
New Trends in the Politics of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Issues and Outcomes

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In the post-1947 period, political landscape in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was shaped by its moderate socio-cultural milieu. However, internal bickering, factionalism between key political parties, geo-strategic vulnerability to regional and international conflicts such as the emergence of jihadi elements and Russian involvement in Afghanistan, Afghan civil war and International Counter Terrorism policies radicalized Khyber Pakhtunkhwa politics and its social structure to a great extent. The present study aims to examine the existing confusion among all the political parties on the issue of how to challenge the menace of rising militancy. The failure of the Awami National Party (ANP), Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Jamiat-i-Ulmai Islam (Fazal ur Rehman) JUI (F) in providing tangible policy choices on major issues such as terrorism, energy crisis and economic down-flow have provided a golden opportunity to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to dominate the provincial politics. Also the paper has dealt with the current challenges and its impacts on moderates and the Islamists in the wake of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf emergence which out-mastered all the parties in the three successive elections of 2013, 2018 and 2024.

Key Words: New Trends, Politics, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Issues, Outcomes

INTRODUCTION

Dominantly inhabited by the Pakhtuns and mainly rural the nature of politics of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is very complex and complicated due to a number of reasons. The political trends of the province have been deeply influenced by the local, regional and international dynamics such as geographical location, issues of governance, the emergence of militant Islamists under an international agenda and Afghan civil war in the 1990s. At present, war on terror have played key role in shaping the political contours by expanding the battle from Afghanistan to the tribal areas and then to the settled district of the province. From 1990s to 2013, the province was dominated by moderate political forces such as ANP and PPP, however, well competed by rightist political parties such as PML, Jamat-i-Islami Pakistan (JIP) and JUI at various occasions. Especially, the victory of Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) in the 2002 election has raised fears that Islamists might take-over power through the ballot box and push the moderates to corner for their failure in devising workable strategies to eradicate the menace of terrorism in the bud and to solve governance issues of the province.

The rising popularity of the PTI before the May 2013 elections as a third option by most of the political analysts was proved by the election results. Although public perception was that the PTI popularity was because of the establishment massive propaganda in its favour.¹ In the pre-2013 elections scenario at some point the popularity graph of PTI came down due to some of the local stalwarts' withdrawal from the party and also outmaneuvered by PPP led government and PML (N) led opposition parties by reunifying the diverse forces across the political landscape in support of democracy in the wake of Tehreek-e-Minhaj-ul-Quran's protest and eventual Long March of Tahir-ul-Qadri with hundreds of his followers on January 14, 2013.²

The massive transformation in favour of PTI as a dominant force has astonished the political analysts and observers. The popularity of PTI has dramatically changed the traditional outlook of the politics. Before the PTI dominancy, the political situation was complex and extremely fluid in the province, yet two factors played decisive role in the elections. First was to formulate a robust strategy to combat violence and terrorism and the second, was to deliver to the masses especially restoring peace and security, equity in employment, solution of energy crisis, better education and health services and price control of the commodities of daily use.³

Given the disarray among the religio-political parties and the failure of the nationalists led by ANP in providing tangible solutions of some major issues, PTI successfully capitalized on their failure for maximizing their chances of electoral success. The failures of the ANP-PPP government in providing tangible policy choices on terrorism, energy crisis and economic down-turn increased the wariness of the masses towards them. During their tenure 2008-2013 ANP made blunders in the fields of local governments, massive embezzlement of funds and lack of interest to establish provincial HEC etc. People, particularly the generation Z lost

trust on ANP and massive switching over of the youth from ANP to PTI took place.⁴

The outcome of the successive elections has again demonstrated the changing dynamics of the politics in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In 2013, PTI received the largest provincial assembly seats and formed a coalition government with Qaumi Wattan Party (QWP) Jamat-i-Islami Pakistan (JIP) and a little known Awami Jamhuri Ittehad Pakistan (AJI).⁵

Table No. 1
Number of Seats of the political Parties in KP Provincial Assembly in 2013 Elections

No.	Name of the Party	Seats in the Assembly
1.	All Pakistan Muslim League	1
2.	Awami Jamhuri Ittehad Pakistan	5
3.	Awami National Party	5
4.	Independents (Government Coalition)	2
5.	Independents (Opposition)	1
6.	Jama'at-i-Islami Pakistan	8
7.	Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (F)	17
8.	Pakistan Muslim League (N)	17
9.	Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians	4
10.	Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf	53
11.	Qaumi Wattan Party	10

Source: Official website of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial Assembly www.pakp.gov.pk/index.php/members. the website was visited on 12.11.2013

Given the complexity of the situation this study has traced the changing dynamics of KP politics that have eventually transformed the political environment of the province. A number of issues and problems would also be dealt with in the wake of American withdrawal from Afghanistan and other looming crisis. The Taliban restoration in Afghanistan also affected the political scenario of the province. In fact, the achievement of political power in the province can only be attained through public trust in addressing their concerns. In the three preceding general elections the people of the province demonstrated their political maturity by electing various political parties for solving their political problems. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa experienced MMA 2002-8, ANP-PPP 2008-13 and currently PTI which astonishingly increased its electoral performance in 2013, 2018 and 2024 elections.

A. BACKGROUND

In the twentieth century, politics in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have always been volatile as the underlying dynamics never remained the same but kept on changing. In the pre-partition era struggle against the British imperialism was goalpost of key political parties spearheaded by Muslim League and Indian National Congress.⁶ Struggle for political reforms in the province, promotion of its status to a governor province and infrastructural development were the main aims of the All-India Muslim League and nationalist parties.⁷ The allies of the Congress were organized under the banner of the Khudai Khidmatgar Movement led by Abdul Ghaffar Khan.⁸ It was a secular, non-violent organization strongly influenced by the cross-communal politic and blend of anti-British orientation.⁹

On the declaration of independence and subsequent withdrawal of British from India, politics in the province took a new turn. Instead of approval from the provincial Assembly like the provinces of Punjab and Bengal, the matter of amalgamation of the province was resolved by holding referendum which resulted in favor of joining Pakistan. Abdul Ghaffar Khan demanded an independent state of Pakhtunistan which however due to lack of support from the British government, Congress and Muslim League could not materialized. In the post-1947 period the politics in the province was largely occupied by Abdul Qayum Khan, the main rival of Abdul Ghaffar Khan.¹⁰ Mistreatment by Abdul Qayum Khan kept Ghaffar Khan disgruntled with the emerging political scenario in the country at large and in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in particular.

Eventually, in the post-partition era the Frontier Congress endorsed the creation of the independent state of Pakistan¹¹ and decided to promote peace and prosperity of the Pakhtuns within the state of Pakistan. However, factionalism in the Pakistan Muslim League and power politics of the provincial League leadership kept nationalist Pakhtun leaders out of favor of power echelons of the state. Pakhtun leadership had infrequently been dubbed as anti-state elements and Ghaffar Khan and other leaders of his organization remained incarcerated for most of the time of their political career.

On the other hand, Muslim League being Pakistan winning party kept on striving to expand influence all over the province. However, due to the dominant role of the nationalist Pakhtun leaders and their contribution for the wellbeing of people of the province only allowed PML to make inroads in the non-Pakhtun areas of the province like the Hazara division, pockets in Kohat, Peshawar, Swat, Swabi and Dera Ismael Khan¹² which currently PML leadership still enjoy and cherish.

By the establishment of the National Awami Party (NAP) in 1957, the nationalists made a common cause with other leftist forces of Pakistan against the One Unit Scheme, getting provincial autonomy and opposing American imperialism¹³. It also joined hands with other ethno-nationalists in the struggle against Ayub Khan which eventually culminated with the end of Ayub Khan's regime and finally One Unit was dissolved in 1970 after the promulgation of Legal Framework Order (LFO) by the General Yahya Khan's regime.¹⁴

The election of 1970 was a blessing in disguise for the nationalist politics in the Frontier and Balochistan provinces and even at the national level. It secured substantial representation in both the border provinces and in the National Assembly as well. It resulted in the formation of the NAP governments in both the provinces in collaboration with JUI of Maulana Mufti Mahmud. Although, by 1973 both the provincial governments were dismissed by the Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, however the very experience of forming governments in two strategically important provinces reestablished the predominance of nationalists in politics. Due to ideological differences and political rivalry between NAP and PPP, Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto banned the NAP in 1975. Its key leadership such as Wali Khan, Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo, Sikandar Khan Khalil and Attaullah Mengal was put in jail on the allegation of treason¹⁵. A special tribunal by the name of Hyderabad Tribunal was constituted to hear the case of treason against the NAP leadership. The proceeding was continued when the government of the PPP was overthrown by the Zia-ul-Haq's martial law in 1977. Afterwards, the tribunal was dismissed and all the convicts were freed from jail.¹⁶

a. POST-ZIA POLITICAL TRENDS IN KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

It was the Zia-ul-Haq's martial law regime which brought the nationalist politicians back into politics. However, they had to work underground due to the imposition of ban on political activities by the military regime. By 1986, the Pakhtun nationalists under Abdul Wali Khan established Awami National Party (ANP).¹⁷ Most of other NAP leadership either formed their own political parties or switched over to other parties. With relatively secular and nationalist program ANP emerged as the successor of the NAP in the province and started preparation to participate in the electoral politics.¹⁸ It was a time when on national scene political situation became vibrant after the coming back of Benazir Bhutto from exile in 1986. In the post- Zia-ul-Haq 1988 general elections main stream parties like PML and PPP performed better in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as compared to ANP performance. Even the religio-political groups such as JIP and JUI fared well and

became major competitors of the ANP in the province. The subsequent emergence of radical Islamists in the wake of Zia's Islamization had considerably shifted the balance of power in favor of religious and rightist parties.

By 1994 a new religio-political force with the name of Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariati-e-Muhammadi (TNSM) emerged on the political scene of the province. The base of the movement was Swat including the entire Malakand division.¹⁹ The hard-liner approach of the movement made the political environment very tough for ANP to compete for influence among the masses in Malakand division and Swat. To stay in the mainstream politics, ANP tried to join PML-N and then PPP, however at both the times it had to withdraw from governments. The main objectives of its coalition with these parties were to secure provincial autonomy, changing the name of the province and not to build Kalabagh Dam. However, none of these issues were materialized as per ANP's expectations.

In the 2002 elections ANP was completely driven out of influence among the public because of its confusing policy regarding Taliban and ambivalent response to American intervention in Afghanistan against the Taliban regime. A coalition of main religio-political parties under the umbrella of Muttahida Majils-i-Amal (MMA), almost swept the elections in the province. The MMA's forceful attack on ANP's jumbled election manifesto and the people's anti-American sentiments in the wake of attack against the Taliban government, the latter was unable to make headway among the masses. The coalition of Islamists dislodged the electoral power of the secular ANP and the traditional feudal elite (Khans) in the province.²⁰ However, poor performance of the MMA government during its five years rule (2002-8) brought the nationalists and liberal on the political scene of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2008 general elections. The verdict of the people in the 2002 general elections largely went against American intervention in the region. However, in the 2008 elections the people of the province demonstrated their anger against extremist and militant elements. ANP electoral victory came because of people's strong desire of eradicating terrorism from the province. Thus ANP emerged to be masses' favorite party in the 2008 elections. In fact, people were demanding the restoration of peace, ending of religious extremism, solution of energy crisis, provision of essential commodities and employment. And on that front the MMA measurably failed.

During its five years rule (2008-13), ANP proved itself a dominant coalition partner with PPP in the province. However, it has been unable to rid the province of violence and terrorism and to be up to the expectations of the masses. The perception of massive mishandling of the developmental fund and a relatively visible gap between its workers and party leadership had arisen the subsequent public anger in 2013 elections. Mishandling and mismanagement in the implementation process of the 18th amendment also gravely affected ANP popularity. Its soft response to American presence in the region played key role in its electoral defeat. The people of the province demonstrated their anger clearly in the 2013 general elections.

There is no doubt that provincial autonomy under the 18th amendment to the constitution has been granted and the province was renamed as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa according to the long cherished demand of the ANP leadership.²¹ Also the construction of the Kalabagh dam was no more politically viable due to the opposition of three provinces of the country. The PPP led government at the Centre never pursued the issue during its tenure. This perception was corroborated by Asfandiyar Wali Khan, ANP chief, who claimed in his April 1, 2012 interview. He said “we have achieved all our objectives and fulfilled promises that my party made during the 2008 general election campaign. We have renamed North West Frontier Province as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to give an identity to the Pakhtuns, won maximum provincial autonomy and closed the doors on the construction of the controversial Kalabagh Dam project.”²² However to play an active role in provincial politics, ANP has to develop a new rationale to ensure its political survival. It can be articulated by taking up clear-cut position against the forces of terror and devise measures to protect the masses against the onslaught of the terror of the local Taliban. On popular front it has to reach to its workers with a fresh and people’s friendly political program. The party leaders have to make strenuous efforts to discard the anti-social elements that had penetrated in its political circles.

On the other hand, religio-political parties despite being in opposition lost influence due to their soft corner and support of militants Islamists under the leadership of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). They failed to present a concrete and practical policy that has the rationale to win the favor of the masses. Major public concern in the province during the 2013 elections was not an alternate system (Islamic state/Sharia) as projected by the religious parties but to have a workable formula for resolving the menace of terrorism and rising Islamic militancy. Although, in some pockets the religious parties gained some seats, however the political dynamics changed in favor of alternate political forces in the shape of PTI. The issue of whether to have an Islamic or secular system of government remained unresolved which at this stage in the history of Pakistan goes in favor of the religio-political forces. However, internal bickering did not provide them the much needed chance to turn the dissatisfaction of the people in their own favor and the fragmentation between the JI and, JUI²³ enhanced the chances of PTI and its slogan of *Riyasat-i-Madina*. This was the time when a new alternate force emerged in the shape of PTI which completely transformed the political scene of the province.

b. LIBERAL TRENDS IN POLITICS OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has been considered as the hub of nationalist and leftist political elements.²⁴ However, before PTI emergence, centrist groups like PML and rightist parties like JI and JUI also expanded their influence over the political scene of the province. Political pragmatism, have some time tilted in favor of rightists and another time of nationalists and leftists.

Stalwarts of nationalist politics like Ghaffar Khan, and Wali Khan were the dominant figures who had deep roots among the masses and huge public

following. Later, Pakistan People's Party also competed well and made much headway among the public mainly due to the efforts of Hayat Muhammad Khan Sherpao. He played very important role in the formation and then in the consolidation of PPP among the people in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.²⁵ ANP and PPP won the support of the people in the province in the 2008 elections and then both the parties were coalition partners. Interestingly, despite central government's special favors during the early decades, PML as a right of the center party had hardly been able to win over-whelming support of the people due to the peculiar nature of provincial politics.²⁶

The political rise of religio-political parties happened in the 2002 elections when MMA won sweeping majority in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in wake of International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) presence under the command of USA in Afghanistan. In the 1970 elections Maulana Mufti Mahmood formed a coalition government with the NAP²⁷ in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Although, NAP won majority seats in the assembly and in that arrangement it was the senior partner but to keep out Abdul Qayum Khan and PPP government out of the province it agreed to give the chief minister post to Mufti Mahmud. Despite that there is still a chance for both the liberal secular parties to perform well in terms of governance and also to nib the menace of terrorism and corruption in the bud and institute accountability and provide security and employment to win the support of people. Given the trends of variation in voting behavior of the public it can be rightly mention here that PTI's poor performance could dislodge it from the public scene if it failed to deliver to the public on important issues such as inflation, bad governance, lawlessness, 18th amendment, reforms in higher education etc. however, due to massive propaganda in favour of PTI, populism cult of Imran Khan and weak narrative of ANP turned it a strong political force of the province.

B. LIBERAL, ISLAMIIST AND ISLAMIC WELFARE POLITICS

The unresolved debate to have a liberal state system or the Islamic one has been fueling confusion since day one after independence and has been at the center of promoting Islamism in the country in general and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in particular. Reliance on Islamism accelerated after the dismemberment of the country in 1970²⁸ which led to reduce the geo-strategic stature of the country and was perceived to be the culmination of the ideology of the creation of Pakistan among the public at large.

The Islamization of Zia-ul-Haq gave further boost to Islamist elements in the country. An extension of his domestic policy to regional issues resulted in the ideology of *Jihad* in the Kashmiri freedom struggle and resistance of Afghans against Soviet occupation forces which had a huge backlash in the form of rising Islamism in the country. In his *Jihad* and Islamization drive Zia was heavily financed by American CIA (Central Investigation Agency) and funded by Arab and Middle Eastern rulers. His abrupt end in a plane crash in August, 1988 led to end of *Jihad* in Afghanistan in 1989 and some de-escalation of tension on the

Kashmir front turned the militants' attention to the internal situation in Pakistan itself which resulted in deadly sectarian warfare that marred the whole of 1990s era. Several prominent people in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and all across the country were hit by the lethal wave of sectarian hatred.

The rise of militancy and radicalism in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan has a direct link with the civil war in Afghanistan which ensued after the withdrawal of the Soviet occupied forces and particularly after the disintegration of Soviet Union in 1992 which ignited the deadly civil war in Afghanistan.²⁹ Having proximity to the war zone and sharing long border with Afghanistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was hard-hit as a result of blowback effect of Afghan turmoil from across the border. Rise of religio-militant movement of TNSM in Swat in 1994³⁰ and its inspiration from the Taliban regime in Afghanistan to establish similar model in Swat and the rest of the province is a case in point. Later, the emergence of Tehrik-e-Taliban-i-Pakistan in South Waziristan in the wake of American military action against the Taliban regime and their ultimate dismissal gave rise to this umbrella militant organization which facilitated Taliban and Al-Qaida elements and provided safe havens to them in the tribal belt.³¹

Since 2002, Government of Pakistan launched several military operations against the militants in the tribal areas which have hardly been a success story except in Swat against Fazlullah led militants. The Pakistani Army has resolved to bring changes in its orientation, motivation, thinking and strategy for the last ten years in order to face this challenge. In this regard, the army has launched five major and some minor operations against the insurgents and terrorists. These groups pose severe security challenges for Pakistan. However, militants have increased in number and stronger in resources and resolve. Their activities are not confined to pitched battles with the armed forces in their safe havens but they have extended their activities to settled districts of the province and other main cities in the country. The following table would illustrate the number of operations conducted in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA.

Table No. 2
Military Operations Conducted in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa & FATA

No.	Operation	Year
1.	Operation Enduring Freedom	(2001–2002)
2.	Operation Al Mizan	(2002–2006)
3.	Operation Zalzalā	(2008)
4.	Operations Sher Dil	(2007–2009)

5.	Rah-e-Haq	(2007–2009)
6.	Rah-e-Rast	(2007–2009)
7.	Operation Rah-e-Nijat	(2009–2010)

Source: Zahid Ali Khan, *Military Operations in FATA and PATA: Implications for Pakistan*, Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad.

Nonetheless, weaponization of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and of tribal belt has happened since the onset of the Afghan *Jihad*. It has turned the historic land of traditional Pakhtuns into an ammunition dump and has become main cause of lawlessness and militancy in the province as such and in the country at large. Now the genie of militancy is out of the bottle, how to put it back into the bottle is an uphill task. So far, none of the political party who has some following in the province has come forth with any viable solution of the problem. Although, ANP has held an anti-Taliban stance for which it has made sacrifices by losing its leaders, workers, MNAs and MPAs but it is sitting on the other side of pendulum. It has adopted a tough and extremist stance which is certainly not a rational approach to do away with this problem. On December 22, 2013 the senior minister in the provincial cabinet Bashir Bilor was killed in a suicide attack in Peshawar. However, it has not expressed its clear cut policy in connection with how to eradicate the phenomenon of terror. Till late, even it did not clearly differentiate between Al-Qaida and Taliban. For instance, in his March 15, 2004 interview Asfandyar Wali Khan said in response to a question, “Al-Qaida is not a product of Pakhtun society. It’s a foreign element. What is strange about this operation is that those who offered shelter have been arrested and those who took refuge remained elusive. We will have to see who is responsible for bringing them here. They come from countries ranging from Morocco to Indonesia. Who harbored them for so long? All this must have certain consequences.”³² In response to another question that what options Pakistan have in such a situation he said, “When you brought these aliens here and looked after them for so long you closed your options.”³³

No doubt, ANP is a diehard anti-Taliban and for the same reason it lost a number of valuable party leaders since they were in power in the province as a result of 2008 elections. However, their policy response to tackle the Taliban vacillates between military operations against the Taliban and bringing them on the negotiating table. Till now, ANP lacked a clear policy decision regarding militancy which could assure the masses security against the scourge of Taliban due to which they lost the public support. ANP failure on this front is certainly a factor in the rise of PTI which took clear anti-USA stance and preferred a political solution. It also openly denounced establishment’s dual policy and publically exposed its lethargic behaviour towards Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

a. WAR ON TERROR AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

Pakistan's becoming US ally in fighting war on terror added a new spike to the already precarious political situation in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. As after the collapse of the Taliban regime Al-Qaida and Taliban have got refuge in the tribal areas of Pakistan since then the ex-FATA along with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has become the flashpoint against war on terror. Frequent drone strikes have fully radicalized the political and social environment. There are huge anti-American and anti-government sentiments especially among the public in FATA and adjacent settled districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Similarly, *Jihad* and Islamism are popular slogans in ex-FATA and in the affected areas of the settled districts. The elements of revenge in the *Pakhtunwali* (Pakhtun code of conduct) largely have made the victims of drone strikes anti-American and pro-Taliban. After losing their near and dear ones, these victims readily join militants for waging *Jihad* against American forces.

The key reason for MMA to win sweeping victory in 2002 elections in the province was anti-American sentiments for which only MMA provided the platform for the public to express their resentment. Although, anti-Americanism has not yet subsided but failure of MMA to deliver governance to people got them out of people's favor in the 2008 elections. The Islamic parties won only eight seats including reserve seats in 342 members National Assembly elections in 2008.³⁴ In the 2013 elections, JIP having 8 seats is a coalition partner with PTI in the provincial assembly. While JUI (F) with 17 seats remained in the opposition benches with PML (N), ANP, PPP and other minor groups. It was the golden chance for the moderate previous coalition government of ANP and PPP to utilize the opportunity for being in power to their maximum advantage by delivering services to the people and giving them clear cut policy road map for the future. What the people in the province needed at that crucial time from ANP government was to rid them of violence and terrorism and restore peace and security. Besides, they need to be provided economic security, health and education services, employment opportunities and solution of energy crisis. In this connection both the liberal and Islamist failed to come up to the expectation of the people.

b. THE EMERGANCE OF PAKISTAN TAHRIK-I-INSAF (PTI)

It was a few months before the 2013 elections, ground was considered to be prepared for third option to win the maximum number of seats. Analysts were predicting Imran Khan's PTI to be the one if he plays his cards well. For instance, he maximized his chance by using his Pakhtun card in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan and projected himself as an honest and credible leader on the basis of his previous record as a delivering social worker and successful cricketer. In his electioneering campaign, he talked about complete overhauling of the political system and eradicating corruption within 90 days. PTI claimed to snatch Pakistan from those who have successively subverted national development and almost destroyed the country for the sake of their own personal interests, greed and subservience to external interests.

People in the country in general and in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan and ex-FATA particularly have been targeted by the terrorists, continues bomb blasts and drone strikes. Under these circumstances PTI promised to provide security to the ordinary citizens so that terrorists could not be able to melt into the population and find shelter there. The people in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were looking forward for a messiah to get them out of the unresolved mess. It called for the abolition of the Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR) and the people of ex-FATA will be given in sense of ownership in Pakistan with “no to drone policy.”³⁵

By promising a counter-militancy strategy and ending the narratives of *Jihad*, the PTI provided to the people a ray of hopes which the other mainstream parties failed to formulate. It pledged to balance the pressure of American policies vis-à-vis Pakistan and getting the country out of the mess of terrorism. In the pre-election 2013 scenario at one time it was sidelined by other parties on a number of occasions. His inconsequential long march against US drone strikes up to Tank, ex-FATA, desertion of political leader such as Khwaja Muhammad Khan Hoti and ambivalent response to the Long March of Tahir-ul-Qadri were some of the vents which greatly tarnished PTI image of a potential challenger to the PPP and PML (N). He was also being outwitted by Nawaz Sharif of PML-N who held a meeting of the political parties in the wake of the march has got the steam out of the party. At that time, a political analyst Muhammad Waseem pointed out in his interview to *The News* on February 3, 2013, “This is a challenge for the PTI Chairman Imran Khan who was outsmarted first by Tahir-ul-Qadri by taking out the Long March and then by Nawaz Sharif by holding a meeting of the political parties in the wake of the March. The PPP on its part is taking decisions cleverly, such as making alliances, without making a noise.”³⁶ But PTI, with a workable political agenda resurfaced and proved that it can still have a chance to show better results in the elections if it reaches out to the youth and galvanize them as much as possible. Although, PTI was considered as a swing factor by most of other political leader in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but it stayed consistent to win the favor of the people especially of the youth who comprise huge proportion of the population. It won the support of the youth by projecting the party platform an appropriate forum for discussing their issues and concerns. Unlike the traditional approaches of other political parties in which the reign power were largely in the hands of conservative and closed elder circle, the PTI projected itself a party with a new vision and bright future for the youth. In 2013, it addressed with a new perspective every problem for instance energy crisis, war on terror, corruption, education, development of national infrastructure etc. So, it was a wake call for ANP and PPP leadership to do some soul searching and strengthen the implementation processes of its policies and to do the proper projection of its achievements in education, employment, law and order and new energy projects. However, the ANP confused policy with regard to terrorism and Taliban transformed the nature of the war to that of Taliban verses Pakhtun nationalism. It failed to understand the sentiments of a large segment of population with the victims of terrorism.

Internal grouping, leadership crisis, in-effective policies, and traditional ways to reached to the public all these contributed in the massive downfall of the ANP and other liberal parties. While PTI made tremendous efforts since 2013 to the present to attract public especially the youth, other parties miserably failed in this side. Undoubtedly, PTI out-mastered all the political rivals in the province. Currently, the situation seems extremely unfavorable for the traditional Islamist and liberal parties to restore their former position. However, the chance is always there in politics. In case of PTI failure and wise maneuverings on the part of opposition parties, the dynamics of the province could be changed again.

Conclusion

Politics in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has drastically changed as a result of successive failures of governance, resolution of the Afghan conflict and especially war on terror. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as a centre of liberal politics shifted to Islamism in 2003 as populous favorite option. Then it opted to vote for liberal, secular ANP to give them a chance to deliver. The lacking of a calculated and consistent efforts on the part of liberal parties like, ANP, PPP with regard to social and economic security, militancy and perpetual violence, triggered from International war on terrorism have contributed in their downfall. The election of 2013, 2018 and 2024 proved the will of the people for eradicating of all these menaces from the society at large.

Notes and References

¹ Amir Hamza Bangash, 'KP and PTI: The Story of Unending Love-But Why?', *The Frontier Post*, 27 March 2024.

² Government of Raja Pervez Ashraf signed a deal with Tahir-ul-Qadri which ended his long march and set-in in Islamabad. That was also a blow to PTI because it was the ally of each-others in opposing the PPP and PML (N) governments at the center. See Pakistan's Imran Khan and Tahir-ul-Qadri in Islamabad Rally, *BBC English*, 16th August 2014.

³ The traditional political trends were replaced by populist stream in favour of Imran Khan's PTI. Initially, it was under a concerted propaganda but later on the generation Z took upon themselves to support Imran Khan because of his charisma and personality cult.

⁴ In 2018 ANP put a ban on its affiliated youth auxiliary organization the National Youth Organization (NYO) which practically shut the only available door to the youngsters to take active part in politics. *The News International*, March 21, 2018.

⁵ PTI won 54, the largest number of seats, in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa total 124 assembly seats and form its ministry with the coalition of Jamat-i-Islami Pakistan 8 seats, Awami Jamhori Ittehad 5 seats and Qaumi Wattan Party 10 seats. www.pakp.gov.pk, site visited on October 3, 2013.

⁶ On April 15, 2010 the Senate of Pakistan voted in favor of the new name for the province of NWFP. Under the 18th constitutional amendment the name of the province was changed to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa which was a long standing demand of the nationalists led by ANP.

⁷ In the Delhi-Muslims' Proposals 1927 and Fourteen Points 1929 Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah vehemently presented the case of N-WFP. He demanded that reforms should be introduced in the province and it should be given the status of a full-fledged province.

⁸ Abdul Ghaffar Khan was the undisputed leader of the Pakhtun nationalist who rose to prominence in the wake 1930's Congress Civil Disobedience Movement. He affiliated his organization with the Indian National Congress in 1931 and due to his support; Congress formed the ministries after 1937 and 1946 elections in the former N-WFP. The present Awami National Party, which is considered the political successor of the Khudai Khidmatgar Organization of Abdul Ghaffar Khan, has governed the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa after 2008 elections. For detail study on ANP and NAP see Khan Abdul Wali Khan, *Bacha Khan aw Khudai Khidmatgari*, (Peshawar: n. p, 1994)

⁹ Abdul Wali Khan, *Bacha Khan aw Khudai Khidmatgari*, and Abdul Ghaffar Khan, *Zama Jond au Jahu Juhad, [My Life and Struggle]*, (Peshawar: Danish Publications, 2008).

¹⁰ Yasmin Roofi and Ayaz Muhammad, Renaming of NWFP AND Hazara Ethnicity: A New Course of Ethnic Politics in Pakistan, *European Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol.19, Number 4 (2011), 590

¹¹ Ibid, 591. Also see Abdul Ghaffar Khan's speech in the *Constituent Assembly Debates* Vol. III, No. 2 (Karachi: Government of Pakistan Publications, 1948). Also see interview of Abdul Ghaffar Khan in Anwar Mazdaki, *Bacha Khan aur Pakhtunistan* [Urdu] (Lahore: Tariq Publishers, 1976), 78

¹²Razia Sultana, Pakhtun Integration in the Federation of Pakistan, *Pakistan Perspective*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (January-June, 2007)

¹³M. Rashiduzzaman, The National Awami Party of Pakistan: Leftist Politics in Crisis, *Pacific Affairs*, Vol.43, No.3 (Autumn, 1970):, 395. In 1957 major leftist political parties of Pakistan had assembled in Decca and formed the first secular-leftist and nationalist political party by the name of Pakistan national Awami Party. The prominent leaders who attended the inaugural convention of the NAP were Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Maulana Bhashani, G. M. Syed, Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo, Mian Iftikhar-ud-Din, Hyder Bakhsh Jatoi and Abdul Wali Khan.

¹⁴ For details see Himayatullah Yaqubi, *National Awami Party: Nature and Direction of Politics* (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 2021).

¹⁵Razia Sultana, Pakhtuns Integration in the Federation of Pakistan. Also see B. M. Kutty, ed. *In Search of Solutions: An Autobiography of Mir Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo* (Karachi: Pakistan Study Center)

¹⁶Khan Abdul Wali Khan, *Bacha Khan aw Khudai Khidmatgari*, Vol. II, (Peshawar: n. p, 1994), 230.

¹⁷ Raees Khan, 'Formation and Orientation of ANP' (Islamabad: Unpublished M.Phil thesis, Quaid-i-Azam University), 33

¹⁸ Yasmin Roofi and Ayaz Muhammad, Renaming of NWFP and Hazara Ethnicity: A New Course of Ethnic Politics in Pakistan, 591

¹⁹Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (Movement for the Enforcement of Muhammadan Law) was a Pakistani militant struggle initiated in Malakand. The objective of the movement was to enforce Sharia law in the country and banning of female education. The rebel group took over much of the areas in Swat in 1992 and in 2007. It was founded by Sufi Muhammad in 1992, and was banned by President Pervez Musharraf on January 12, 2002. See Navid Iqbal Khan, Tehreek-i-Nifaz-i-Shariat-i-Muhammadi in Malakand Division (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa): A Case Study of the Process of "State Inversion" *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture* Vol.XXXI, No.1, 2010.

²⁰ Kamran Asdar Ali, Pakistani Islamists Gamble on the General, March No.231, 5

²¹ In 1948 Abdul Ghaffar Khan demanded the renaming of the former NWFP into Pakhtunistan. He took the oath of allegiance to the new state of Pakistan in the first constituent assembly of Pakistan. In his first speech he spoke in favor of provincial autonomy and independent foreign policy. Constituent Assembly Debates Vol. III, No. 2 (Karachi: Government of Pakistan Publications, 1948). Also see interview of Abdul Ghaffar Khan in Anwar Mazdaki, *Bacha Khan aur Pakhtunistan* [Urdu] (Lahore: Tariq Publishers, 1976), p. 78.

²²Rahimullah Yusafzai, 'A Contended Man: An Informal Chat with Asfandyar Wali Khan', *The News*, Sunday April 1, 2012

²³ International Crisis Group, *Islamic Parties in Pakistan*, Asia Report, No216-12 December 2011, 1-6

²⁴ Kamran Asdar Ali, Pakistani Islamists Gamble on the General, 2.

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- ²⁵ Himayatullah Yaqubi, Arshad Muhammad, “Hayat Muhammad Khan Sherpao: Nazriyati Siyasat ka Alambardar”, *Mujallah Tarikh wa Saqafat-i-Pakistan*, (April-September 2014)
- ²⁶ PML has some support in the trans-Indus Hazara division of the province where it usually winning seats in successive election. In the 2013 elections its candidates won a number of seats in Kohistan, Abbottabad, Swat, shangla, and Swabi districts. It has 17 members in the present provincial assembly. www.pakp.gov.pk.
- ²⁷ Yasmin Roofi and Ayaz Muhammad, Renaming NWFP and Hazara Ethnicity, 590
- ²⁸ Razia Sultana, Integration of Pakhtuns in the Federation of Pakistan.
- ²⁹ Vali Nsr, ‘Military Rule, Islamism and Democracy in Pakistan’, *Middle East Journal*; (Spring 2004): 204
- ³⁰ For a detailed study of the TNSM see Navid Iqbal Khan, “Tehreek-i-Nifaz-i-Shariat Muhammadi in Malakand Division (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa): A Case Study of the Process of State Inversion”, *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture*, Vol. XXXI, No. 1, (January-June 2010)
- ³¹ Manzoor Ahmad, “Implication of the War on Terror for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan,” *Journal of Critical Globalization Studies*, No. 3 (2010), 105-106
- ³² Amir Mohammad Khan, Personal Interview: Asfandyar Wali Khan, Peshawar, March 15, 2004.
- ³³ *Ibid*
- ³⁴ International Crisis Group, *Islamic Parties in Pakistan*, Asia Report, No. 216-12 December, 2011,1-6
- ³⁵ PTI issued a comprehensive election manifesto with the title of an Agenda for Resurgence. It promised end to drone strike, lawlessness, and massive reforms in every sector. See PTI Election Manifesto 2013, *An Agenda for Resurgence*.
- ³⁶ *The News*, February 3, 2013