Lack of Strategic Incentives:**

The last but not least important factor is the lack of any strategic incentive for Pakistan to go against the Afghan Taliban either in Afghanistan or regionally. During the 1980s, when Pakistan supported the Mujahideen against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, there were several strategic incentives for Pakistan. For example the Communist regime in Kabul was anti-Pakistan; it was an opportunity to dislodge that regime. Secondly, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan would have brought an anti-Pakistan superpower at its western border, which would have posed a serious threat of two front wars with India and Afghanistan simultaneously. Thirdly, the United States ignored Pakistan's nuclear weapon enrichment program, which would not have been possible if there was no alliance between Islamabad and Washington. Fourthly, Islamabad received a large amount of economic and military assistance from the United States and Saudi Arabia. It was combined project at the benefit of all parties; therefore, all of them cooperated without any hesitation. The fifth factor was the expansion of Pakistani influence into Afghanistan. Pakistan's army knew that if the Soviet was defeated, the Mujahideen would form a government, which would be friendly to Pakistan. Thus it was a de-facto occupation of Kabul by Islamabad to counter the Indian influence in the region.

On the other hand, today there is not any strategic incentive for Pakistan to cooperate with the United States in Afghanistan. If the Taliban are defeated militarily, it will keep the current elites in power for the foreseeable futures, which are friendlier to India and Iran than Pakistan. The Afghan Taliban are considered more friendlier to Pakistan than the present government, therefore, any cooperation especially at such huge expense as stated above is not considered in Pakistan's national interest by the army. The United States also unlike in 1980s does not offer any strategic incentive to Pakistan for a major cooperation against the Afghan Taliban. The United States has been spending approximately \$100 billion dollar in Afghanistan per year since 2008, whereas, it gives around \$3 billion to Pakistan for reimbursing its forces on border and assisting the civilian government. John Biden said during the strategic review of the Afghan war in 2009 if Pakistan is so important to the United States mission in Afghanistan then why the ratio of spending on Pakistan to Afghanistan is 1:30 (Woodward, 2011). He recommended it should be the other way round. In such a situation, it is really difficult for Pakistan's army to fulfill the United States' demand of military operation against the Afghan Taliban, unless the United States threaten it again as it did after the incident of 9/11.



## 10. Conclusion:

This paper illustrates that Pakistan's responses to the demands of the United States against the Afghan Taliban doesn't depend on its security calculation against India as neo-realism predicts, but on other factors like military capability, the presence of threat from India and lack of strategic incentives. Pakistan's responses can be precisely explained by neo-classical realism that stresses upon the roles of elites' perception, military capability and domestic politics. One of the key reasons for the lack of cooperation between the US and Pakistan on the issue of the Afghan Taliban is the capability of the Pakistani army. If Pakistan's army has to do a military operation against the Afghan Taliban to remove their sanctuaries in FATA and Balochistan under the doctrine of counter-insurgency, it has to deploy its forces in the Taliban's influenced Pashtun's belt of Pakistan. While keeping the threat from India in perspective, it is not numerically possible for Pakistan's army to deploy its forces in the entire Pashtun's belt; therefore, it has to sequence its operation first against the Pakistani than Afghan Taliban.

Secondly, for counter-insurgency operation it has to change its force structure and weapons system from conventional army to counter-insurgency one. It is not possible as long as the Indian threat is there; therefore, Pakistan has to develop a new counter-insurgency army. Thirdly, the average age of a successful counter-insurgency campaign is 14 years, whereas, the track record of south Asian forces is not that good against insurgency. These three operational constraints on Pakistan's army capability played an important role in delaying the military operation in North Waziristan.

The last but not least constraint on Pakistan's behaviour is the domestic pressure and lack of strategic incentives. There is a strong network of madrasa system, religious forces, and right wing political parties, who oppose Pakistan's cooperation with the United States in the war against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. Pakistan's army can only do a military operation against the Afghan Taliban if it has public support. At strategic level, unlike in 1980s when the United States did not only accommodate the Pakistani demand of control over the guerrilla forces, but also supported its nuclear program along with generous financial assistance, in the current war in Afghanistan, Islamabad and Washington have divergent strategic interest, which did not allow them to work smoothly in the war against the Taliban. Pakistan can only change its position on the issue of the Afghan Taliban either after strategic partnership like in 1980s or strategic threat like after 9/11. The United States cannot afford any one of them; therefore, there are bleak chances of cooperation between them on the issue of the Afghan Taliban.

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