



PROJECT *on* Middle East Democracy

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USIP and CSIS

“The Causes and Consequences of Extremism in Pakistan”

USIP, 1200 17th Street NW, February 3, 2009, 1:00 pm

The Pakistan Working Group at USIP and the CSIS Post-Conflict Reconstruction Project co-sponsored a panel discussion addressing the root causes and spread of militancy in Pakistan, with a particular focus on the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the greater Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP). Panelists included **Faiysal AliKhan**, founder and honorary executive director of the Foundation for Integrated Development Action, an NGO concerned with good governance and democratization in the Dera Ismail Khan in the NWFP and South Waziristan; **Shuja Nawaz**, a political and strategic analyst who has worked with RAND, USIP, CSIS, the Atlantic Council, and other leading think tanks on projects dealing with Pakistan and the Middle East; **James Bever**, Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator for the Middle East Bureau at USAID; **Frederick Barton**, Senior Adviser in the CSIS International Security Program and co-director of its Post-Conflict Reconstruction Project; and was moderated by **J. Alexander Thier**, Senior Adviser in the Rule of Law Program at USIP.

Faiysal AliKhan began the discussion by outlining the problems the Taliban and various extremist groups have created and capitalized on in the NWFP. He emphasized the dangers faced by youth in the region, as they are vulnerable targets to radicalization and recruitment. Additionally, issues such as U.S. drone attacks, displacement of peoples, a poor economy, and a lack of services and political representation create an atmosphere ripe for militancy. **In dealing with the problem of susceptible youth, he recommended targeted youth initiatives that serve to demonstrate alternative paths to joining the Taliban.** He also stressed the importance of protecting migrant labor, providing vocational and technical training to the indigenous population, and formalizing the money transfer and credit system. AliKhan also suggested localized, strategic engagement with the Taliban as a way to delay, dampen, and divert its efforts.

Shuja Nawaz emphasized the importance of acknowledging that people in the region have long memories which are passed down through generations. Over the years they have found ways to cope with chaos and turmoil and their experiences show that foreign invaders and indigenous regimes will come and go. **Understanding the region’s history will be the first step in moving forward appropriately.** Nawaz also touched upon the fundamental problem of language. A majority of the Pakistani army engaged in FATA do not speak Pashto, the primary language of the region. In dealing with this issue he focused our attention to the British school of thought – in which soldiers stationed in the region were required to learn Pashto. This very basic step has proven effective not only in opening the lines of communication but also exhibiting a sign of cultural respect. He stressed a critical need to focus on areas such as education and economic

conditions – both of which fall significantly behind the national average. Additionally, the “convoluted” interpretation of Sharia law which is practiced in areas such as Swat must be addressed in order to improve socioeconomic conditions. However, Nawaz also acknowledged that Pakistan, in general, is currently lacking a national debate on what kind of country they would like to be. **It will be crucial to not just throw money at the problems but to bring the people into the discussion and figure out the best way to reincorporate FATA into greater Pakistan.**

James Bever briefly discussed the ways in which USAID is working to improve conditions in the NWFP. Recently, the Afghanistan-Pakistan taskforce was formed to support USAID missions with funding and staffing to improve collaboration across the Durand line. Aid programs have been focused on education, health, economic reform, and democracy and governance assistance. There is growing concern over internally displaced persons, food shortages and the future of food production, and a problematic energy sector that has been suffering for over 25 years. In reevaluating aid to Pakistan, Bever urged that these issues should become priorities.

Frederick Barton highlighted three ongoing problems that must be overcome. The first is that **we need to gain real knowledge about FATA and the region** by opening up the lines of communication with the Pukhtun communities and diaspora, and turning to British writings of the past fifty to one hundred years. In doing so, we can determine our goals and develop a clear purpose for moving forward with partners in the region. The second issue involves the lack of onus by the Pakistani government for what has been occurring in the NWFP; and Barton argued that this will be an existential challenge for the Pakistani state and people. The last problem is reflected in the question of how to gain the trust of the people, as the only viable way to clean up the region is to engage in an active partnership. For this problem he suggested direct assistance to the people which includes incentives.