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The fact that Jihadistan has gradually become an empirical reality is borne out by the fate of Pakistan's efforts to return the region to its sovereignty. The turning point came in 2006 when President Pervez Musharraf, in Ashley J. Tellis' words, ordered 'major formations from the Army XI Corps and elite Special Services Group into the FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas)' ostensibly to root out the Taliban and Al Qaeda and remove them once and for all from Pakistani soil. The undertaking was a dismal failure, which cost the army over 600 lives. 'The core members of the Taliban and Al Qaeda leadership survived and remain active antagonists,' Tellis concludes. (Carnegie Policy Brief, December 2007).

Arnaud de Borchgrave goes further and declares that the 'Taliban and Al Qaeda have reconstituted their strongholds with virtual impunity; and a chaotic Pakistan, which many terrorists call home, should be the new US geostrategic priority.' (Commentary, Nov 8, 2007). Bill Roggio, in the Long War Journal Sep 13, 2006, is even more emphatic: 'South Waziristan fell some time in the spring of 2006 (I suspect sometime in late March). On March 6, I referred to South Waziristan as 'Talibanistan'. Shariah Law was instituted ... at this time and the Taliban began to rule openly. A single political party was established in South Waziristan, a party loyal to the Taliban. It is said a secret accord was signed between the Pakistani government and the Taliban around this time...'

Bill Roggio came closer than the other two to drawing the obvious conclusion: The outcome of the US failure at Tora Bora to eliminate Osama bin Laden, thereby allowing him to redeploy his forces and resources in Waziristan, enabled him to merge his followers with the remnants of the Taliban in a region which for all practical purposes has long constituted a political vacuum as far as viable Pakistani suzerainty is concerned. 'While the fighting continues in Afghanistan, the Taliban and Al Qaeda have set up the 'Islamic Republic of Waziristan' much like Al Qaeda in Iraq did in Haditha an Qaim...' (Ibid, Feb 7, 2006).

Given the nature of the Pathan cultural communities occupying this social space, it proved possible for Al Qaeda and the Taliban to infuse them with their ultra-fundamentalist Islamic ideology and establish a nexus of personal relationships with local structures of power into which the region is subdivided at the grassroots level. The nature of these local structures of power and their relationship to encompassing political authority was depicted by Frederick Barth in his classic study of the Swat Pathans. (1959). 'The Pakhtun chief,' he declared, 'is the nucleus around which form a corporate following and field of political influence.' (p. 89) Because these local systems were so highly individualised and fluid in composition, Barth concluded that the encompassing state, if it was to succeed, was compelled to exercise a limited writ. The central system presupposes and superimposes itself upon the local systems without materially altering them. This allows the latter to continue following their own internal l

gic, maintain their special identity, while the encompassing state bargains for whatever material and intangible resources it can retrieve from this loosely integrated interrelationship.

The Swat model, in essence, prevails throughout Waziristan and FATA; it is this model, which the Taliban and Al Qaeda have successfully, indeed instinctively, adapted to their larger purpose. They have gradually assembled the Mahsud, Wazir and other tribal groups into a loosely integrated confederation, which acknowledges Mullah Omar (the Taliban) and Osama bin Laden (Al Qaeda) as their spiritual and political 'Emirs'. It is no accident that Baitullah Mahsud, the person who ordained

and orchestrated the execution of Benazir Bhutto, has been designated the 'Emir of Taliban in Pakistan' and 'second in command after Mullah Mohammed Omar...' (de Borchgrave, Feb 29, 2008). He exemplifies the powerful position that the Mahsud tribe occupies in the coalition of tribes that now forms the body politic of 'Jihadistan'.

The Afghan National Directorate for Security clearly describes the recruitment techniques through which the Taliban and Al Qaeda have built their state within a state in the Hindu Kush: 'They approach tribes, sub-tribes and communities in the villages.' They induce them to sever their relationship to the government 'and also preach to the population to support jihad against the Americans and the government which they consider infidel'. In this fashion they integrate the tribal-rooted local structures of power into their political nexus. 'Those who (contend) that the region is a state point to the facts that the federal authority is little to nonexistent and that the area is ruled mostly by tribal elders.' (James Rupert, Newsday, 2006-02-09.)

This provides the Taliban/Al Qaeda leadership with an extensive demographic base from which they can extract the 'resources' needed to pursue their political and ideological agenda. It provides them a domain within which they can propagate Shariah Law and maintain the rudiments of a legal system (Shoora) that is empowered to render judicial decisions, ranging from resolving property disputes to the death penalty. It gives them an 'educational system' (madrassas) through which they can indoctrinate the young with their ultra-orthodox, 9th century version of Islam, and then recruit the brainwashed 'graduates' into their military formations which relentlessly attack the forces of the Afghan government, the US and the UN.

Their effectiveness was recently demonstrated when militants attacked a main prison in Kandahar province. 'They used suicide truck bombs loaded with about two tonnes of explosives to blast holes in the mud brick walls of the Soviet-era prison,' CNN reported, and freed more than 400 of their incarcerated brethren. It is also attested to by the rising death toll they are inflicting on the coalition and NATO forces deployed against them; the most recent report declares that in June there were 40 deaths, the highest monthly toll in seven years!

'The Taliban reportedly control most of the region with its own authoritarian rule, including beheadings and other violent punishments which the Pakistan government has been unable to stop,' declares Mansoor Ijaz (Wall Street Journal, Sep 19, 2006).

Al Qaeda/Taliban have also established a viable narco-based agricultural economy within their domain which makes up for the personal fortune that Osama bin Laden originally used to fund the jihad until American and Saudi interdiction dried it up.

What then are the policy implications for the United States, for Pakistan, for Afghanistan, and for India of the rise of this terrorist state in Waziristan which with impunity carries out military attacks, political assassinations and a relentless ideological offensive against its avowed enemies in every direction? The US and its allies must henceforth pursue policies which treat al Qaeda/Taliban as more than merely a collection of disparate terrorist bands; rather it must deal with them as a hostile state against whom all-out war and systematic diplomacy must be waged. To accomplish this, the US must divert forces from its stalemated misadventure in Iraq in order to increase its military and political presence in Afghanistan, in concert with Afghan and coalition forces, until it is capable of breaking the back of the Waziristan Emirate and returning its tribal societies to Pakistan sovereignty. This must be done with or without Pakistani acquiescence, but hopefully with the former, not only for

Pakistan's sa

ke but also for the interest of the region as well. Valuable time is slipping by and action is required which recognises the political reality that jihadi state formation in Waziristan has wrought.

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