



What is the Real Agenda of the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM)

Briefing Paper
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“What is the Real Agenda of the Pashtun Tahfuz Movement (PTM)” was researched, compiled and written by **Imran Siddiqui**, contributor to CommandEleven.

ABOUT COMMANDELEVEN

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PREFACE

The real agenda of PTM is to disrupt CPEC, support drug trade and to ensure that border between Pakistan and Afghanistan remains open for terrorists to attack Pakistan.

The grievances of Pashtuns, the progress of KPK, support base of PTM, role of PTI and PPP, and proposed next steps are discussed in this article and offer additional insight to this issue.

During the War on Terror, Pashtuns have suffered the most. In Pakistan, majority of dead and injured (including civil and military) in terrorist attacks are Pashtuns. The majority of IDPs in Pakistan are also Pashtuns and the most impacted by economic woes are also Pashtuns. Hundreds of thousands of Pashtun children and youth have missed the opportunity to go to school and to enjoy a normal childhood.

Despite the hardships, Pashtuns have continued to believe in Pakistan and have actively participated in defence, economy, politics, sports and overall growth of Pakistan. An estimated 25% of foreign remittances received by Pakistan are from the Pashtuns that are working in different parts of the world.

Grievances of the Pashtuns

Despite many sacrifices the Pashtuns have faced humiliation at check points, discrimination, enforced disappearances, landmines (FATA) and curfews (FATA). The severity of these grievances varies based on geography of Pakistan; most people in KPK have witnessed improvements in the last four and a half years but most people in FATA have experienced little improvement in their day-to-day lives.

Progress in the KPK ([total population 30 million or 15% of Pakistan](#))

After the 2013 elections, a PTI led govt. comes into effect in the KPK. The PTI led govt has performed well in all aspects of governance. The police in KPK, healthcare, education, and provincial economy have not only improved but have received recognition from local and international organization. The **Billion Tree Tsunami** project has been [recognized by the Bonn Challenge](#) and the [improvement in education has been recognized by Alif Ailaan](#). The Pashtuns in KPK are on path to recover and although more has to be done but a hope of better future is much stronger today.

Negligence towards FATA ([total population 5 million or 3% of Pakistan](#))

Unfortunately, Pashtuns in FATA have not seen many improvements in their lives because of FCR and lack of support from the Federal govt. The grievances are genuine and needs to be addressed. Pakistan armed forces have delivered some projects but **FATA needs a democratically elected local body system and political system that allows real representation at provincial and federal levels.**

Intent to resolve grievances

There is firm commitment and intent to resolve the grievances of people of FATA from all stakeholders.

Here are some steps taken by stakeholders:

- [PTI's Chairman Imran Khan demanded the abolition of FCR and merger of FATA with KPK as early as 2015.](#)
- Subsequently, the KPK assembly, led by PTI also [adopted a resolution with majority vote to merge FATA in KPK.](#) However, the delay by the PML-N led Federal govt. and hindrance by JUI-F has caused delays till today.
- Pakistan army has also urged the eradication of FCR and merger of FATA with KPK.
- The FATA Political Alliance (FPA) has [fully supported the abolition of FCR and merger of FATA with KPK.](#)

The above points have clearly demonstrated that the intent of all major stakeholders is to address the grievances of FATA. The reports from FATA have been showing that people in FATA are hopeful about their future as they have witnessed a significant drop in terrorism; life also started to move towards normalcy.

Reaction of Pashtuns to PTM

The majority of Pakistani Pashtuns live in KPK and are happy with progress and the smaller segment of Pashtun population in FATA was also looking forward to resolution of their issues. Quite frankly, [there is very little support](#) for [PTM in the KPK.](#)

The Mardan Bar Association passed a resolution against the PTM for starting a campaign against the institutions of Pakistan. [The participants suggested that PTM is supported by some foreign backers to create anti-Pakistan situation in FATA.](#)

What is the real agenda of PTM?

If the Pashtuns in KPK are happy and the Pashtuns in FATA are expecting transfer of authority to civilian administrators then why is there a need for the PTM?

In order to understand the real agenda of PTM, one need to see where PTM has never bothered to raise an eyebrow about:

1. thousands of Pashtuns killed by terrorists and drones;
2. TTP, Al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups take control of many places in FATA;
3. drug trade that was at peak level due to open border;
4. millions of Afghan refugees using resources for FATA;
5. lack of women empowerment in FATA;

The PTM was nowhere to be found to raise voice for the above issues. Then why now? What has changed? *What is the real agenda of PTM?*

The CPEC, restrictions on drug and weapons trade, creation of security check posts, fencing of border and the plan to repatriate Afghan refugees have given sleepless nights to many adversaries of Pakistan.

The real agenda of PTM is to disrupt CPEC, support drug trade and to ensure that border between Pakistan and Afghanistan remains open for terrorists to attack Pakistan.

The PTM leaders have criticized and threatened the Pakistan Army. The PTM platform has also been used to challenge the CPEC. There is no doubt that PTM is serving interests of enemies of Pakistan under the garb of a rights movement.

Support for PTM

The PTM draw a big chunk of its support from the Afghan refugee camps. The situation in Afghanistan has not improved and Afghan refugees don't want to go back. At the same time, there are also many elements in Afghan refugee camps that are involved in drug trade, smuggling, human trafficking and terrorism; a well secured border is not in interest of any of these elements.

It is also in the interest of Afghan govt to keep FATA volatile, this situation will allow the Afghan govt to keep blaming Pakistan for its own failures. The immediate support to PTM from the Afghan President is an evidence of this:

Ashraf Ghani – Feb 9, 2018 on Twitter:

["I fully support the historical #PashtunLongMarch in Pakistan. The main purpose of which is to mobilize citizens against fundamentalism and terrorism in the region."](#) (6)

Mr. Ghani conveniently forgets that Pashtuns in Afghanistan are still suffering. Instead of interfering in the matters of another sovereign country, Mr. Ghani should focus on improving the lives of Pashtuns in Afghanistan and facilitate the return of refugees to Afghanistan.

Mahmood Achakzai and **Asfandyar Wali** – [Quoted by Afghanistan Times on Feb 6, 2018](#) (7)

- "Countless Pashtuns have been slaughtered by Pakistan's security agencies for their vested interests, based on destabilizing Afghanistan and undermining US led war on terror," **Achakzai added.**
- "Fate of FATA could only be decided by the people of FATA," he said. Moreover, Asfandyar Wali said he is an Afghan and would be, as prescribes in the documents of Pakistan, adding no one can change his origin and nationality.

There is limited support from the Pashtuns for both Achakzai and Asfandiyar and both have been rejected by Pashtuns in elections. Their biased opinion has limited value and it is mostly for foreign audience.

Zalmay Khalilzad – April 11, 2018 on Twitter (8)

"Recently launched peaceful Pashtun struggle has potential to transform [#Pakistan](#) from extremism, terror, ethnic discrimination & dictatorship. Given Pakistan's importance for global security, the world has a stake in movement's success. [#Afghanistan](#) [#India](#)"

Husain Haqqani – April 8, 2018 on Twitter (9)

"Fully support [#PashtunLongMarch2Peshawar](#) May the people get the justice they seek."

Pick any anti-Pakistan element and you will find that person to be a supporter of PTM. Some of Pakistan's bright and reputed media persons and journalists are also supporting the PTM, thinking that they are doing a service by supporting anti-establishment rhetoric but not realizing the real agenda of PTM.

Role of the PPP

There is a growing speculation that PPP is financially supporting the PTM. The reasons for this speculation are as follows:

- The PPP is instigating the Pashtun voters in KPK to get benefit for PPP/ ANP in 2018 elections
- Any seats for PPP/ ANP will mean a greater chance for a coalition govt, a desired outcome for both parties
- Naqeebullah Mehsud was killed by Rao Anwar, Rao is close to Asif Zardari
- A better alignment with foreign powers in keeping Pakistan under pressure in WoT

These are speculations but supporters of such ideas claim that anything is possible and give the murder of Murtaza Bhutto as an example.

Role of the PTI

The leadership of PTI has a vital role to play here. The genuine grievances and the entire issue can only be resolved by politicians. In the KPK, PTI has earned respect and trust of the voters. They have been the first mainstream party that asked for the abolition of FCR and merger of FATA with KPK. PTI must reach out to elders in FATA and all stakeholders to engage them for the resolution of all genuine issues including abolition of FCR and merger of FATA with KPK.

Proposed next steps

Many of the supporters of PTM are from Afghan refugee camps. At this point, PTM has failed in instigating Pashtuns in major population center, the KPK (pop

30 million) because of widespread support for Pakistan, PTI and the army. [PTM has failed in KPK, however, concerns regarding conditions in FATA persist.](#) (11) (12)

The strategy should allow political parties to address genuine concerns by engaging non-PTM population in order to counter any impact of PTM in FATA. Here are proposed next steps:

- Ensure that no use of force/ arrests takes place, regardless of the hate speeches by PTM
- Immediate abolition of FCR and merger of FATA with KPK. Process must be driven by politicians
- Complete removal of landmines
- Transfer of check posts to police and local levies
- End to curfews and punishment of entire tribe for mistakes of few
- An absolute stop to any real or perceived enforced disappearances
- Formation of a committee to ascertain the number of missing and then recovery of missing specially ones that may be in state's custody
- Any committee formed must include stakeholders from FATA and KPK. Process must be driven by politicians
- Meaningful financial grants to the residents of FATA
- Movements of the Afghan refugees to be restricted to their camps
- Repatriation of Afghan refugees on an urgent basis, specially those involved in politics
- Tele/ WhatsApp/ Radio messages in Pashtu, highlighting success in reducing terrorism, drug trade and upcoming projects
- Continue with steps such as extension of Supreme Court jurisdiction to FATA

Nothing is lost as most have rejected the PTM, however, genuine concerns need to be addressed politically. Let's hope that the real agenda PTM is completely exposed soon and culprits face punishments through judicial process.

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