



Framework for peace pathways and conflict transformation for conflict in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan

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Abstract: Conflict in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan stayed on the margins of the ‘war on terror’ throughout the period following the events of 11 September 2001. This conflict is embedded in the narratives of occupation as well as historical grievances, terrorism, developmental discrimination, and identity crises – all of which have helped perpetuate it. With the shifting of the Al Qaeda leadership from Afghanistan to the tribal areas after the US-led war on Afghanistan in October 2001, meta-narratives have been employed to advance local grievances. This paper develops the framework of peace pathways and conflict transformation which involves an in-depth analysis of conflict and reasons for its intractability, taking into account not only socio-political and economic needs and interests, but also addressing the root cause (or causes) of the conflict.

Keywords: Taliban, conflict transformation, peacebuilding, Islam, nonviolence.

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1. Introduction

The principle of indigenous empowerment suggests that conflict transformation must actively envision, include, respect, and promote the human and cultural resources from within a given setting. The setting and the people cannot be seen as the problem and the outsider as the answer. Rather, the long term goal of transformation demands that external agents of change take as the primary task of accompaniment the validation of the people and the expansion of resources within the setting.

– John P. Lederach¹

The Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan (FATA) has been the focus of a violent conflict since 11 September 2001. This is one of the most controversial and least focused conflicts among other high profile conflicts in the aftermath of 9/11. More importantly, the death of the leader of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP – Pakistan’s chapter

1 John Paul Lederach and R. Scott Appleby, ‘Strategic Peacebuilding: An Overview,’ in *Strategies of Peace: Transforming Conflict in a Violent World*, eds. Daniel Philpott and Gerard F. Powers (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010) ‘Strategic Peacebuilding: An Overview’, in *Strategies of Peace: Transforming Conflict in a Violent World*, ed. Daniel Philpott and Gerard F. Powers (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 28.

of the Taliban), Hakimullah Mehsud, in an American drone attack on 31 October 2013, has landed the region in a period of uncertainty around peace talks and the role of Taliban after the US–NATO drawdown from Afghanistan in 2014. To complicate things further, the use of religion, strategic culture, and the tapestry of FATA by TTP and the government of Pakistan reinforce the image of tribal Muslims as inherently violence-prone.

Historically, FATA can be termed as a ‘conflict attracter’.² This is due to the historical, social, religious and political residues of the British Empire policies; the India–Pakistan War of 1948 over Kashmir; the Soviet–Afghan War of 1979–89 and events following 11 September 2001. The attacks of 9/11 were the trigger for the war itself, but the prolonged duration of the conflict, suicide bombing, and attacks by Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan have added a further dimension to its intractable nature. The link between the local and the global natures of this conflict owes to the shifting of Al Qaeda leadership from Afghanistan to the tribal areas of Pakistan in October 2001, subsequent drone strikes by the US, and the military operations by Pakistani government in FATA.

For a full understanding of the situation, it is imperative to factor in the severe, protracted and complex nature of this conflict. This article develops a coherent analysis of this conflict to formulate a framework for conflict transformation. The first part of the article examines the concepts of indigenous peacebuilding, the role of religion and the concept of ‘peace pathways’ as an indigenous approach for conflict transformation. The second part examines the roots of the conflict and its intractability and the need to develop an approach for the case under study. The third part formulates the framework for ‘peace pathways’ for the conflict in FATA as an alternative approach to peacebuilding. The paper argues that specific strategies based on indigenous approaches need to be designed for conflicts, which are suitable for controlling violence and transforming its intractability.

The conflict in FATA provides much support for the theories which focus on the win-lose conflict resolution. The win-lose factor owes to the asymmetrical nature of the conflict and the difference of power structures between parties. As a part of conflict intervention in FATA, there have been some major steps towards the peace process; while the road blocks to peace are due to both systemic and domestic factors. This suggests the use of conflict transformation approaches instead of conflict resolution approaches. The analysis described in this article will provide a foundation for the development of processes of peace and transformation in similarly fragile conflict situations. The proposed framework will enable the conflict parties and peace practitioners to ground their philosophy and course of action that will ensure a conflict-sensitive approach so that it does not lead to violent prone conflicts, but rather to peace and development.

2. Theory: Peacebuilding and indigenous religious–cultural approaches

Generally, the role of religion in a conflict situation serves two purposes: to promote religious militancy or to play a positive role in peacemaking and peacebuilding.³ From a sociological point of view, the challenge concerning the role of religion in conflict is not about religion per se, but rather religious extremism.⁴ This is true for the tribal areas, as the militancy is informed by interpretations of religious texts, and the same texts can play an important role in the conflict transformation.

The inclusion of a religious approach for developing the framework for peacebuilding is imperative for terminating conflict in the tribal areas. Gerard F. Powers suggests that the Western secularist paradigm ‘as a solution to religious extremism can have the unintended effect of feeding extremism by further threatening traditional sources of personal, cultural, and religious identity’.⁵ This division of extremist and non-extremist is problematic, but from a peacebuilding perspective, it is crucial for distinguishing between them due to its impact on peacebuilding ventures. This point is relevant for the conflict in FATA, as the Western-infused peacebuilding ventures for dealing with religious extremism are proving to be futile. An important aspect of religious actors and institutions in peacebuilding is their transnational reach, which can play a decisive role in long-term peacebuilding efforts, although the same transnational aspect can be important for conflict intractability, which is also critical for the religious dimension of the conflict.

Peacebuilding is mostly concerned with Johan Galtung’s concept of positive peace following a bottom-up approach and local consensus.⁶ Yet in the post-Cold War era it has become a multidimensional activity aimed at the construction of liberal peace, connecting peacebuilding with state-building with or without local consent.⁷ This

2 Raymond Ibrahim, Larry S. Liebovitch, Robin Vallacher, Andrzej Nowak, Andrea Bartoli, Peter Coleman and Lan Bui-Wrzosinska, ‘Intractable Conflict as a Dynamic System’, <http://necsi.edu/events/iccs7/papers/712171923f5c0087fe29a1fb110c.pdf> (accessed 24 April 2012).

3 Gerard F. Powers, ‘Religion and Peacebuilding’, in *Strategies of Peace: Transforming Conflict in a Violent World*, eds. Daniel Philpott and Gerard F. Powers (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 318.

4 *ibid.*, 321.

5 *ibid.*, 318.

6 Johan Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization* (London: Sage, 1996).

7 Oliver P. Richmond, ‘A Genealogy of Peace and Conflict Theory’, in *Palgrave Advances in Peacebuilding: Critical Developments and Approaches*,

includes the establishment of a vibrant civil society, a human rights regime, democratic and participatory processes, market economy, and good governance, which are basic pillars of liberal peace. The critics of liberal peace focus on 'issues with its universal claims, its cultural assumptions, its top down institutional, neo-liberal and neo-colonial overtones, and its secular and rationalist nature'⁸ and call it a hegemonic peace. This is particularly true of peacebuilding projects in Iraq and Afghanistan in the post-9/11 era.

On the other hand, the indigenous form of peacebuilding is considered a bottom-up approach that is based on local culture and traditional practices, which are assumed to be peaceful. It is contended that this approach is difficult to adjust to liberal peace values, which are individualist and institution-centric.⁹ The post-war reaction to peace-building or state-building in Iraq and Afghanistan by the local population and by 'insurgents', relating to the intervention, and 'emancipation' of society, illustrates this rejection of liberal peace.

Roger MacGinty terms indigenous peacebuilding as 'organic peacebuilding'.¹⁰ There is an important distinction between organic or indigenous peacebuilding and traditional peacebuilding. The former refers to practices based on local custom, while the latter refers to practices that have long been held by the local population.¹¹ William L. Ury considers the role of the local population in the peacebuilding and transformation process as developing a 'social immune system, preventing the spread of the virus of violence'.¹² These approaches rest on the moral authority of community figures, have a public, communal element and story-telling, and rely on locally-derived resources having material and symbolic values connecting 'cultural memory banks to norms and expectations'.¹³ The drawbacks of some indigenous approaches include being essentially conservative, reinforcing power hierarchies, upholding the legitimacy of existing norms and practices, and excluding some groups.¹⁴

Within the Muslim society, an important factor concerns the role of religion in peacebuilding. This in particular has three critical dimensions: the inherent public nature of religion, the relationship of nonviolence to war and peacebuilding, and the role of inter-religious peacebuilding. For developing an approach for Muslim societies, Abdul Aziz Sachidena points out pluralism as one of the more important pillars in Islam that specifically deals with the question of 'otherness'. He suggests that it is imperative to rediscover the moral concerns towards peacebuilding in Islam based on social justice and pluralistic values.¹⁵ Similarly, Yilmaz and Esposito suggest a vibrant civil society of informed and responsible citizens which can play an important role in the peacebuilding, pluralism, and the democratic spirit in the society. They argue that instead of promoting militancy and violence, transnational religious and faith-based movements can play an important role in peacebuilding at the international level.¹⁶

One of the problems concerning peacebuilding in FATA is the absence of 'civil society', as understood in the modern nation-state system in the sense of 'informed and responsible citizens'. The society in the tribal areas is a 'traditional' society that has its own values of pluralism, social justice, and individuality. Developing peacebuilding measures for such a society requires 'out of the box' strategies based on indigenous religious-cultural resources, but the universal knowledge base of peacebuilding as a form of knowledge cannot be neglected in this process. The peacebuilding approaches adopted by Pakistan's government and under the AfPak strategy by the US suffer from the dilemmas discussed above. The FATA Sustainable Development Plan (SDP) 2007–2015 by the government of Pakistan is important in this regard. It is based on a strategic framework targeting the grassroots level of society in the tribal areas. The framework takes an integrated approach based on the principles of equity and participation. Its main focuses are developmental planning, economic and social development, environmental integrity and poverty alleviation. The period from 2007 to 2015 has been divided into three phases for monitoring, evaluating and implementing the SDP. One of the problems concerning the SDP is defining the issues that require development strategies. The focus has been on the micro level of problems facing FATA, rather than addressing the macro level of problems, which are at the core of the conflict. The SDP is also limited to developmental issues and a major failing is that it is not addressing the religious or political dimensions of the conflict. On the other hand, the peacebuilding measures under the AfPak strategy of the

ed. Oliver P. Richmond (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 22.

8 *ibid.*, 26.

9 Andrew J. Williams, 'Reconstruction: The Missing Historical Link', in *Palgrave Advances in Peacebuilding: Critical Developments and Approaches*, ed. Oliver P. Richmond (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) ed. Oliver P. Richmond (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 61; Richmond, 'A Genealogy of Peace and Conflict Theory', 29.

10 Roger MacGinty, 'Gilding The Lily? International Support for Indigenous and Traditional Peacebuilding', in *Palgrave Advances in Peacebuilding: Critical Developments and Approaches*, ed. Oliver P. Richmond (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

11 *ibid.*, 349.

12 William L. Ury, *The Third Side: How We Fight and How We Can Stop* (New York: Penguin, 2000), 7.

13 MacGinty, 'Gilding The Lily?', 349–50.

14 *ibid.*, 359.

15 Abdul Aziz Sachedina, *The Islamic Roots of Democratic Pluralism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 5–6.

16 John L. Esposito and Ihsan Yilmaz, ed. *Islam and Peacebuilding: Gulen Movement Initiative* (New York: Blue Dome, 2010), 1–7.

US in Pakistan and FATA also seem to be futile as they are not taking into account on-the-ground realities or using a conflict-sensitive approach.¹⁷

For the conflict in FATA, this paper suggests the ‘peace pathways’ process, as an indigenous approach and a process for the transformation. This concept of ‘pathway’, ‘road’, or simply a ‘way’ is derived from the Qur’an’s overall understanding of Islam as a way of achieving peace, which becomes a ‘way of life’: Islam has been termed as *Din* which in Arabic means ‘a way of life’; *Shariah* (Islamic Law) literally means ‘a path to be followed for governing life’, and *Salaam* (peace-submission) as ‘a way of peace’.

In short, peace pathway is the way of organising life, which is considered in Islam to be inherent in human *Fitrah* (human nature) as an inclination towards peace. This ‘way of peace’ within humans and society connects them to the inner, outer and universal ways of peace. Unlike peacebuilding, it does not involve the ‘building’ of an infrastructure of peace by an outsider or borrowing from other cultural settings, but rather develops human personality and society on the existing pathways in order to transform the factors responsible for violence. It follows a gradual process and a long-term view of developing human personality and transforming society from violence towards peace.

The ‘peace pathway’ (*Subal al Salaam* in Arabic) is based on the Qur’anic concept of *‘Sirat-e-Mustaqeem’*, which means ‘straight path’ and considers transformation process to be achieved through perseverance. It offers a model of a path to peace and transformation of conflicts by using the resources that are already present in the memory bank of a culture or society through constant individual and collective efforts. Muhammad Shahrur has explained a straight path as *‘Istaqama’*, which is a representation of the internal dialectical nature of human life based on the acquisition of new knowledge that leads to changes in social and political conditions, while at the same time introducing new legislation or interpretation as a ‘proactive response to these changes and development’.¹⁸

In the peacebuilding processes, as Ury mentioned, the third party actors are termed as ‘providers’ or ‘bridge builders’ in the prevention stage, ‘mediators’ or ‘healers’ in the resolution stage, and ‘witnesses’ and ‘referees’ during the peacekeeping stage.¹⁹ On the contrary, in the ‘peace pathways’ approach, the role of the third party can be termed as the ‘listener’ and ‘path finder’, who can open the avenues for promoting peace, ending hostilities, acknowledging victimhood and humiliation, and working for socio-economic development and justice. A third party can also play an important role in ‘bridging’, in the words of Bassam Tibi, as an approach for providing inter-civilisational dialogue to promote harmony at the international level.²⁰ The use of terms such as ‘building’, ‘infrastructure’, ‘packages’, ‘deliverable’, ‘peace engineer’, or ‘peace builder’ sometimes contradict the perception of peace in local cultures, which consider peace and transformation as a process from inside, rather than from outside builders. The next section will expand the argument by examining the roots of conflict in FATA for developing an indigenous framework for conflict transformation.

3. FATA: Roots of the conflict

FATA is located on the border of Pakistan’s Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province (previously the North West Frontier Province) and Afghanistan. The border with Afghanistan is 450 kilometres long, and the area of the FATA is 27,220 square kilometres. The people of this area are called *Pakhtuns* or *Pushtuns*, (mostly Sunni Muslims, with the Shiite communities to be found mostly in the Orakzai and Kuram agencies) and are divided into many tribes with a total population of 3.2 million.²¹ This paper will use the term as pronounced in the local language, *Pakhtuns*. The entire area consists of seven tribal agencies, namely Bajur, Khyber, Kurram, Mohmand, Orakzai, South Waziristan, North Waziristan, and six federal regions. This region has semi-autonomous status in the federation of Pakistan.

The most important factors in the life of the *Pakhtuns* living in FATA are religion and its cultural code *Pakhtunwali*. This entire region borders Afghanistan and has historical, ethnic, religious, and linguistic links with that country. It was a part of Afghanistan before the Durand Line Agreement was signed in 1893 between Sir Mortimer Durand and Amir Abdur Rehman on behalf of the British and Afghan governments respectively. For the British, it served as a strategic buffer zone between British territory and the Russian Empire, which led to its administrative division with indirect British control. This system has been maintained until now though some recent political reforms have made progress

17 ‘FATA Sustainable Development Plan 2007–2015’, Civil Secretariat FATA, Peshawar, http://www.worldsecuritynetwork.com/documents/Booklet_on_FATA_SDP_2006_-_15.pdf (accessed 3 May 2010).

18 Andreas Christmann, ed. *The Qur’an, Morality and Critical Reason: The Essential Muhammad Shahrur*, vol. 106, Social, Economic and Political Studies of the Middle East and Asia (Leiden, Boston: BRILL, 2009), 180.

19 Ury, *The Third Side*.

20 Bassam Tibi, *Islam in Global Politics: Conflict and Cross Civilizational Bridging* (London: Routledge, 2012).2012

21 Noor ul Haq, Rashid Ahmed Khan and Maqsoodul Hasan Nuri, ‘Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan: Northwest Tribal Belt of Pakistan, Part One: 550 B.C.–1947 A.D.’, IPRI Paper 10 (2005), 17. <http://ipripak.org/papers/federally.shtml> (accessed 3 December 2013).

towards including the area in the mainstream political process. This area is regulated under the Frontier Crimes Regulation Act of 1901.

Since 1948, after the first India–Pakistan war over Kashmir, the State of Pakistan has used the tribal areas as a buffer zone for its military adventures in Kashmir and later in Afghanistan. At the time of Partition, the agreement between Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the first Governor General of Pakistan, and the tribes was a confidence-building measure; fifteen battalions were removed from Waziristan and Razmak, which were later believed to be engaged in the 1948 tribal incursion into Kashmir. The deliberate weaponization of tribal society after independence helped the State of Pakistan, as it inherited an army in poor condition, and tribal militia were a good alternative in the early days of the State.²² Moreover, the Soviet-era *Madrassahs* (religious seminaries) and training camps, along with the poppy cultivation to generate funds, and the post-9/11 stationing of 80,000 troops follow the buffer-zone trend. In order to maintain military/state control, the government's deliberate policy is to keep this area underdeveloped and under brutal Frontier Crimes Regulations (1901), hidden by the cloak of tribal independence. As Maria Hayat contends,

[That] FATA became such a ready safe haven for militants (local as well as foreign) highlights the culpability of the state's historical dealings with the FATA, vacillating between use and abandonment – in contributing to the current crisis.²³

The foundation of the local aspect of the conflict was laid by the *Malaki* system, weaponization, a warrior culture, and the use of this territory as a buffer zone to gain leverage in Afghanistan by Pakistan. The 1979 Afghan *Jihad* against the Soviet Union, ideology of Al Qaeda, and the US 'war on terror' in the post-9/11 period were important international factors giving a new direction to the revival of global Jihadism.

The structural factors that affect the conflict intractability include the level of economic development, capacities for different ways of fighting, cultural patterns, and decision-making institutions. The lack of development, employment opportunities, and low educational levels in FATA has made people susceptible to militancy as a way to earn money and gain power in society. FATA is the most underdeveloped and impoverished region of Pakistan, with 60 percent of the population living below the poverty level. The literacy rate is 17.42 percent, compared to 56 percent nationally, with male literacy of 32.6 percent and female literacy of 3 percent.²⁴ Political agents control development funds and planning. Agriculture is the main source of livelihood. A total of 7 percent of FATA land is cultivated for agricultural purposes. Eighty-two percent of the land is not available for agricultural purposes because of difficult topography and lack of irrigation; 44 percent of agricultural land has to rely on rainfall.²⁵ These socio-economic factors and developmental discrimination influence self-conceptions and identities, how grievances are experienced and interpreted, what goals are formulated, and the methods used to attain them. All this in turn provides the canvas in which relationships are depicted. An important aspect of conflict in the tribal areas of Pakistan is that its root causes lie in the structures of relationships that have propagated the conflict and escalated violence in the area. Since these structures are socially constructed their transformation can potentially lead to peaceful change.

At the time of the 1947 partition of the Indian subcontinent, agreements were signed between tribes and M.A. Jinnah to maintain the status quo in the region, which provided the basis for future relations between the tribal areas and Pakistan.²⁶ The political status of FATA in the State of Pakistan is governed by Articles 246 and 247 of the 1973 Constitution, which extends the executive authority of the state into this area. The President of Pakistan enjoys discretionary power, and the governor of the Province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (the former North West Frontier Province) exercises executive power on behalf of the President.

The administration and control of FATA is the responsibility of the Federal Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON), which is answerable to the Prime Minister and National Assembly. However, the real power for policy changes and administration rests with the President. The political design under British colonialism continues with political agents (usually bureaucrats) acting as representatives of the President for each tribal agency. Political agents (PA) have political, judicial, and executive powers to handle criminal issues and the revenue system. The Levis, or tribal militias, and *Khasadars* (irregular forces from different tribes) are under their authority.²⁷

The political agent has the power to grant *Malak* status to tribal elders or conversely to give them *Lungi* (lower than *Malak*) status if he determines that the tribal elder is not sufficiently serving the interests of the State.²⁸ The

22 Maira Hayat, 'Still Taming The Turbulent Frontier? The State in the Federally Administrated Tribal Areas of Pakistan', JASO Online 1, no. 2 (Winter 2009), 192–93.

23 *ibid.*, 19.

24 'Pakistan's Tribal Areas: Appeasing The Militants', in Asia Report no 125 (International Crisis Group, 11 December, 2006), 9.

25 *ibid.*, 9.

26 Haq, Khan and Nuri, 'Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan'.

27 *ibid.*, 4.

28 *ibid.*, 4–5.

Frontier Crimes Regulation Act enshrines judicial authority to settle disputes and combines it with police and executive authority in the Political Agent (PA). It is a continuation of the Federal Crimes Regulatory Act, 1901 (FCR) with minor modifications. It combines the executive discretionary powers with tribal norms and traditions. Although the *Jirga* (tribal council) system has the power to resolve civil and criminal disputes, it is subservient to the PA as he can refer cases to it. The composition of the *Jirga* is also at his discretion and he is vested with the power to award punishment without trial in a proper court of law. The FATA jurisdiction is divided into inaccessible areas, administered areas, and protected areas. All the areas have been denied due process of justice, allowing the punishment of an entire tribe for any crime, seizure of tribal property, or arrest of any persons the PA deems to be against the interests of the state.

Although many reforms have been initiated, this area is still governed by the FCR. Political reforms were initiated in 1996 by the government of Benazir Bhutto; the adult franchise was introduced to the area, and the first elections were held in 1997 on a non-party basis with twelve seats in the National Assembly and eight seats in the Senate of Pakistan. Control of the election process, however, still remains firmly in the hands of the political agents. In 2002, the FATA Secretariat was set up and in 2004, Agency Councils were introduced to serve as local representative bodies in FATA. On 12 August 2011, the President of Pakistan signed two orders, extending the Political Parties Order (2002) to FATA, which introduced political parties in the area and amended the FCR by granting prisoners the right to bail within twenty-four hours of arrest. It also softened the collective punishment clause. However, while there has been no progress on the issue of auditing the funds of political agents, these reforms are a good starting point.²⁹

4. FATA: Conflict intractability

Conflict in FATA can be termed as an intractable one, which is a particular kind of social conflict that is protracted and destructive, and attempts for solution and transformation of such conflicts have not been successful in most cases. Louis Kriesberg's observation about this kind of conflict fits well with the conflict in the tribal areas: 'Leaders of one side in a fight may evoke old battles with the adversary and try to characterise a new fight as part of a long-standing, perhaps decades- or centuries-old intractable conflict'.³⁰

The intractable nature of the conflict in FATA also owes something to the political culture that has been inculcated over the course of many years because of the unending conflict, the media coverage and the educational system. The Soviet–Afghan war of 1979–1989 was crucial to this story. While the conflict that is the subject of this paper started after 9/11, its roots are deep and its nature is protracted and complex. One important question that this paper tries to answer is: what is the nature of transformation sought, and by whom and for whom it is sought? The conflict narratives addresses the dynamics of tribal society coupled with the sense of victimization and humiliation that Muslims feel in general about the conflict.

Ahmed Rashid argues that although the United States gave \$750 million to support the FATA Sustainable Development Plan (2006–2015), the plan set unrealistic goals and was based on Orientalist images of the tribal areas. He believes that changes in the FATA can only happen by giving political freedom and choice to the people and by changing FATA's political status. The government and army did not contemplate this, which resulted in Al Qaeda and the Taliban triggering political change by renaming the region the 'Islamic Emirates of Waziristan'. The Pakistani army's undermining of Political Agents, replacing them with army officers who had no knowledge of the area, complicated the conflict even more. The entire administrative system of FATA was destroyed, with tribesmen losing trust in the Pakistani government. Akbar S. Ahmed argues that because of the strictly military approach of the United States, the Pakistani army has control of the area, sidelining the political agents by abolishing the administrative system. This has created a power vacuum in the area, and facilitated the leadership of the Taliban and Al Qaeda leadership in the area.³¹ Although the army is exercising full control over Balochistan (another insurgency hit province in south-western Pakistan), it has ceded its writ in FATA, raising many questions about Pakistan's role in both regions.³²

In order to develop the framework for transformation, the intractability of conflict in the tribal areas will be examined through what Louis Kriesberg defines as six phases of intractability. These phases are: the eruption of conflict with the potential of generating intractability; the escalation of conflict with destructive patterns; the failure of all peacemaking efforts to reduce or transform intractability; internalisation and institutionalisation of destructive

29 Shehryar Fazli, 'A New Dawn for Pakistan's Tribal Areas?', Foreign Policy: The AFPAC Channel, 11 August 2011, http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/08/12/a_new_dawn_for_pakistans_tribal_areas (accessed 24 July 2012).

30 Louis Kriesberg, 'Nature, Dynamics, and Phases of Intractability', in *Grasping the Nettle: Analyzing Causes of Intractable Conflict*, eds. Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson and Pamela Aall (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 2007), 67.

31 Akbar Ahmed, 'Dealing with Pakistan's Wild West', *The Globalist*, January 24, 2008, <http://www.theglobalist.com/StoryId.aspx?StoryId=6738> (accessed 27 March 2011).

32 Louis Kriesberg, 'Nature, Dynamics, and Phases of Intractability'.

conflicts; the patterns of de-escalation that lead to transformation, and termination and recovery from the intractable nature of the conflict.

The eruption phase of the conflict in the tribal areas emerged with the attacks by Al Qaeda operatives on the World Trade Centre in New York on 11 September 2001. The eruption of this conflict in FATA also owes to the shifting of Al Qaeda leadership and its ideology to this region after the U.S. attack on Afghanistan in October 2011. Ahmed Rashid argues that the exit of the Taliban and al Qaeda from Afghanistan was facilitated by the ISI and the Pakistani regime when, during the 2001 Battle of Kunduz, hundreds of stranded ISI personnel and soldiers from the frontier corps were airlifted along with hundreds of Taliban and Al Qaeda members. This was later dubbed 'Operation Evil Airlift' by US Special Operations personnel, and had great import for the 'war on terror' in the years to come.³³ The creation of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in 2007 using violent methods such as suicide bombing, terrorism, bombs, and brutal methods of killing people, had an effect on the choice of method adopted for resistance by local people to tackle this conflict. The escalation phase of the conflict started with the formation of TTP, which created a destructive pattern of the conflict. Although initially Al Qaeda and the Taliban had separate aims, with the Taliban committed to a limited ideology of the Islamisation and stability in Afghanistan, Al Qaeda added a global perspective to these goals. This had an impact on identity formation, which was shaped in opposition to the enemy. It generated new grievances, goals, and methods that differed from the eruption phase, as fighting itself creates new grievances and goals due to the level of injuries inflicted on the combatants. This also brought old injustices and dissatisfaction with the government of Pakistan to the fore.

The failure of a peacemaking effort phase has important implications on the intervention and transformation of the conflict. There have been numerous efforts for peace agreements between the TTP and the government of Pakistan, for example the ShaKai peace agreement in 2004 and the Sararogha peace deal in 2005. However, because these efforts were mainly focused on ending the violence and hostilities and not on the transformation of conflict, it did not produce the desired result. Another phase that increases intractability is the internalisation and institutionalisation of conflict, which increases the degree of its protraction. Kriesberg defines internalisation as:

[m]any processes contribute to its [conflicts] institutionalisation and self perpetuation. ... In addition to internalising attitude and beliefs about each other, people on each side develop guiding rules about how to wage their struggle. The rules make certain means of struggle legitimate. ... [a]s the fight persists, some people develop vested interests in continuing the struggle.³⁴

The internalisation of the conflict attitude and belief of enemy brutality enacted in the form of persistent drone attacks by Americans on tribal areas, the ordeal that prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, Baghram and other prisons experienced, and killings through military operations by Pakistan. The institutionalisation of the conflict occurred as a result of the dismantling of the existing institutions present in the tribal areas, the chief among them being the *Jirga* system, the power hierarchy, and the absence of institutional structure similar to the rest of Pakistan.

This conflict is still in the internalisation phase, although there is a possibility of its termination as a result of the proposed drawdown of foreign troops from Afghanistan in 2014. Although this step may terminate the violence and the destructive aspects of the conflict, there is still a need to adopt a transformation approach as long as the internalisation of the conflict persists and grievances related to the meta-narratives of Al Qaeda in terms of a 'clash of civilization' continue to be framed in FATA. This requires religious-cultural approaches of peacebuilding to deal with the conflict, but also changes in the structures of those relationships which are at the core of this conflict.

5. Framework for peace pathways and transformation

Based on the conflict analysis and phases of intractability, this section suggests a process of transformation of this conflict. The process suggests how to achieve political and economic empowerment and justice while incorporating a conflict-sensitive approach and an understanding of the cultural, social and religious contexts. The proposed framework will enable the actors to adopt a conflict-sensitive approach that does not lead to future conflict, but rather to sustaining peace and development. This section is divided into three parts: firstly, addressing socio-political, economic and cultural issues; secondly, the roles of different actors in the process; and lastly addressing religious and theological issues.

Addressing the political, socio-economic and cultural issues

33 Rashid, *Descent Into Chaos*, 92.

34 Louis Kriesberg, 'Nature, Dynamics, and Phases of Intractability', 74.

This section focuses on political issues following the war on terror, socio-economic issues and cultural approaches such as the *Pakhtun* cultural code *Pakhtunwali*³⁵ and Abdul Ghaffar Khan's³⁶ philosophy of self-restraint and nonviolence for transformation of the conflict.

- a. *Shifting the strategic depth policy from security perspective to cooperation.* Concerning Pakistan's role in the 'war on terror', and FATA as the centre of this conflict, Pervez Hoodbhoy describes Pakistan's role as one part of the military establishment of Pakistan clearly at war with another.³⁷ This is due to the refuge given at the government behest to the Al Qaeda leadership in the area in the post-9/11 period. Pakistan's policy of strategic depth towards Afghanistan is one of the important causes of this policy, which itself is rooted in Pakistan's identity crisis and insecurity as a state after the partition of subcontinent in 1947 from the British Empire. Therefore, it is imperative for Pakistan to shift the empire building strategic policies towards more economic and cultural cooperation, as Pakistan is a state of much smaller scale compared to the British Empire.
- b. *Ceasefire and cessation of violence.* This involves first limiting the destructiveness of the conflict in FATA by arranging a ceasefire and cessation of violence, which is related to assessment of the issues that led to loss of human life, displacement, terrorist activities and killing of tribal leaders and people opposing the Taliban. As Nagia Abdelmoghney Said commented that 'we need to appreciate the value of "life gold" instead of black or white gold and save human being from being wasted in wars and violence'. She suggested the launching of 'Operation Desert Spring' instead of a military operation, which should be centered on values of human liberation, conscience and freedom.³⁸
- c. *Peace talks through a historical dialogue framework* will address the connection between militancy and historical encounters between West and the Muslims, and socio-economic conditions which made this region a centre of militancy and extremism using Islam as its basis. *The sub-system strategy* proposed by Lederach could open new avenues for peace by 'linking immediate issues within the setting to the broader systemic dynamics within which the particular conflict unfolds'.³⁹ Because violence in the FATA conflict emerged in the wake of the US-led invasion of Afghanistan and the 'war on terror', it is important to consider these points as peace pathways strategies are developed. This historical dialogue is to be addressed at two levels. Firstly, at the local level, FATA has experienced discrimination since the creation of Pakistan, and from the misuse of history and culture to keep tribal society underdeveloped. Secondly, it involves analysing official and competing narratives about militancy and violence in the area. Peace activists need to hold strategic dialogues on Muslim–West relations while emphasising reconciliation and peace. Indeed, there are 'positive memories' and 'negative memories' concerning Muslim–West relations. The need is to emphasize positive memories for reconciliation process to succeed.⁴⁰ This should be done by holding group meetings with youth and religious leaders to discuss the positive aspects, based on the historical relations between the two civilizations, as a way of dispelling negativity and misperceptions. A 'Dialogue for Life' is needed to get to know each other and to get rid of stereotypes as we all are humans and creations of God. But we are different also. Difference does not mean to be antagonistic or developing hatred. It means searching for common grounds which are very large and which should be utilised with mutual respect.
- d. *Ghaffar Khan's philosophy of nonviolence and self-restraint.* Abdul Ghaffar Khan's nonviolent approach focusing on forgiveness can play an effective role; as a *Pakhtun* himself, his espousal of forgiveness instead of revenge symbolically offers a significant contribution to the dialogue. Although the Ghaffar Khan philosophy calls for self-restraint and nonviolence, I also recommend the use of self-restraint,

35 *Pakhtunwali*, the way of *Pakhtuns* or the cultural code: The honour-based *Pakhtun* society is governed by the concepts of chivalry or bravery (*ghayrat* or *nang*), hospitality (*melmastia*), gender boundaries (*pardah* or *namus*), council (*jirga*), the right of fugitive to seek refuge and acceptance of his offer of peace (*nanawati*), the right of revenge (*badal*), bravery (*tureh*), steadfastness (*sabat*), righteousness (*imandari*) and persistence, or *isteqamat*.

36 Abdul Gaffar Khan (1890–1988) was a *Pakhtun* Leader from the North West frontier region of the British Empire. He launched *Khudai Khidmatgar* (servant of God) reform movement that emerged in 1929 from the Northwest Frontier region, and adjacent tribal areas. His philosophy was based on the nonviolence and he was a follower and supporter of Gandhi in his struggle against the British Raj.

37 Pervez Hoodbhoy, 'The War Within Islam', *New Age Islam* (11 June 2011), http://newageislam.com/NewAgeIslamWarWithinIslam_1.aspx?ArticleID=48112011 (accessed 12 April 2012).

38 Interview: Nagia Abdelmoghney Said, Moral Rearmament Program, Cairo, Egypt, 23 June 2012.

39 John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, Washington D.C.:United States Institute of Peace, 151.

40 Interview: Dr Cornelis Hulsmann, Director Arab–West Report, Cairo, Egypt. 15 July, 2010.

which is a positive action or *Musbat harakat*⁴¹ and focuses on constructing a society with a positive attitude. Positive action can be used when dealing with Muslim–West discourses. Instead of focusing on conflicting encounters, it is important to consider Muslim–West encounters in a positive way. Although Funk and Said called for developing a story of complementarities concerning Muslim–West historical encounters,⁴² this article takes the view that both negative and positive elements in the encounters need to be considered in order to understand the root causes of recurrent conflict.

- e. *The use of a nonviolent 'army' instead of Lashkars (militant tribal group) to deal with the Taliban in FATA.* Ghaffar Khan introduced the concept of a nonviolent army (*Khudai Khidmatgar*) in his philosophy. He gave this a practical shape by actually forming a nonviolent army that voluntarily worked in society by cleaning activities, educating and dispensing positive virtues and peace messages of Islam. He formed his nonviolent army to oppose British colonialism. Instead of forming tribal *Lashkars* to confront the Taliban in the FATA region, it is important to form a volunteer nonviolent army of youth as Khan did in his movement. This will serve two purposes. First, it will provide an alternative of positive activity for the youth who are facing unemployment, drug addiction, terrorism and other problems. Secondly, it will be helpful for social reform and training in peaceful methods. As Ghaffar Khan called for greater literacy among *Pakhtuns* and formed schools and educational institutions, this movement will bring the youth closer to religion and the concepts that support peace, harmony, development and prosperity.
- f. *Reshuffle the cultural code: Pakhtunwali.* Although Ghaffar Khan was a *Pakhtun* and believed in its cultural code of honour, he made subtle efforts to change it by reshuffling the order of priority in the cultural code from a code of violence and revenge to a code of peace and tranquility. Traditionally, it is the *Pakhtunwali* that takes precedence, because *Pakhtuns* believe that this code of culture was present even before the arrival of Islam in the region. The Taliban have also used this strategy, but to promote violence. The aim here is to emphasize the values of peace and conflict transformation. In addition, the values embedded in the principle of *Sirat-e-Mustaqeem* (the straight path) should be inculcated for mutual respect, justice, peace and respect as values within Islam, including those in the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet. Consequently, it will be helpful in rejecting the edict of *takfir* by the Taliban to influence the elders and youth who oppose them. Ghaffar Khan's approach of self-restraint against anger and utilising the values of forgiveness, hospitality and honour offer a workable way of achieving this. It will also help dissociating Islam from the concepts of revenge and killing.
- g. *Need for reform:* The introduction of a broad range of socio-economic and political reforms in FATA and inclusion into the State of Pakistan as an active actor, as well as paying more attention to development, education and employment issues, is needed. This also includes the following: increasing the federal budget for this purpose and the proper use of funds based on an approach that does not offend local sensitivities. This includes repealing the Frontier Crime Regulation Act and ending FATA's exclusive character by fully integrating it into Pakistan. Extending the judicial system in FATA would end the monopoly of political agents and tribal elders over the decisions of *Jirga*. It is also important building a counter force, a counter way of thinking; of cooperation not confrontation, to have heroes of peace, not heroes of war, to deal with the intractable conflict, as people never feel proud of peace; rather, they are proud of victories. The need is to inculcate a culture or mindset which makes Muslims proud of peace and development.
- h. *Approach to transform the stereotyping of Muslims and Pakhtuns:* Stereotyping of Muslims and *Pakhtuns* as violent people or having a culture of violence has generated misperceptions and conflict-generating tendencies. Ghaffar Khan's approach to self-restraint as a form of nonviolence targeted this aspect effectively. During the struggle against British colonialism, he realised that *Pakhtuns* were behaving in a way that had been stereotyped. The aim and purpose of his movement was to resist these stereotypes. He brought humility, conflict resolution against pride and feud, self-reform and indigenous and self-reliant

41 This concept of positive action was Said Nursi's major contribution; his philosophy of '*Musbat Hareket*' was based on his principles of non-violence. He considered spiritual *Jihad* as the *Jihad* of contemporary times, which involved 'preventive action through communication and open dialogue'. His philosophy of positive action was a new way of non-violence that does not include hunger strikes, sit-ins, blockades and similar forms of non-violent resistance. His methods included taming anger and revenge, helping others and responding to intolerance through love. His entire life was based on the Qur'an: verse 4:128 – 'peace is better'.

42 Nathan C. Funk and Abdul Aziz Said, 'Islam and the West: Narratives of Conflict and Conflict Transformation', *International Journal of Peace Studies*, 9, no. 1 (Spring/Summer, 2004): 1–2.

institutions against 'un-governability'. The adoption of this approach not only by *Pakhtuns*, but also by Muslims at large, will dispel the stereotypes to which they have been subjected. The approach will repeat the way nonviolence and self-restraint surprised and discomfited the British, who were persuaded to react differently. Therefore, this approach has the potential to surprise the West and to encourage a change of policy.

- i. *The role of the international community*: It is also the responsibility of the international community to play an active part in ending the conflict that has been prevalent in the area since 9/11. The drone attacks, whose extent is seldom reported, currently fuel negative feelings and instill support for militant retaliation. This is where the international community can help transform this conflict.

Addressing different levels of actors in the Tribal Areas

This section explains the role of different levels of actors who have the potential to transform this conflict.

- a. *Middle-range actors* must be central to building infrastructures for 'peace pathways'. These should include ethnic and religious leaders, academics/intellectuals and humanitarian leaders and most of all ordinary people of the area. In the FATA conflict, religious and humanitarian nongovernmental organisations' (NGOs) leaders are in competition with each other due to their different approaches to peace and development in the region. Religious leaders stress Islamic law and cultural/religious approaches to guide strategies, whereas NGO leaders call for education, the empowerment of women and economic development. It is important to have local leaders of NGOs trained with knowledge of FATA culture and a more sensitive approach to local people. Inviting them to the *Jirgas* on the basis of *Pakhtunwali* approach, based on '*melmastia*' or 'hospitality', would help pave way for listening to and respecting different views.
- b. *Issue of governance*. One of the more important issues within the conflict in FATA is that of governance. As Lederach observes, 'Conflict is also fuelled by governance issues'.⁴³ The lack of judicial reforms and development opportunities has contributed to this conflict. The region needs relief for the 1.1 million⁴⁴ displaced persons (who, the government claims, have been resettled), development opportunities, employment, and facilities for learning different vocations. The *Jirga* system also needs to be transformed from a decision-making institution to a social forum for interaction and reconciliation that is free from political and religious exploitation by both government and religious leaders. Abu Nimer suggested that it would help if issues of governance, development and peacebuilding could be addressed in the light of indigenous approaches to peace and values enshrined in Islam and dealing with structural issues.⁴⁵ This includes the pursuit of justice, social empowerment, recognition of the sanctity of human life, collaborative action and solidarity, and inclusive and participatory processes.
- c. *The issue of female education and employment opportunities for women* could be addressed by creating an awareness of Islamic principles of education and the rights of women, to counter TTP claims that there is no place for the education or employment of women in Islamic/*Pakhtun* society. The attack on 14 year-old Malala Yousufzai by TTP on 9 October 2012 for her advocacy of female education depicts sensitivity attached to these issues as it has been viewed as bringing 'Westernisation' to the tribal society. Statistics about the destruction of girls' schools given by the FATA Disaster Management Authority show that 542 primary schools for boys and 108 girls' schools are dysfunctional, while 440 schools, of which 130 are girls' schools, have been destroyed by the Taliban. Yasmeen Hassan has called this a 'war on Pakistani school girls'.⁴⁶ Awareness concerning education for women and their rights in Islam and *Pakhtun* culture by opening up the education system can be accomplished through workshops which address the changing realities of society and to stop the attacks on female schools and students.

43 John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 165.

44 FATA Research Centre, <http://www.frc.com.pk/linkc/subCatCon/30> (accessed 01 February, 2012).

45 Abu Nimer, *Nonviolence and Peace Building in Islam*, 30.

46 Fawad Ali Sher and Alam Shirwari, 'Devastation: Bombing of Schools in KP and FATA', *Dawn*, 20 February 2012, <http://dawn.com/2012/02/26/devastation-bombing-of-schools-in-kp-and=fata/> (accessed 13 April 2012); Yasmeen Hassan, 'A War on Pakistan's School Girls', April 18 2010, www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/opinions/articles/2009/01/26/20090126WP-hassan0126.html (accessed 1 August 2011).

- d. *To achieve transformation and reconciliation, it is imperative to build 'institutions'* in FATA that can pave the way for political reconciliation with the State of Pakistan, acknowledge the atrocities and discrimination that have occurred over the past 64 years, and understand the emotional and psychological wounds arising out of the military operations, displacement and drone strikes. There is also a need for reparation for the displaced people through public recognition of their victimhood. This can be in the form of development reforms, employment opportunities, resettlement of people back to their areas, or establishment of schools and health services. The inclusion of retributive justice for the punishment of criminals and terrorists should form a portion of the restorative justice practices. This must be done by setting up an independent judicial commission in order to ensure a fair process.
- e. *To reduce the level of hostility in FATA* is one of the prime objectives of this framework as it influences the local capacity for socio-economic development. The participation of local people in the peacebuilding process is imperative and can be achieved through the resettlement of IDPs, ending military operations and introducing reforms, together with changing the status of FATA in the Federation of Pakistan. This will align the area with mainstream political and developmental processes instead of making it a safe haven for terrorists. Therefore, this approach can pave the way for reducing hostility, which is linked to increased local capacity due to the inclusion of people in the development process.
- f. *The role of NGOs is very important in this regard.* Non-governmental organisations should not act as 'force multipliers' for the foreign policies of Western powers, a term used by Colin Powell in 2001⁴⁷ for the US role in Iraq. In FATA, there have been killings and kidnappings of male and female NGO workers by militants. The NGO workers have been accused of promoting Western values and agendas, and as a result Westernising the society. NGOs are currently not operating in the area, due to security concerns. It is important that NGOs working in the area should abide by the local customs and religious-cultural concerns, as they are integral players in the peace pathways process. As a result of their absence, the social wings of militant organisations have jumped into the breach as relief workers for displaced and war-affected people.

Addressing religious/theological aspects of the conflict

The section addresses the religious and theological aspects embedded in the conflict.

- a. *Education and training programmes in conflict transformation and the peace pathways process.* This is one of the most important aspects of transformation in FATA. The *Madrasah* education system based on the Deobandi/Wahabi school of thought, and the low literacy rate of 17.42 percent, have greatly hampered the development of education system. In 1980 and again in the 1990s, the emphasis on a particular form of religious education based on Deobandi–Salafi doctrines created a movement that has damaged the entire fabric of the tribal society. It is imperative now to revamp that system of education and carefully to establish a new system.

This new system of education should not be exclusively based on Western ideas or traditional Islam, but rather needs to be a fusion of new interpretations of Islamic concepts and precepts within the framework of Islamic education. This is particularly important, considering the sensitivity of the people and their aversion towards much that is 'Western'. The need is for establishing peace in the sense of unity and come out of the closed mindset of classical or traditional religion and interpretations. Thus, it is important to read, interpret and teach the Qur'an according to 21st-century realities as it is only mind or conscience which frees mankind from illusions.

- b. *Transformation of Jihad as constructive resistance:* The concept of constructive resistance is used to deal with the question of victimhood, humiliation and emotional injury. This paper suggests that the concept of Islamic conflict transformation is based on the use of *Jihad* as a constructive resistance tool rather than for violent purpose. This calls for a 'civilizational resistance' by education, change of perspective, and by behavior'. *Jihad* should be understood through the Qur'an as a positive

⁴⁷ Colin Powell, 'Secretary of State Colin L. Powell Remarks to the National Foreign Policy Conference for Leaders of Nongovernmental Organizations', 26 October 2001, http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/sept_11/powell_brief31.htm (accessed 26 November 2011).

struggle between two opposite camps, and the purpose should not be conflict within the community. *Jihad* needs to be understood as struggling for and on the path to the preservation of peace.

Jihad as a way of peace is guided by the principles of Islam (submission) to encapsulate peace at the universal, societal, and individual levels. It is important to educate the people indulging in militancy and terrorism in FATA to understand the concept of *Jihad* not as an offensive or defensive military struggle, but rather as ending mischief and discord within society through tools of education and reforms. It is the concept of *Jihad* as a military struggle that was used as a policy tool by the West during the Afghan *Jihad* in 1979. Based on the classical understanding of *Jihad* in Islam, this version of *Jihad* was changed into terrorism and militancy and applied particularly in 9/11. It is therefore imperative to transform this concept through the education system and reforms.

- c. *Combining Jihad with the concept of Sabr (patience)*. The thirteen years of Prophet Muhammad's struggle against the pagans of Makkah underscores the importance of patience and perseverance. This is needed for a better understanding of *Mujahideen* (active strivers) and *Sabirin* (quiet forbearers) and to give them equal importance. It lays the basis for the emergence of Islam as a major religion in Arabia and for opening up the pre-Islamic Arabian society to the virtues of peace and Islam. This is clearly evident in defining victory as the 'opening' [*al Fateh*: an opening] in the Qur'an (Chapter 48) which underscores the use of hegemonic discourse of victory and defeat. The 'opening' or victory at Makkah by the Muslims was not due to violence or the use of military force, but rather to forgiveness, mercy and patience. The discourse of 'victory-defeat' of the USSR and the US by Al Qaeda and TTP can be addressed through changing the discourse of 'victory' towards one of 'opening'. This will be enshrined in the values of peace, forgiveness, mercy, and patience, as depicted by the Prophet's 'victory' in Makkah, which is referred to as '*al Fateh*' or 'an opening' in the *Qur'an*.
- d. *Reconciliation: Taleef al Qulub and Sakina*. One of the issues concerning the adoption of brutal methods of killing and suicide bombing by militants in FATA is the lack of recognition of the victimhood, humiliation, and emotional scars suffered by the people of FATA since 9/11. The military operation, drone attacks, missing persons, killings and displacements are the issues that require greater reconciliation efforts. This is evident from the commentary in the video of the Taliban severing the heads of kidnapped Pakistani soldiers. The Taliban provided the following explanation of their actions:

... because of them [military] our mosques were ruined, our Madrassahs destroyed, our women were dishonoured, our children were martyred, children and elders were dishonoured: it was an injustice done to us, because of all these reasons we took revenge and also for the establishment of the law and system of Allah.⁴⁸

In order to address and tackle this issue, the concept of *Taleef al Qulub* (joining of hearts) and *Sakina* (tranquility) can be applied as a form of reconciliation to reconcile people and provide 'recognition' of the injustices done to the people of FATA. This can be achieved through holding *Taleef* (joining, togetherness) *Jirgas* in the tribal areas to listen to and understand their stories of humiliation, victimhood and injustices. The final act of the reconciliation process is '*Sulh*' (settlement), which is accomplished for achieving common good, or *Musalaha*, to start a new beginning and achieve long-term transformation.

Lastly, a break in the cycle of the criminal-trafficker-Taliban nexus in the area is required. The exclusive character of FATA in the State of Pakistan and the corruption embedded in the political agent system is encouraging this nexus and providing a source of monetary support for TTP. Furthermore, it is recommended that the former British Empire's strategic policy of buffer zones currently used in FATA, be terminated. It is imperative that this conflict is viewed from the perspectives of both economic and strategic policy options available to Pakistan as a vulnerable country. Any policy that is based on empire-building projects will result in the emergence of movements and conditions that promote separatism as the only option for a people seeking to escape the familiar cycle of exploitation.

5. Conclusion

48 'Tehreek-e Taliban Severed Heads Video', Video released August 2012, <http://mrctv.org/videos/tehreek-e-taliban-severed-heads-video> (accessed 4 September 2012).

In summary, there are five principles that have informed the conceptual framework of a religious-cultural approach of 'peace pathways' for the case study of the tribal areas.

Firstly, the 'peace pathways' is a *human-centered* approach that considers peace as an inherent part of human nature, or *Fitrah*, which includes all that encompasses human needs and guides the actions in the process through a vision of transforming conflict. It is based on ending hostile feelings that in turn impact on the local capacity for making this transformation a successful process. It gives 'the people' the role of a 'pathfinder' to search for new possibilities of peace and harmony within the society.

Secondly, 'peace pathways' are *communal and comprehensive* as they envisage the inner, outer, societal and universal levels for building communal relationships. The purpose of the approach is to reconstruct the relationships within a war-torn society through interconnected roles, activities through mutual acknowledgment, and recognition of the need to transform a violent culture into ways of peace.

Thirdly, 'peace pathways' is a *gradual and long-term process*. It further considers '*Istaqama*' as perseverance on a straight path, which takes a long-term view of transformation and formulates strategies along the way. It not only focuses on prevention and resolution of immediate conflict, but also develops and promotes cultural resources within a setting to stop the recurrence of conflicts and wars. It requires a long-term commitment among the people involved and the society at large. This is supplemented by the self-restraint approach of Ghaffar Khan, which gives added benefit for the 'peace pathways' process.

Fourthly, 'peace pathways' is a *Misaaq* (covenant) or 'peace of believers', which uses *Ihsan* (doing good) as a common virtue and *Mohsin* (doer of good) as an ideal Muslim character to make the area a sanctuary of peace. Moreover, *Pakhtunwali* can play an important role by using a positive approach and serving as an agency for change. The transformation process, if based on the ethics of 'common good' and connected to the processes, frames or lenses and levels of activity, has the potential to work and bring about desired results.

Lastly, 'peace pathways' is a form of '*Sulh*', or settlement, as the last stage of the reconciliation process to start a new beginning. It focuses *Musalaha* (common good) for political and socio-economic development; *Sabr*, or patience, for acknowledging victimhood and humiliation; and *Taleef-ul Qulub* for reconciliation or bridging of inter-civilisational dialogue.

In short, this paper provides evidence of an abundance of resources for conflict transformation within Islam and the tribal society in the FATA that can be used to end this conflict. The discussion and strategies of transformation provided in this paper proceed from the understanding that a religious framework is a basic requirement for peace pathways and transformation strategies since it critically overcomes the sensitivity of local people to Western approaches or other cultural approaches. However, these strategies are not final and require the participation of people and grassroots leaders together with the sincere and active involvement of the Federal Government of Pakistan. Nevertheless, it can be considered as a first step towards the long-term transformation of this conflict and other conflicts involving similar dynamics.