Anti-Americanism And Radicalization Process: A Case Study Of Collateral Damage From Drone Strikes In FATA, Pakistan

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Abstract:

This paper is primarily about how collateral damage from US drone strikes in the FATA region of Pakistan results in the radicalization of the aggrieved community. However, this research study challenges the very established hypothetical assumption that it is religion that helps people in FATA undergo radicalization process. Instead, what is argued is that it is the tribal code of revenge that encourages the local people to join militant organizations like Al Qaeda and Taliban in Afghanistan to fix the revenge for the death of their dear ones. Importantly, the paper establishes the assumption, with empirical data, that drone strikes kill innocent people along with high profile terrorists intentionally targeted to kill. As the region is already in the grip of intense feelings of
anti-Americanism, any small mistake or mishap brings much bigger repercussions and gives boost to how America is projected and presented by these banned militant organizations. Though data is scarce on the subject matter, much efforts were made to collect as much empirical evidence as possible to support the hypothetical assumptions.

**Keywords:** Radicalization, drone strikes, FATA, collateral damage, anti-Americanism.

**Introduction:**

The attack on World Trade Center in America, a potent symbol of western capitalism, on 11th of September 2001 marked a significant transformation in policies to counter and defeat terrorism. In a swift response, the then US President held the leadership of Al-Qaeda Central, a terrorist organization based in Afghanistan, responsible for the havoc. On the eve of his decision to send his ground forces to Afghanistan in October 2001, President Bush made it clear in his speech to the Congress that ‘our war against terror begins with Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan but doesn’t end there’ (Clark & Creek, 2012) and showed a strong resolve to chase down every terrorist wherever he was happened to be found. The American led attacks disturbed and dispersed members of terrorist organizations in Afghanistan, the Taliban and the Al-Qaeda members infiltrated into FATA, a rough mountainous terrain in Pakistan near Pak-Afghan border and from there, they started launching their attacks against the NATO forces in Afghanistan (Minhas & Qadir, 2014). As the US post 9/11 security strategy provides for pre-emptive and preventive strikes, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) turned to drone strikes to target Taliban and Al-Qaeda network in FATA (Minhas & Qadir, 2014).

Ever since 2004 when drone was used for the first time in Pakistan, the deployment of pilotless aircraft for so-called targeted killings by the US has fast become one of the most controversial human rights issues in the world (AmnestyInternational, 2013). Given the feature of being controlled from a remote place along with greater distance, both social and emotional between the killer and victim, drone strikes are more vulnerable to mistakes in target identification and location that often result in collateral damage. Though CIA officials maintain that drones are extremely effective and precise, with least possibility of civilian casualties (Khan, 2011), there is consensus in opinion about collateral damage from drone strikes. Even Barack Obama and others in the US have publicly acknowledged that drone strikes have killed and injured civilians (Stephen & Leonard, 2005). Because drone strikes kill non-combatants including children, women and elderly people, polls suggest that there is a strong opposition in Pakistan to the use of drones in Pakistan (Kaltenthaler, Miller, & Fair, 2012).

This research study will try to address the following question.

1. Can collateral damage from drone strikes in FATA, Pakistan result in the radicalization of the aggrieved community?

Contemporary studies on radicalization, in general, maintain the viewpoint that it is political Islam that has been the driving force for radicalization, resulting in violent extremism and terrorism.
around the world. However, while there may be evidence to suggest that the main driver to radicalization is through religion and commitment to ‘jihad’, the possibility of alternative explanations cannot be denied. This research study argues that given the unique socio-cultural code of FATA known as Pashtunwali, importantly it is not religion, but the desire to avenge the death of their dear ones, those civilian non-combatants killed in drone strikes, that works as a potent reason in the radicalization of Pashtun community in FATA region of Pakistan. In other words, it is the tribal code of revenge, known locally as badal, that reinforces and paves the way for radicalization of the aggrieved people in the wake of collateral damage from drone strikes.

Furthermore, this study argues that this revenge-radicalization relationship has worked to the advantage of terrorist organizations operational in FATA as those overpowered by the desire of revenge are more willing to join militant organizations like the Taliban and al-Qaeda. The rationale for this alliance between drone victims and militant organizations is the identification of common enemies - the US and Pakistani government. Moreover, the Pashtun tribesmen feel more in common with Al-Qaeda and the Taliban fighters than foreign occupiers such as the US. This brings the terrorist organizations and aggrieved community closer.

**Drone Strikes and Collateral Damage:**

The punitive enforcement strategies such as targeted killing has not been a new phenomenon to counter extremism and terrorism (Gill, 2014). However, since 9/11, there is a marked reliance on and increase in the frequency of such counter-insurgency techniques, and have been extended to even countries that fall beyond the declared war theaters. Over the years, the use of American unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), aka, drones have become one of the critical tools to target and kill, instead of capturing, militants and terrorists in Pakistan’s tribal belt, FATA (Zenko, 2013). Drone aircrafts have the distinctive features that they are pilotless and are controlled from a remote military base. In the case of Pakistan, drones are remotely operated by the Central Intelligence Agency from its headquarters based in Langley, West Virginia, US, while others argue that they are controlled from US’s military base in Khost, Afghanistan (Khan, 2011).

This section tries to establish that drone strikes kill innocent civilians along with militants and terrorists in FATA, Pakistan. This hypothetical assumption is important to prove because there is a strong co-relation between civilian deaths from drone strikes and the desire to avenge those deaths in the tribal belt of Pakistan. In the first instance, it will be ascertained whether drone strikes kill civilians or not as authorities in the US deny any civilian casualties from drone strikes and so, the warfare continues unabated with no accountability mechanisms and moral concerns. Moreover, because innocent civilian casualties are constructed as a source of humiliation by tribal people, the tradition of revenge is invoked more actively in situations when one who is killed is proclaimed to be innocent. The first part of the chapter discusses in detail the drone warfare and drone technology, and that why is employed in counter-terror campaign. The last section tries to prove that drone strikes result in collateral damage by consulting a number of credible documents and sources.
Why Drone Warfare?

The deployment of drones in Pakistan as counter-terror technology is of recent past. It was in the month of January in 2004 that the first drone strike took place. Since then, drone strikes have become a matter of routine in FATA region. However, one could see a sharp upsurge in these strikes in the borderland of Pakistan after Barrack Obama took office as the President in 2009 (Khan, 2011). According to the Bureau of Investigative Journalism latest figures, of 427 confirmed drone strikes from 2004 till date, 122 strikes took place in the year 2010 only (Zenko, 2013). The reason may be that he believes more in pre-emptive strategies to counter terror.

The US’s increased reliance on drone technology in counter terror operations is because of its comparative advantages over manned aircraft. According to Zenko (2013), drones can remain, fully loaded with ammunitions, in the air for 14 long hours against F-16 Jet aircrafts that can stay in the air for only 4 hours. Moreover, drones have the capability to fly directly over the enemy territory without placing the pilot or ground forces at risk. Importantly missiles fired from drones travel faster than a sound and can hit the target within seconds (Zenko, 2013). These features of drone technology matter heavily because as FATA falls beyond the declared war zone where the deployment of ground troops stand in gross violation of international law. This makes drones to be the only viable strategy. Moreover, as al-Qaeda and the Taliban rely much on guerrilla warfare in the border land between Pakistan and Afghanistan, for that reason drone warfare is a much effective counter-insurgency strategy in comparison to other conventional means of warfare.

Despite its comparative strengths, drone technology is not immune to drawbacks and weaknesses. Take, for example, the signature strikes as such strikes are the subject of hot criticism for being highly vulnerable to mistakes in target identification. Signature strikes are those that ‘target people who bear certain signature or defining characteristics associated with terrorist activity, but whose identities aren’t known’ (Peel, Godden, & Keenan, 2012). For example, in 2002, the US fired a Hellfire missile in Afghanistan on one person who had some resemblance with Osama bin Laden. The person killed, along with two others, was later identified to be a local resident, named Daraz Khan, whose innocence was beyond any doubt (Benson, 2014). Despite so many loopholes in target identification, President Obama issued a waiver to exempt these strikes from stricter scrutiny requirements in Pakistan (Rohde, 2015). This has resulted a rise in the number of signature strikes, causing the death of many innocent civilians.

Drone Strikes and Collateral Damage:

Since 2004 when drone warfare was launched in the tribal belt in Pakistan, they have proved to be a weapon of insulting humiliation, with every moral boundary crossed and every social structure attacked in the American led war against terror in FATA (Ahmed, 2013). The killing of innocent people including an undeniable number of small school going kids, women and old aged people, the violation of their religious occasions and disgraceful attacks on gatherings of social importance at will by the American sponsored drone warfare have all helped dash Pashtun’s pride to the ground. Once a proud nation with no power able to subjugate and humiliate them, and living a
contended life with greater autonomy, drone strikes and military operations have forced millions of tribal people to flee their homes in search of shelter and live in inhuman conditions as refugees in camps (Ahmed, 2013). In other words, they have been forced to live a life in humiliation which is hurtful as well as painful.

American led drone warfare in FATA has been controversial for a number of valid reasons, but it is the collateral damage that an average Pakistani sees as more humiliating (Williams, 2017). Before moving further, it is important to define what I mean by collateral damage here. According to Prof. Georg Meggle, an expert on terrorism, ‘collateral damage is something which, in contrast to the intended aim of an action that brought damage, is unintended’ (Meggle, 2005). Though Georg’s point of view carries weight, his definition is too vague. He doesn’t explore the intricacies of what and who is the ‘intended’ and ‘unintended’ target. In contrast, collateral damage as defined by Oxford dictionary is more comprehensive. According to Oxford dictionary, the unintended damage and destruction of targets or personnel not considered as lawful military targets in an armed conflict. It can be exemplified by civilians unintentionally killed when military targets are bombed. However, keeping in view the requirements of the study, the scope of collateral damage will be limited to human damages, either killed or injured, in the wake of drone strikes.

Despite the US’s consistent denial, empirical evidences support the hypothetical assumption that drone strikes result in collateral damage. However, there remains confusion about the actual number of civilian casualties from drone strikes in FATA, Pakistan. The reason for this confusion is the non-availability of accurate information and data for a variety of reasons. Because of the worsening law and order situation for years in the tribal region, a very limited empirical research has been conducted on ground to ascertain the number of civilian casualties. Moreover, the US stubbornness not to share or disclose information to general public about those killed or injured is other major reason for the prevalent confusion about civilian casualties. However, there are organizations and scholars engaged in rigorous research to explore civilian deaths and injuries from drone strikes.

The London based Bureau of Investigative Journalism has been involved in extensive research on drone strikes and civilian casualties for quite some time. The Bureau reports that a minimum of 427 confirmed drone strikes have been conducted since 2004, resulting in the death of civilians between 424 and 969. These attacks have also led to the death of 172 to 207 children (Bureau of Investigative Journalism, 2017). However, these figures are far below than the deaths reported by Pakistani officials and private research groups. Dawn, one of the Pakistan leading newspapers, reports that only in 2009, for every militant targeted, 140 civilians also died (Bergen, 2013). Although the authenticity of the report is subject to debate, if the number of civilian casualties they suggest is true, then the figures stand very high.

The New American Foundation has processed a comprehensive database on civilian casualties based on reports from a number of well-known international newspapers such as Associated Press, The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Los Angeles Times, and The Wall Street Journal;
The Telegraph and The Guardian; The Express Tribune, Dawn, The Daily Times, Geo TV, and The News; as well as the BBC and CNN (Bergen, 2013). The database suggests that between 454 and 637 non-militants/civilians have been killed by U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan between 2004 and 2013 (Bergen, 2013). This is quite high number, given the socio-cultural dynamics of the tribal people where one single death can be a source of bloody enmity that lasts for years and may take the life of many people. Moreover, it is important to note that target precision and accuracy might have improved over the years, but the toll, in the shape of sentiments of anti-Americanism in the wake of unpopular drone warfare, has already taken place.

The opinion has taken roots in Pakistan that drone attacks result in unnecessary civilian damages in FATA. A joint survey was conducted by the New American Foundation and Terror Free Tomorrow under the locally-based Community Appraisal & Motivation Program between June and July 2010. The survey interviewed 1000 local residents aging 18 or more in a face to face conversation. The survey indicated that three quarter of FATA residents oppose drone strike, as they result in significant number of civilian casualties. As compared to 16 percent who believe that high value terrorists are targeted and killed, 48 percent of the respondents think that they kill civilians (Bergen & Doherty, 2010).

Scot Shane of The New York Times strongly asserts that independent investigation confirms far more civilian deaths than the US government officially admit in the ongoing drone warfare. The reason, he cites, is that when a missile is fired into a remote tribal territory across the border, the operators are often uncertain about who they are targeting, but try to make an imperfect best guess (Friedersdorf, 2016). Scot’s assertion may be true. Amnesty International reports that on 24th, October 2012, two Hellfire missiles were fired from a drone aircraft in Ghundi Kala village in the North Waziristan, that resulted in the death of 68 years old Manama Bibi, who was collecting vegetables in her family field. Several of her grandchildren received injuries because of shrapnel (AmnestyInternational, 2013). Intelligence sources from Pakistan revealed that one militant had used satellite phone close to the victim’s house some 10 minutes before the strike and then drove on his way (AmnestyInternational, 2013). Close relatives and those living in neighborhood testified that there was no element of militants. Moreover, the owner of the house was an educated and retired government servant whose links with terrorist outfits are beyond any question (Open Society Foundations, 2014). This and many other incidents like this speak volume of the fact that drones may not be part of the solution. Instead it is part of the problem.

There are occasions when civilian casualties are compromised intentionally, especially when a high value target is involved and the authorities are more eager not to let the opportunity go. Take, for instance, on 5th August 2009, a US Predator targeted the supreme leader of TTP, Baitullah Mehsud, in Zanghara, South Waziristan. Though Mehsud was killed, the strike also resulted in the death of eleven others, including his wife, father in law and mother in law (Mayer, 2009), who, by no means, can be dubbed as militants. Such (un)intentional blunders help expand the sympathy bank for militants, who have often been seen buried with heroic protocol by the locals.
What adds more to the feelings of humiliation is the perception that has taken roots that civilians are repeatedly killed intentionally. One drone victim expressed his concerns in these words; ‘The Americans can make a mistake once, twice, maybe three times. But twenty, thirty times? I am not convinced that they are doing this without intention’. One other said that ‘They are bombarding villages because they hear the Taliban are there. But this is not the way, to bomb and kill 20 people for one Taliban. This is why people are losing hope and trust in the government and the internationals’ (Sluka, 2013). The experience on ground shows that drone strikes have become a weapon of humiliation and are resisted, opposed and feared by the locals, for they cause collateral damage.

**Revenge-Radicalization Nexus in FATA: Empirical Evidence.**

Over the years, the tribal borderland between Afghanistan and Pakistan has become a hub for terrorist activities and breeding ground where many known militant outfits have established offices and training camps. It was about FATA that General David Petraeus once said that ‘it is the headquarter of al-Qaeda senior leadership’ (Judson, 2013). On one occasion, President Barack Obama described Pakistan’s tribal belt as ‘the most dangerous place in the world’ (Jones & Fair, 2010). Perhaps it is for this reason that the US intelligence agencies have linked many terrorist plots to networks with operational bases in FATA. The reason often cited is its closer geographical proximity with Afghanistan and rough mountainous terrain, which make it a conducive for conducting guerrilla warfare.

**The concept of revenge aka Badal in FATA, Pakistan:**

The inhabitants of FATA, by their very nature, are fiercely independent and can go to any extent to secure their freedom. History bears witness to the fact that these people have resisted and subverted any attempt to conquer them by mighty kingdoms as well as modern state powers (Shukla, 2015). Because those living in the tribal belt are independent minded, even the British government interfered the least in their affairs by resorting to indirect rule. The same system of governance was inherited by the Government of Pakistan on the eve of independence in 1947. The purpose was not to govern, but to manage the tribal residents (Judson, 2013).

The inhabitants of FATA are predominantly Pashtuns (Shinwari, 2010). Pashtuns, especially those living in the borderland between Pakistan and Afghanistan, have a unique social code known as Pashtunwali to organize their collective life. Pashtunwali consists of two words; Pashtun, a distinct ethnic/racial group and Wali means pertaining to. Thus, collectively Pashtunwali means the Pashtuns way (Shukla, 2015). For that reason, Pashtuns observe strict adherence to the codes of Pashtunwali and hold it in high esteem. Though, norms of Pashtunwali are unwritten, they are established enough to carry more authority than any other well-documented law and so, provide maximum level of law and order to regulate tribal individual and communal life.
Honor and revenge are two of the four pillars of Pashtunwali. Revenge aka badal, as it is locally known, signifies vendetta or in other words, revenge killing. Revenge in tribal traditions is based on the principles of ‘an eye for an eye and tooth for tooth’ (Shukla, 2015). Blood revenge is primarily concerned with honor, meaning thereby that the failure to exact revenge in reciprocation will cause one to be thought of as coward (Feyyaz, 2017). The importance of revenge can be gauged from the fact that for an individual to exact revenge, it is morally and ethically permissible in tribal traditions to engage even in deceit and surprise.

For Pashtun tribesmen, the honor of oneself or tribe is of immense importance. Once someone is found guilty for its violation, revenge becomes an obligation against those for humiliation (Judson, 2013). To regain the honor after being humiliated, the damage in vengeance may not be proportionate in scale and magnitude. However, it is noteworthy that the right to exact revenge in such situations may not be the discretion of individuals immediately concerned, but is also retained by family, clan or tribe. Moreover, badal is not limited to prime culprit, but can also be taken against his family members (Hussain, 2008). However, there is one important exception to this principle. Revenge for political killings is characterized by private revenge and thus must be exacted by the immediate individual relative concerned (Landinfo, 2011).

Modern societies believe in the principles of justice delayed is justice denied. But the tribal concept of revenge attaches little or no importance to time considerations. At times, revenge exacted after a century is considered earlier among tribal Pashtuns (Feyyaz, 2017). The blood feud would remain dormant for years unless the immediate family members of the victims are capable of taking revenge. This concept negates the very spirit of Islamic concept of forgiving the culprit. Moreover, it is important that revenge is taken by a male relative of the victim (Feyyaz, 2017). It is very rare for female relative to take revenge. The reason being that it is against the established tribal customs where female should only take care household matters and must remain within four walls of the house.

**Empirical Evidence:**

There is a Pashto proverb: kill one enemy and make ten (Judson, 2013). Empirical research indicates that civilian casualties from drone strikes in FATA have been a powerful source of radicalization. The reason being that Pashtuns in tribal belt see drone strikes as a source of humiliation that triggers their cultural norm to seek and exact revenge against the US and its allies (Judson, 2013). On the other hand, local and trans-national militant organizations have manipulated and exploited these sentiments of revenge to inspire further radicalization and recruit for more violence.

According to Hari (2010), polling from Pakistan indicates that there is increased desire to retaliate against the US after every drone strike, especially when the strike involves the death of civilians. Professor John Cole explains the same phenomenon more bluntly. He says that it is not a rocket science as the logic is quite simple. When you bomb and kill their mother, brothers and other loved ones, and when they see them in thousands of bloody pieces scattered all around, it
pisses them up. The result would be that even those who earlier had no sympathies or desire to join militant organizations, now join them in revenge.

The words of Faisal Shehzad recorded in the courtroom are instructive in this regard. When asked about the possible death of children in the courtroom by the judge if the bomb had detonated, Shehzad, an American born Pakistani replied, ‘When the drones hit, they don’t see children, they don’t see anybody. They kill women, children, they kill everybody... I am part of the answer... I’m avenging the attack’ (Hari, 2010). Shehzad, an ethnic Pashtun by birth, who is believed to have visited FATA many times before making an unsuccessful attempt to detonate a bomb at the crowded Time Square in the US, made no secret of his revengeful sentiments. According to Lorain (2010), Shehzad moved to Peshawar, the immediate adjacent district to tribal belt, in 2009 where he lived with his parents for some time. It was the same year when there were 47 drone strikes, killing 411 people including a large number of innocent civilians (Adams, 2010). His stay in a district adjacent to FATA might have provided him an opportunity to see drone atrocities from close angles. The possibility can’t be denied that these events had powerful effect on his mind to think more radically, who reportedly then developed contacts with militant outfits to fix revenge for the death of their brothers in religion.

According to Tom (2008), the use of force, especially when it is indiscriminate and is assumed as illegal, leads to counterforce, by creating more and more new enemies. The fact is that whenever, there is an air strike or drone attack, those who sponsor must assume that there will be left, in the wake of an attack, a bunch of grieving relatives filled with the anger of genuine injustice and so, creates potential new recruits overpowered by the spirit of revenge (Engelhardt, 2008). And when revenge becomes a matter of honor, it leads to uncontrollable rage.

Kilcullen and McDonald (2009), while commenting on the repercussions of collateral damage, argue that ‘nevertheless, every one of these dead noncombatants represents an alienated family, a new desire for revenge, and more recruits for a militant movement that has grown exponentially even as drone strikes have increased’ (EXUM & Mc Donald, 2009). In the same vein, Imran Khan, chairman, Pakistan Tehreek e Ensaf, a mainstream political party in Pakistan, is a diehard opponent of drone strikes because he thinks that it feeds militancy. He opines that those who suffer losses in the shape of collateral damages seeks revenge, which in such situations is a potent reason to radicalize Pashtuns from tribal belt (Siddique, 2013). In one of his interviews, Khan revealed that Jaffer Mehsud, who had conducted a suicide attack in Ghazni, Afghanistan against the NATO forces primarily to avenge the death of his cousin who had been killed in a drone strike (id). On another occasion, when there was a drone strike in Damadola, Bajaur that killed 82 people, including 12 teenagers. As majority of those killed were claimed to be innocent, one of the parents whose child was also killed later joined the Taliban group and carried out suicide attack (id).

Drone strikes may be effective to kill terrorists, it does not stop terrorism to spread. Syed Akhunzada Chittan, who was a member of National Assembly from FATA in the previous
government (2008-13), has raised concerns about the counter-productivity of drone strikes. In one of his interviews, he claimed that for every militant killed, many more are born. Being a tribal himself, Chittan understands well that Pashtuns from FATA are too revengeful, especially when it comes to avenge the death of dear ones (IHRCRC, 2012). ‘Blood for blood’, this is what a resident from Waziristan had to say who lost his younger brother in a drone strike. One other young man from FATA who had lost his close relative to drone strikes recorded his sentiments to International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Clinic in these words; ‘we will not forget our blood, for two hundred, two thousand, five thousand years—we will take our revenge for these drone attacks’ (id).

The sentiments of rage and fury are boosted by the way these people are killed. As the missiles fired from drone are too powerful, capable of crushing the internal organs through shrapnel and forceful blast waves. Often those killed are even hard to identify. One survivor described the scene at the site of drone strike that killed some 40 innocent people in these words; ‘The community had to collect [the victims’] body pieces and bones and then bury them like that, doing their best to identify the pieces and the body parts so that the relatives at the funeral would be satisfied they had the right parts of the body and the right person’ (IHRCRC, 2012).

The death of their loved ones in a brutal manner, which most of the Pashtuns see as disgraceful, can easily convince the victims to take the path of insurgency and violent militancy against the perpetrators in revenge. For example, Zubair, a victim of air strike while on his way back could see many villagers from distance gathered around his house. As he rushed closer, ‘he saw his mother's severed head lying amid mangled furniture’. However, ‘he didn't cry nor made any complaint. Instead he picked up the head, cradled it in his arms, and started walking aimlessly. He carried on like this for days, until tribal elders pried the head from his hands and convinced him to deal with his loss more constructively. He decided he would get revenge by becoming a suicide bomber and inflicting a loss on some American family as painful as the one he had just suffered’ (Gopal, 2017).

What has been seen on many occasions is that the drone strikes have killed civilians who carry greater social status and financial responsibilities, whose death often brings irreparable loss to the family. Take, for example, Malik Ismail Khan, who was killed in a drone strike was the sole breadwinner for a large family of eight (Judson, 2013). Data reveals that since 2004, drone strikes have killed a large number of maliks; men with years of experience and wisdom who hold government positions. The desire for revenge is stronger in situation where the death of important family member is involved because such events leave the victims with pessimistic outlook of future life. Moreover, the death of such a person of eminence brings grief and humiliation not only to members of family but to the entire tribe. All these factors contribute heavily to reinforce feelings of revenge.

A drone strike that killed 40 people in March 2011, mostly influential and respectable communal elders whose death was mourned by the entire tribal region. The attack caused increased fury and leaders from North Waziristan who, in a unanimous voice, vowed to avenge the death.
‘We are a people who wait for 100 years to exact revenge. We never forgive our enemy,’ those from tribal belt uttered these words in a press conference held at Peshawar after the attack (News, 2011). One could see upsurge in violence after these strikes, especially suicide attacks against security forces of Pakistan, for being a close ally of America in war against terror (Meo, 2009). Because after every drone strike, a new and fresh bunch of aspired avengers appear in radicalization, giving boost to insurgency and violence.

Tribal traditions assert that if anyone killed unlawfully and if his innocence is established, the culprit must apologize and pay the blood money in compensation to settle the blood feud. However, the blood feud continues unless the revenge is exacted if the convict refuses to pay the compensation called diyat (Pascoe, 2015). Setting the apology and compensation aside, America has denied even the killing of civilians by drone strikes. For this reason, the US officials have not made any coordinated efforts to make compensation for strike victims in FATA, though compensation packages for civilian casualties exist in Afghanistan. On the other hand, the government of Pakistan has announced compensation schemes from time to time. But on many occasions, the victims have rejected them for being too low and not worth enough to address adequately the loss (Judson, 2013).

**The Ultimate Beneficiary of Drone Warfare:**

Banned militant organizations such as al-Qaeda and the Taliban have emerged the ultimate beneficiaries of the revengeful feelings and traditions in the troubled zone of FATA. According to Becker & Shane (2012), over the years, drones have alternated Guantánamo as the recruiting tool of choice for organizations like al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Reports suggest that all the people close to Bin Laden who have been interviewed are unanimous in their opinion that he (Bin Laden) is delighted when he sees the Americans killing the Muslims indiscriminately (Hari, 2010). The reason being that it not only validates his principal slogan and narrative that America is evil, it has also provided the militant organizations with a new pipeline of revenge ridden recruits.

According to Qandeel (2013), a significant number of captured militants have cited the reason to seek and exact revenge for drone strikes as the motive to join militant organizations. In this regard, United Nations’ report in 2007 indicated that the principal motive for suicide attacks was to avenge those killed in American air strikes while in another report in 2008, a survey of 42 Taliban commanders revealed that 12 of these fighters had seen their family members killed by air strikes and 6 of them joined insurgency to exact revenge. According to The Telegraph, video films recorded by the militant organizations depict teenage being trained as suicide bombers to take revenge against the security forces. Most of them have successfully executed what they had been groomed for (Meo, 2009). However, the question is why these victims have launched this revenge ridden radicalization from the platform of organized militant outfits?

In the first instance, FATA has been home to many terrorist networks with training camps and offices. Resultantly, the absence of physical gap between the militant leaders and the aspirants has worked to the advantage of militant organizations. Anyone who seeks revenge finds channels
and opportunities to join these organizations with considerable ease. Moreover, the two are wedded in a marriage of convenience. Importantly, the drone victims who seek revenge and militant organizations share the notion of ‘common enemy’ in the form of America. As individuals seeking revenge lack resources to wage war against a giant power like America effectively, they join these organizations in the hope to inflict maximum damage on their enemy.

The partnership is further facilitated by the shared commonalities in terms of socio-cultural identities. Both the actors; leaders and members of the Tehrek e Taliban Pakistan and the ‘aspirant avengers’ in FATA come from the same Pashtun ethnic background. They share the same dress code; they speak the same Pashto language; they share the same religion and belief system. While on the other hand, the enmity of America, portrayed as an outer group that has been blamed of invading many Muslim countries, has further helped the two come closer and join hands.

**Why FATA has fallen prey to Revenge Induced Radicalization?**

The question is that why it is only in FATA, unlike other parts of the country, that the concept of revenge rooted in cultural norms is invoked by an aggrieved, instead of using legal channels, in individual as well as collective life to cause violence and bloodshed? Looking into the socio-economic dynamics and administrative structure of the FATA, one has to recognize the fact that the act of revenge in the wake of collateral damage works as a triggering factor to unleash radicalization while the ground has already been set. Often called as the lawless region of the country, FATA’s governance structure and administrative setup lack the very needed characteristics and institutions to respond to, and address the genuine grievances and needs of the tribal people. The region is still administered by the notorious colonial law called FCR, that deprive tribesmen, instead of granting, much of the fundamental democratic rights. Though the tribal people have the right to elect their representatives to the parliament, laws enacted by the same parliament are not extended to FATA unless notified so by the President.

While FATA region doesn’t have any judicial system of their own, the jurisdiction of the courts, functional in the rest of the country, doesn’t extend to the tribal region. Much of the organs of civil administration to maintain order are missing. The region is administered in a centralized manner from federal capital Islamabad while all the powers of judiciary, parliament and executive have been placed in the office of Political Agent with no check and balance mechanism. The result of all this is that there is no credible institution and mechanism to make approach to in the wake of any violation of fundamental rights and seek remedy. Such a situation motivates individuals to fix and avenge any wrong done to them in person.

FATA’s poor socio-economic indicators make it a fertile ground to feed and breed radicalization. The region is home to poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and under-development. The area is highly deficient in basic facilities of life like education, health, clean drinking water and play grounds. Military operations and drone warfare have added more to the miseries and hardships of local people. These are the factors that make an area more vulnerable to radicalization.
and violent extremism and any unpleasant event can trigger it to unleash. People already charged with feelings of deprivations are soft targets to vent their vengeance in violent radicalization.

Aqil Shah, Assistant Professor in the College of International Studies at the University of Oklahoma, challenges the revenge thesis that suggests that when someone dies in a drone strike who is not a proclaimed militant, their family members are bound to take revenge in accordance to the social code of Pashtunwali. According to him, the Taliban militants have killed many hundred tribal elders. But they don’t see anything like revenge motive to target the Taliban to avenge the death of their loved ones. He argues that it is the violent creed of jihad that motivates people to radicalization. This dissertation challenges his assumption on the ground that his research lacks deep understanding of the Pashtun tribal society.

In the first place, it is a recognized fact that Pashtun customs and traditions predates Islam. And for that reason, the code of Pashtunwali carries more weight in Pashtun tribal life. Moreover, the words of Winston Churchill about tribal Pashtuns are instructive here when he said that ‘every tribesman has a blood feud with his neighbor. Every man’s hand is against the other, and all against the stranger’ (Jones, 2017). Being an outer group, this is beyond any doubt that America is subject to much intense revenge feelings when it is held responsible for any wrongdoing. Furthermore, a region already in the grip of negative sentiments of anti-Americanism, anything that is perceived against the law and social norms can easily provoke tribesmen to retaliate against the US.

**Conclusion:**

Despite the continuous denial by authorities in the US, this chapter tries to prove that drone strikes kill innocent civilians along with militants and terrorists by consulting a number of credible sources and studies. This is vital to establish because there is a strong hypothetical relationship between innocent deaths and the spirit of revenge as it is collateral damage or civilian casualties from drone strikes that can work to invoke the tribal tradition of revenge. Importantly, for tribal Pashtuns these civilian casualties have been a source of humiliation which must be fixed at any cost. Ironically, the inhuman way these innocent people are killed coupled with the assumed perception that civilians are killed intentionally by American drone strikes further reinforce the desire for revenge in the tribal belt.

This paper tries to explore the revenge-radicalization nexus in the wake of civilian casualties from drone strikes in context of FATA. The first part of the chapter analysis the tribal traditions of revenge where every innocent civilian who is killed must be avenged to restore his honor and social standing in his locality. As the phenomenon of revenge is deeply rooted in the centuries old traditions of Pashtunwali, they are held in high esteem and are observed with religious zeal. The next section looks into the empirical evidence of revenge-radicalization hypothesis. Overpowered by the desire of revenge, these aggrieved people resort to violence. The net beneficiary of all this bloody game is militant organizations like al-Qaeda and the Taliban. The two are wedded in a marriage of convenience as they share cultural norms and the concept of common enemy with the
aggrieved people. Radicalized by the sentiments of revenge, these aggrieved people join terrorist outfits to vent their vengeance on America and its allies in the war against terror.

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