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## **How Bad Governance Led to Conflict: The Case of Swat, Pakistan**

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# **How Bad Governance Led to Conflict: The Case of Swat**

**Presented By,  
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Pakistan has been facing a complex security situation along its Western borders for nearly a decade now. The volatile situation along the border with Afghanistan coupled with indigenous problems in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA) in KP, have left the whole frontier region vulnerable to terrorist attacks as well as protracted armed conflict. During this time there has been a wave of Talibanization in FATA and PATA in KP, which has often ended up in military operations to flush out the miscreants. Over time, the attacks and operations have increased in frequency while the local Taliban (TTP) continue to wrest control of pockets of land in FATA and PATA in KP from where they continue to run their operation in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Over the last few years this wave of Talibanization has crossed over from the traditional border areas in to the more settled<sup>1</sup> areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa such as Swat, Buner and Malakand. This trend reached its climax in 2009 when the Taliban inspired and allied, Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM) took over the Swat Valley and banished all Government functionaries operating there. This led to a large scale military operation, *Operation Rah-e-Raast*, which flushed out the militants and liberated the Swat Valley. In the aftermath of this operation, the discussion on how the TNSM managed to take over Swat Valley and what factors led to this occupation, took center stage. This discussion was dominated by the view that the growing trend of Talibanization coupled with religious extremism and overflow of the Afghan War<sup>2</sup> was to blame for the Swat Occupation and that the weak early response by the Provincial Government helped prolong the conflict. But both these points focus on how the conflict happened and what contributed to it but they fail to address the core question, **what factor/s led to historically peaceful Swat/Malakand to enter an armed conflict in the first place and what it would take to ensure a lasting peace in the region post conflict.**

Throughout this paper I will attempt to challenge this notion that the Swat Conflict resulted from rising Talibanization and as an overflow of the Afghan War by presenting an alternative narrative based on the hypothesis that **Prolonged periods of bad governance are the main cause for the armed conflict in Swat/Malakand as they led to;**

- **Power Vacuum as a direct result of the Political Status Ambiguity**
- **Lack of Development**
- **Appeasement Strategy**

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<sup>1</sup> The “settled” areas is the name commonly given to those parts of the frontier in which the state has implemented regular forms of governance and taxation, viz., the districts which fall under the authority of the North-West Frontier Province and which are not considered to be tribal areas.

<sup>2</sup> White, Joshua T. (2008). *The Shape of Frontier Rule: Governance and Transition, from the Raj to the Modern Pakistani Frontier*. Asian Security Journal, Vol. 4, No. 3.

In the argument that follows, I will attempt to provide historical and analytical grounding to this hypothesis by providing historical background to the Swat Conflict as well as presenting the findings of an extensive field research conducted in the Swat Valley and Peshawar.

To start with it is crucial to define the type of conflict that took place in Swat and is the dominant type across the border regions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa along with the definition of what Talibanization is for the purposes of this paper. Next it is pertinent to analyze the history of Swat and the background to TNSM to explain how things came about. Lastly, field research conducted in the Swat Valley as well as in Peshawar will be presented to substantiate the hypothesis using findings based on the primary data collected.

### Defining 'Conflict'

Conflict can be defined as a 'contested incompatibility' which concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths<sup>3</sup>. So, for the purposes of this study conflict is a case where the state is at war with another party that lays claim to the writ of the state within a particular area or a territory<sup>4</sup>. This can mean that a conflict can arise between two countries as well as rebel groups within a state. Either way an armed conflict would involve one party challenging other party's writ within a specific geographic location.

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<sup>3</sup> Wallensteen, Peter & Sollenberg, Margareta. (2001) *Armed Conflict, 1989-2000*. Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 38, No. 5.

<sup>4</sup> **The separate elements of the definition are operationalised as follows:**

- (1) **Use of armed force:** use of arms in order to promote the parties' general position in the conflict, resulting in deaths. **Arms:** any material means, e.g. manufactured weapons but also sticks, stones, fire, water, etc.
- (2) **25 deaths:** a minimum of 25 battle-related deaths per year and per incompatibility.
- (3) **Party:** a government of a state or any opposition organization or alliance of opposition organizations.
  - (3.1) **Government:** the party controlling the capital of the state.
  - (3.2) **Opposition organization:** any non-governmental group of people having announced a name for their group and using armed force.
- (4) **State:** a state is
  - (4.1) an internationally recognized sovereign government controlling a specified territory, or
  - (4.2) an internationally unrecognised government controlling a specified territory whose sovereignty is not disputed by another internationally recognised sovereign government previously controlling the same territory.
- (5) Incompatibility concerning government and/or territory the incompatibility, as stated by the parties, must concern government and/or territory.
  - (5.1) **Incompatibility:** the stated generally incompatible positions.
  - (5.2) **Incompatibility concerning government:** incompatibility concerning type of political system, the replacement of the central government or the change of its composition.
  - (5.3) **Incompatibility concerning territory:** incompatibility concerning the status of a territory, e.g. the change of the state in control of a certain territory (interstate conflict), secession or autonomy (intrastate conflict).

For the purposes of this study the conflict that is under discussion is that of non-international nature i.e. domestic armed conflict or an insurgency<sup>5</sup>. According to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), non-international armed conflict exists when there is:

*“Protracted armed violence between governmental authorities and organized armed groups or between such groups within a State.”*

*Thus, in the view of the ICTY, for there to be a non-international armed conflict:*

- *Non-state armed groups must carry out protracted hostilities; and*
- *These groups must be organized.*

In the context of this paper, both these conditions were met by the TNSM who were an organized group with an armed militia at their disposal. In addition to that the TNSM were allied to the Pakistani Taliban (TTP), an organization that has publicly stated its intention to engage the State of Pakistan in an armed conflict. In the post conflict situation, the Government did establish its writ again within the area and TNSM along with TTP were defeated completely.

### **Phenomenon of ‘Talibanization’**

The term Talibanization refers to the rise and spread of the Taliban along the Pak-Afghan Border<sup>6</sup>. It can be understood as a phenomenon where by Taliban values of strict Salafi Islam are backed with armed enforcement in various regions. Talibanization itself is not a threat from one or two groups, but it is more of an ideology taken up by various distinct and locally-oriented groups to pursue their own goals<sup>7</sup>. Hence, Talibanization is not just limited to groups that are strictly allied with the Afghan Taliban or the Pakistani Taliban; instead it is more of a brand used by groups taking up arms to achieve their own distinct goals in various regions.

For the purposes of this paper, the activities of TNSM in the Swat/Malakand region are referred to as Talibanization of that area. TNSM was the largest group in the region that was spearheading this effort but they were not alone, a number of non-Swati groups like Waziristan Taliban, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) and East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) formed the bulk of foreign fighters in the region<sup>8</sup>. The foreign fighters joined the TNSM once they had already taken over much of the Swat Valley and had launched attacks in nearby areas.

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<sup>5</sup> According to the US State Department an insurgency is an attempt by any anti-state group to seize, nullify, or challenge political control over a particular region. Hence, an armed insurgency would be doing so in a scenario where the anti-state group is heavily armed.

<sup>6</sup> Wang, Lien (2010) *Talibanization in the Tribal Areas of Pakistan*. Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (in Asia) Vol. 4, No. 1. Shanghai International Studies University.

<sup>7</sup> White, Joshua T. (2009) *Applying Counterinsurgency Principles in Pakistan’s Frontier*. Counter Insurgency and Pakistan Paper Series, No. 2. The Brookings Institute, Washington DC.

<sup>8</sup> Suleiman, Sadia and Bokhari, Adnan A.S. (2009) *The Swat Conflict: An Arc of Instability Spreading from Afghanistan to Central Asia and Xinjiang*. Terrorism Monitor, Vol. 7, No. 13. The Jamestown Foundation.

## Swat: A brief history

The Malakand Division is comprised of seven districts of Malakand, Swat, Bunir, Shangla, Upper Dir, Lower Dir, and Chitral. The total area of the Division is around 29,871 sq km, which equals to about 40 percent of the total area of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and 3.7 percent of Pakistan's total land area. The two main cities in Swat are Mingora and Saidu Sharif. Both cities are about 5 miles away from each other. Saidu Sharif is the seat of power as it has traditionally housed all government functionaries as well as



the courts while Mingora is the main business hub for the whole region. The area has a high strategic significance by connecting Pakistan with its most reliable partner, the Peoples' Republic of China on north-east, and Afghanistan on north-west by separating Pakistan from Central Asian Republic of Tajikistan through a narrow strip of 20 km at Wakhan.

## Principality of Swat

Swat State has the distinction of not being imposed by an imperial power or an individual but was founded in 1915 by a jirga of the Swat Valley after doing away with the rule of the Nawab of Dir over their areas. The principality was dependent upon British Indian Government and later Pakistan for currency, post, foreign affairs and electricity. Swat State or Wali Swat as it was commonly known as was internally independent. It had its own laws, its own justice, army, police and administration, budget and taxes, and even its own flag<sup>9</sup>.

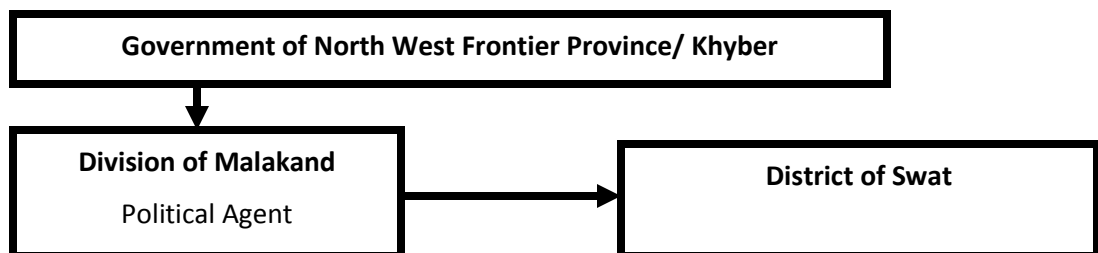
<sup>9</sup> Rome, Sultan-e- (2006) *Administrative System of the Princely State of Swat*. Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan

Since its formation, Swat was a peaceful place where the Wali ruled without any resistance. This was primarily due to the fact that the state of Swat was formed based on a consensus of the Jirga. This allowed the Wali to spend time focusing on developing the state economically and socially. Priority was given to roads, schools and hospitals. Free education and health services were provided to all citizens. In effect it was welfare state under the patronage of the British Raj. Even after the independence of Pakistan, Swat continued to function as an independent state till 1969<sup>10</sup>.

Just after the partition in 1949, the Wali Abdul Wadud who had led Swat State since 1917 abdicated the throne in favor of his son Miangul Jahanzeb. The new Wali launched a host developmental works and schemes to consolidate his rule by gaining popularity among the masses. This continued for a few years and then the Wali starting facing internal challenges to his authority in the form of tribal elders such as the Khans and Khattaks. While there were people who supported the Wali and the independent state, a growing number of intellectuals and Businessmen started pushing for democratic reforms even though the State of Swat enjoyed a flourishing economy and political stability. The talk of reform was in most cases driven by those who wished to have a political say in Swat but were unable to do so due to the popularity and strong control of the Wali. But various stakeholders kept building pressure on the Wali to reform. The Wali managed to delay any serious discussion on democratic reforms partly due to the fact he was the Son-in-Law of General Ayub, the President of Pakistan during that time. This helped the Wali exercise power without any serious repercussions as the State of Pakistan kept out Swat's business. But once General Ayub left power, General Yahya announced the merger of the State of Swat, Dir and Chitral with Pakistan. They were to fall under the Malakand Division which was to be under the Provincial Government in Peshawar. It is said that General Yahya was reluctant to have this merger but his hand was forced by his Chief of Staff, General Pirzada<sup>11</sup>.

### After the Merger

Upon merger with Pakistan, Swat was embedded into the governance structure of the provincial government. Although it was part of North West Frontier Province, it was administratively under the Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA). The political agent of Malakand division was the overseeing authority helped by the District Commissioner of Swat. The flow chart below shows the administrative structure that Swat currently exists under.



<sup>10</sup> Rome, Sultan-e- (1999) *Merger of Swat State with Pakistan Causes and Effects*. MARC Occasional Papers, No. 14. The University of Geneva

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

Ever since the merger, the above mentioned structure has been in place. Swat has kept its historical role of being the gateway to the Northern Areas such as Chitral and Gilgit as well as being a major stop on the way to Bajaur and Afghanistan. But the merger created serious issues as well; the merger itself resulted in confusion and chaos in Swat. As nearly the Wali Swat's entire infrastructure was deemed void, this meant that the people had no one to turn to with their pleas and litigation issues. As the merger meant that the Law of Pakistan would be enforced, the days of quick judicial processes ended. The litigants did not know where to turn for justice. Quick trials and decisions, whether just or unjust, and their proper execution as well as implementation came to an end. The prolonged procedures, undue delay, great expenditures, high bribes, and the further deterioration by PATA Regulations made the situation worse. But no attention was paid to these changing situations in Swat and overall in the PATA areas. Over the years the situation continued exactly like this, whereas at one time the people of Swat were a fully independent and thriving principality functioning as a welfare state, they had ended up becoming a district ruled by those sitting in Peshawar. This fostered resentment in the local population who to this day talk about the time of Wali Swat as that was the most prosperous time for the area.

### **Roots of Disgruntlement**

Contrary to popular belief the trouble in Swat did not start in the 2000s or as a result of the Afghan War and the Talibanization that followed it. In fact the very first signs of trouble in Swat became visible all the way back in 1992. Tired of government neglect in providing swift and free justice and other social services, a religious teacher by the name of Sufi Mohammad formed a movement called Tehreek Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM - Movement for the Enforcement of Islamic Sharia). Formerly part of the Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan, Sufi Mohammad broke ranks to form his movement centered around a localized issue and with a single point agenda. The point of the movement was to impose Sharia Law in Swat and its adjoining areas. At this point it is crucial to understand why the demand was as simple as imposition of Sharia Law and not something as complicated as a power sharing agreement.

Since the end of the State of Swat, judicial processes were going haywire; people in their search for quick justice were relying on Jirgas, Qazis and Political Agents. As there was no state of Swat anymore, all the rules and regulations of that era had been declared null and void. In absence of that and facing lack of access to legal and social services, Sharia law seemed like the best possible alternative. Firstly, it was law that could not be challenged in its legitimacy given nearly 100% of Swat is Muslim and secondly the structure needed for implementation of Sharia was already there in the form of Swat Levies Force. So effectively, Sharia Law was the best possible alternative solution to the problems of judicial access and social services plaguing Swat in a post merger scenario.

Initially, TNSM under the leadership of Sufi Mohammad demanded that the NWFP (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) Government allow the imposition of Sharia in Swat/ Malakand as it was the demand of the people. After being ignored for a couple of years, the TNSM came to



prominence through an armed uprising in 1994. The resulting uprising left about 40 people dead including security personnel and the Frontier Constabulary was called in to quell the uprising<sup>12</sup>. Once the peace was achieved, the Government of NWFP (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) entered in to negotiations with Sufi Mohammad and eventually on the 2st of December 2004, the Nizam-e-Shariat Ordinance was issues that ensured that Sharia rule would come in to force in the region of Malakand<sup>13</sup>. Under this framework, the judicial system was 'Islamised', where by Judges were to be referred to as *Qazi* and the courts were supposed to follow the Sharia law to the letter. This system was supposed to run parallel to the normal judicial system and people were given a choice between the two when bringing cases to the court. The Nizam-e-Shariat Regulation was enforced in Swat and the rest of Malakand division and Kohistan in 1994 and then, with some amendments, in 1999. But this did not have much of an impact on how things were carried out. In fact the system worked more or less in the same manner as before the implementation of the Nizam-e-Shariat regulation (IPCS, 2009). This gave the TNSM enough time to establish them as a force in the Malakand region<sup>14</sup>.

### Rise of TNSM

After establishing themselves as a force in the Malakand Division, TNSM started consolidating its gains by expanding its Madrassah network across the region focusing on the Agency of Bajaur that borders Afghanistan. After the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, TNSM is reported to have sent thousands of fighters to fight alongside the Taliban. The fighting force mostly made of teenagers and students from the Madrassahs run by the TNSM was beaten as a result of Allied bombing in the early phases of the conflict. Incurring heavy losses, Sufi Mohammad returned to the Malakand Division with his remaining fighters. The government of Pakistan arrested him on his own request as he feared backlash from within over his decision to lead a bunch of teenagers in to conflict with one of the most well trained armies. At this point the running of TNSM was handed over to his Son in Law, Maulvi Fazlullah, who was at that time a chair lift operator near Mingora.

Upon taking the helm of the TNSM, Fazlullah changed the way TNSM was operating in the region by utilizing new technologies. The most unique of his new tactics was the use of a pirate radio station that also earned him the nickname of "Maulana Radio". He used the radio broadcasts to spread his message of Sharia and its enforcement across the whole Malakand region making populist statements and talking about social issues often quoting the time of the Wali Swat as an example. The crux of his broadcasts was how things had gotten bad ever since the merger and the only way to make them better was to bring about full Sharia law. His frequent radio broadcasts earned him quite a following over the years. To add to his popularity, the Government's inept response to the Earthquake of 2005 in the region helped boost his

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<sup>12</sup> TNSM Profile by SATP. Available at

<http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/terroristoutfits/TNSM.htm>

<sup>13</sup> TNSM Profile by Global Security.org. Available at <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/tnsm.htm>

<sup>14</sup> TNSM Profile by SATP. Available at

<http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/terroristoutfits/TNSM.htm>

popularity and calls for imposition of Sharia in Swat. This was the time when the TNSM took up the role of a social organization providing people with relief through its decade old established network across Malakand. This helped TNSM gain legitimacy in the eyes of the local population who saw the organization as a beacon of hope in their time of need.

By 2007 Fazlullah had started skirmishes with the Pakistani Army across the Malakand division. This was after his forces had over run police stations and paramilitary outposts in the Swat and Saidu Sharif. It was at this point that the Pakistani Army sent in reinforcements to take back the settled regions of Swat from Fazlullah. More than 200 policemen and soldiers were killed during fighting in Swat in 2007. And Fazlullah maintained the control of parts of Mingora while vacating Saidu Sharif. By 2008, after the fresh elections, the new Awami National Party (ANP), a Pakhtun nationalist party had formed the government in NWFP and started negotiating with the TNSM. In mid 2008, the government signed first of many peace deals with the TNSM that ensured that the government offices were to continue functioning in Swat and a tougher model of Sharia as presented by the TNSM was to be enforced.

The upgraded ordinance was called the Nizam-e-Adl ordinance which was a modification of the 1999 version which itself was based on the original ordinance passed in 1994. The law was eventually ratified by the National Assembly and the President in 2009 with the hopes that it would bring about long term peace in the region of Malakand. But that failed to happen as emboldened by the government apparent strategy of appeasement, Maulana Fazlullah ordered the TNSM and it's Taliban Allies who were mostly foreign fighters operating in Afghanistan, to enter Buner, a neighboring district to Swat. The move was aimed at creating a stronghold for TNSM and its Taliban allies from where they could operate in Afghanistan and Pakistan without any major checks. The geographical location of Swat/. Malakand was crucial to the Taliban allies as it provided them a better base of operations as compared to Waziristan as Swat was centrally located. This incursion was a violation of the peace accord signed alongside Nizam-e-Adl. And after a number of failed negotiations to convince TNSM to move back in to their already established region of Swat, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government finally requested that Pakistan Army be sent in to clear out the area and reestablish the writ of the government.

On May 7<sup>th</sup> 2009, over 700,000 residents of Mingora and Saidu Sharif evacuated their cities on the orders of the government in preparation of the Military Operation. These residents were part of about 2.2 million people who became displaced due to the conflict. Most of these people were housed in Internally Displaced Camps established in Mardan, Peshawar and Charsaddha<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> ACTED (2009) *Rapid Need Assessment for Swat District*. ACTED PAKISTAN

## The Conflict

After the mass evacuation of the Swat District, the Army launched the Operation Rahe-Rast in early May 2009 to flush out the TNSM from Swat and adjoining areas. The operation started with aerial bombardment of TNSM targets around Mingora. Next came the ground offensive where the Pakistan Army entered Malakand Division through Mardan. By 30 June 2009, it was reported that the security forces had claimed Swat Valley, Malakand, Mingora, and Charbagh by killing about 1500 TNSM fighters while arresting about 250 others. Large caches of weapons were recovered from TNSM operation bases across the region.

In a relatively short period of time, the Army was able to reestablish the Government's control within the region and finally in second half of 2009, the government started inviting the Internally Displaced persons to come back in to the region. Having left the area to for security reasons, people came back to find their livelihoods destroyed, their infrastructure completely in shambles and all basic utilities and services wiped out as part the army action. It is important to keep in mind that most of the damage that was done to the region was by the TNSM and their allies who while retreating blew up bridges, grid stations, schools, government buildings and so on<sup>16</sup>.

While the operation was seen as necessary to root out the TNSM, it had a heavy cost in terms of the loss of jobs and complete destruction of the local economy and infrastructure. The fighting itself caused loss of lives, injuries, and damages to private and public property. Houses, standing crops, livestock, schools, health facilities, water supply/irrigation schemes, public office buildings, roads, electricity/gas networks, shops, hotels, businesses, all suffered damages to varying degrees<sup>17</sup>. So while Swat was facing various economic and development hurdles due to its ambiguous status even before the conflict, the conflict just compounded the problems as now the most basic of infrastructures that had survived since the time of Wali Swat were no longer there.

## Post Conflict

Once the conflict was over, the Government of Pakistan engaged the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank to conduct a Damage Need Assessment (DNA) Study in the region to get an initial understanding of what had to be done. The broad scope of work of the DNA included:

- Quantification and validation of physical damages caused
- Development of sector level strategies for the immediate restoration of (public and private) infrastructure, services, and livelihoods

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<sup>16</sup> Interview with Brigade Commander Swat/Shangla conducted on 27<sup>th</sup> of August 2011 at Circuit House, Saidu Sharif, Swat.

<sup>17</sup> Provincial Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Settlement Authority (PaRRSA) (2009) *Post Crisis Need Assessment Report*. PDMA/PaRRSA Publications, Peshawar.

- Quantification of corresponding needs in respect of the immediate reconstruction and rehabilitation of critical damaged infrastructure and services and the restoration of livelihood opportunities.

The DNA was taken as the baseline on which all projects were to be planned. In order to further simplify the aid work, the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) in association with International Aid Agencies such as USAID and UNDP set up Provincial Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Authority (PaRRSA). PaRRSA was to serve as the main mechanism for the implementation of all rehabilitation and reconstruction work to be undertaken within the Swat region. PaRRSA's main purpose to funnel funds provided by international donor agencies as it was seen as an institutions that had a very strong oversight structure averting fears of International Donors about corruption during the relief work. In addition to that, the Government of Pakistan does not recognize 'War' as a 'Disaster' so when a situation like Swat happened, they had to use a different strategy and tackle the situation as a stand-alone case. As the existing government structures had been totally destroyed as a result of the conflict, a different strategy had to be developed where by the Government Departments were to be set up again. But even at this time, the Government of KP and the Federal Government did not change the status of Swat. In fact due to its status as part of the Malakand Division, most of the post conflict aid work had to be done through the Provincial Government which clearly lacked the capacity to take on such a large task. So when PaRRSA was created to function as the overseeing authority it was not aimed at fixing the core problem of lack of institutions.

To its credit PaRRSA came up with the Malakand Strategy<sup>18</sup> that was specifically targeted at solving the issues of Swat in a Post Conflict Situation. To start with the biggest issue was the repatriation of hundreds of thousands of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) to Swat and then the rebuilding of infrastructure lost during the conflict<sup>19</sup>. The onus on building all physical infrastructures lost as the key priority, while social and economic programs took the back seat. Hence, even after the military action and the liberation of Swat, the issue of swift judicial system and social justice failed to make it as a part of the strategy in the short run. Also ignored were lessons from the previous civilian administrations in Swat/ Malakand and the failure of the Political Agents to exercise their powers in presence of Local Government Officials. The fact that Malakand had been running parallel governance systems where there was a local government running alongside a powerful commissioner operating under a Political Agent who was responsible to the Provincial Government, was ignored as a possible improvement area instead post conflict work just focused on rebuilding the physical infrastructure.

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<sup>18</sup> Malakand Strategy was written before the creation of the Post Crisis Needs Assessment (PCNA) was created. The strategy was envisioned as a living document with changes being made on regular intervals till the completion of the PCNA. Both documents were created by PaRRSA in association with its partners such as the World Bank, The ADB and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.  
[http://www.pdma.gov.pk/PaRRSA/Publications\\_and\\_Downloads.php](http://www.pdma.gov.pk/PaRRSA/Publications_and_Downloads.php)

<sup>19</sup> Provincial Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Settlement Authority (PaRRSA) (2009). *The Malakand Strategy*. PaRRSA/PDMA Publications. Peshawar.

Based on the historical background of the region it can be deduced that it was not the talibanization that cause the conflict eventually, but in fact it was the mismanagement of Swat after the merger by government that was the key. TNSM started out as an organization demanding quicker justice through the Sharia law just like Swat had in the days of Wali Swat. In addition to that the lack of development works in Swat and the Government's inept response during crisis period like the floods and the earthquakes further frustrated the local people who sided with the TNSM as it was seen as an opposition to the government. At no point in any literature or interview related to TNSM and its leaders does it mention any other reason for its formation. So potentially, if the Government had invested time in clearing up the political status of Swat and more importantly establishing state institutions there, the chances of TNSM and other such organizations coming about would have been drastically reduced if not ended. The appeasement strategy as evidenced from historical facts just emboldened the TNSM and its allies to further stake their claims on other regions. Hence, even after the conflict the core reasons for it still exists.

### **Field Study**

In order to provide data evidence to the hypothesis in a post conflict Swat, a field study was conducted as part of this study. The focus of the field study was to gauge public perception as to what led to the conflict and what since the end of the conflict has been done to ensure that genuine improvement comes to the region of Swat/ Malakand. Given that the subject is fairly complicated and complex, usual survey techniques such as a paper based survey were unviable. Instead interviews were carried out in casual one on one conversation as well group discussions. Limited by time and financial constraints a total of 30 people were interviewed with each interview lasting about 45 minutes. Each interview was conducted based on a set of questions that were designed to provide answers to the research questions mentioned earlier.

Out of the 30 people that were interviewed, 15 of them were from the urban parts of Swat i.e. Mingora and Saidu Sharif, while the rest were from villages in the 5 Kilometer radius of Mingora and Saidu Sharif. As mentioned earlier due to time and financial constraints, it was not possible to get a larger sample size or increase the coverage area of the survey.

In addition to conducting a perception survey, key personnel interviews were also conducted within the region as well as Peshawar, the seat of the provincial government. Key personnel interviews of the following officials were conducted as they are the key decision makers in their field of work:

- Provincial Government (Bureaucracy)
- Military (Commanding Officer Swat)
- Civil Society (Newspaper Editors, Human Rights Advocates, Local Organizations and Village Organizations)
- Village Elders and Tribal Elders

- Provincial Disaster Management Authority
- Civilian Authorities in Swat
- Police and Law Enforcement Agencies in Swat

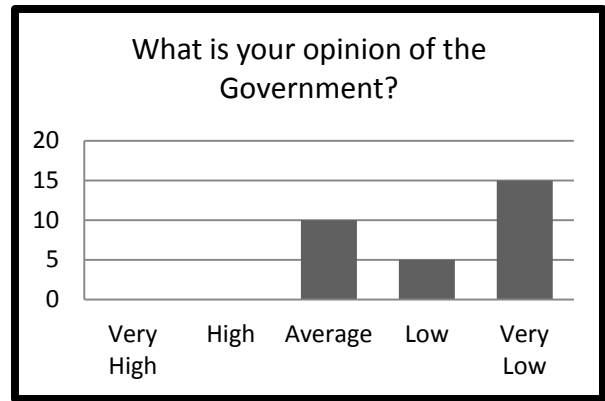
In total about 10 key personnel interviews were conducted of the above mentioned stakeholders. The questions put forward to the respondents were aimed at gathering a perception as to what had happened in there. Some of the questions asked were on following lines:

- Why did the conflict happen?
- What is public perception of various institutions?
- How have things changed since the time of Wali Swat?
- What are the priorities of the public?
- What is expected from the Government?
- Do people understand the status of Swat?
- How is the public service rated?
- Has democracy made a difference?
- Why were the TNSM supported initially?
- What was the main reason TNSM gained public support?
- Who do you think runs Swat?
- Have things improved since the end of the conflict?
- What changes do you wish to see now that the conflict is over?

The survey findings are tabulated on a question by question basis. A total of 25 questions were asked to each respondent. Out of the 25 questions, 20 of them were multiple choice questions while 5 were open ended questions. The open ended questions are tabulated using the key words that were common across all answer choices. The 30 respondents who were questioned belonged to various walks of life including farmers, shop owners, taxi driver, waiters, small business owners, students, teachers, truck drivers and so on. The 10 personnel interviews that were conducted with key decision makers also included the standardized survey and their answers are tabulated as well. It should be noted here that all respondents were not paid for answering questions on the survey and that they did so voluntarily.

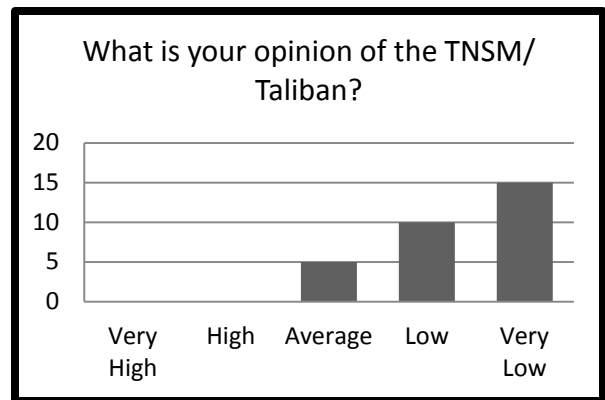
**Q1. What is your opinion of the Government?**

When the respondents were asked what is their general opinion of the government (Provincial, Local and National) was, majority responded by saying very low. About one third of the respondents have an average opinion of the government while no one surveyed had a high or very high opinion of the government.



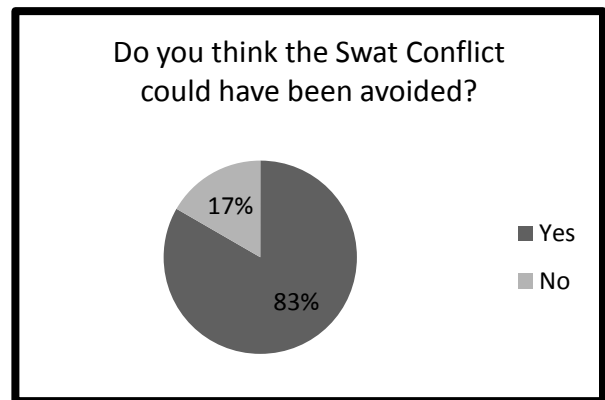
**Q2. What is your opinion of the TNSM/Taliban?**

When asked what their opinion of TNSM and Taliban was, nearly all respondents replied by saying low or very low. A handful of respondents had an average opinion of the TNSM. When asked why did they have an average opinion of the TNSM, the respondents replied by saying they liked the message of the TNSM.



**Q3. Do you think the Swat Conflict could have been avoided?**

An overwhelming majority of the respondents believe that the Swat Conflict could have been avoided from the very start. About 17% of the respondents believed that no matter what was done, the conflict was inevitable. The Majority believed that if the right steps had been taken early on, there would have been no need of the conflict.



**Q4. Are you satisfied with the way the conflict was handled?**

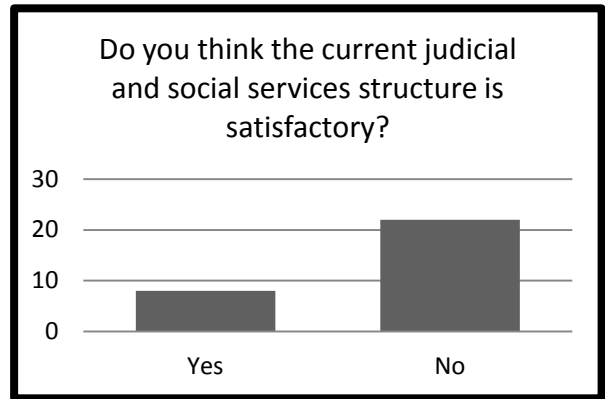
Majority of the people surveyed were happy with the way the conflict was handled. They believed that the army did what it had to do and nothing more could have been done. A handful of people thought that conflict was mishandled and that the



damage incurred was much greater than what could have been. They also believed that damage was much higher as both sides disregarded the public property and infrastructure during the conflict.

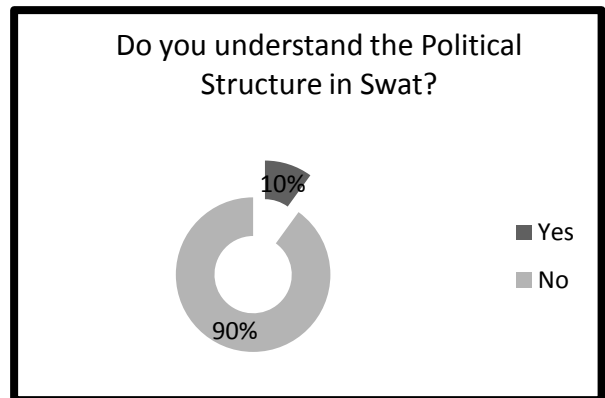
**Q5. Do you think the current judicial and social services structure is satisfactory?**

The question was asked to gauge the public perception with regards to the judicial and social service delivery in Swat/Malakand. Majority of the people were unhappy with the Justice and Social Service delivery while minority of about 25% was satisfied with the way things were. It should be noted that all the respondents satisfied with the current judicial and social service delivery were residents of the urban areas, while those who responded with NO were from both urban and rural areas.



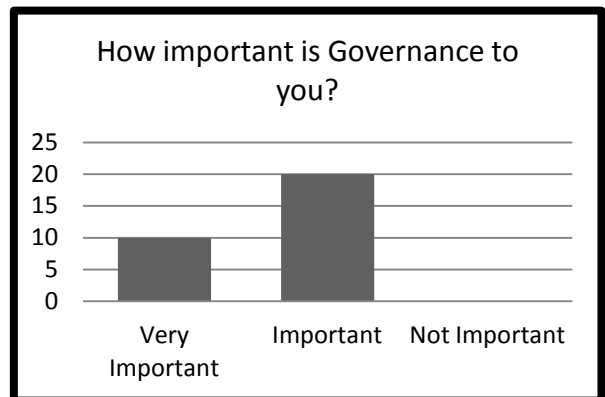
**Q6. Do you understand the Political Structure in Swat?**

When asked if the respondents understood the political structure in Swat i.e. the decision making process and structure of the civilian authorities, 90% of the people replied that they were unaware of the decision making process and the structure of civilian authorities. They complained that there were too many officials doing more or less the same things and that people were unable to understand what department would be able to help them. Only about 10% of all respondents were aware of the political structure in the region. It should be noted that everyone who was satisfied with the political structure was resident of urban areas.



**Q7. How important is Governance to you?**

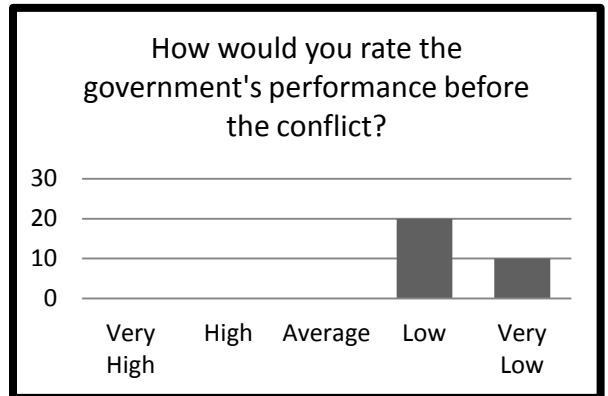
When the respondents were asked how important governance was to them, every one replied with either important or Very Important. Most of the respondents also clarified that governance to them meant smoother civil administration, low corruption and better public service.





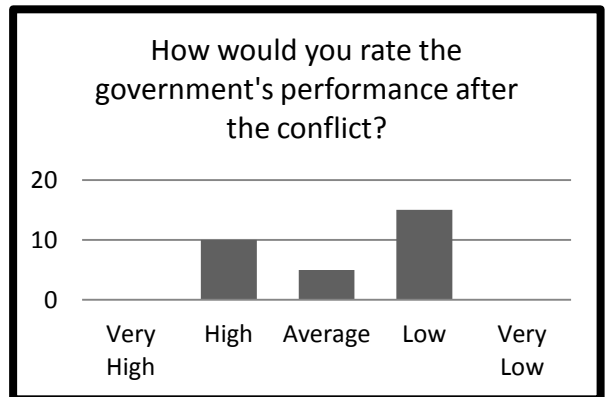
**Q8. How would you rate the government's performance before the conflict?**

As expected, nearly all respondents thought the government's performance before the conflict was low or very low. The respondents also mentioned that they were given no importance before the conflict and had been ignored for a long time by the provincial government. They also raised the point that the government had sold out the people of Swat to TNSM multiple times even before the conflict began.



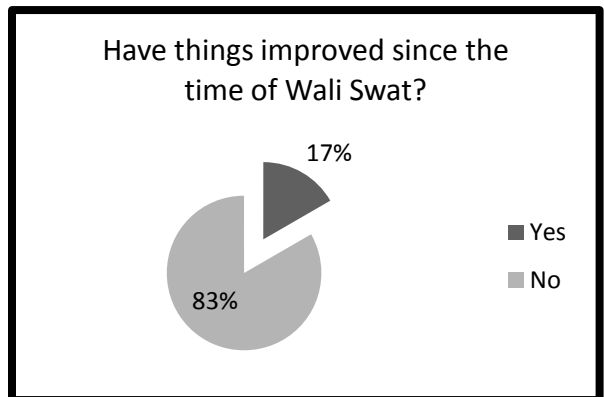
**Q9. How would you rate the government's performance after the conflict?**

After the conflict about 30% of the people had a high opinion of the Government's performance, while majority of the people still had a low or an average opinion. The respondents clarified that this was due to the fact that the government had only cleared the area from terrorists but had not provided adequate relief to the people. A number of people complained that even after the conflict, the government has started to ignore the concerns of the people again while maintaining a heavy military presence in the city.



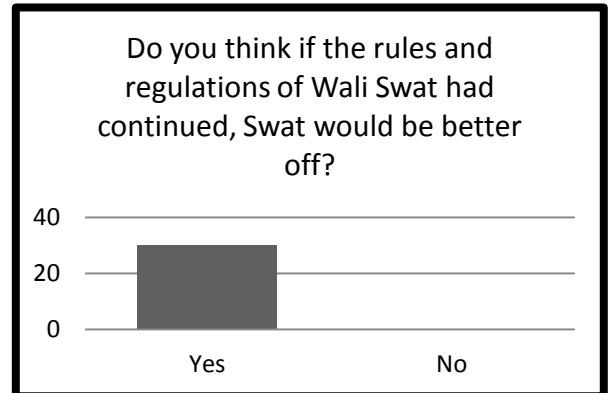
**Q10. Have things improved since the time of Wali Swat?**

Majority of the people surveyed believed that things had not improved since the time of Wali Swat. The respondents thought the basic needs of life were being met but the society was better off under Wali Swat as compared to now. Only a handful people thought that the situation had improved since the time of Wali Swat.



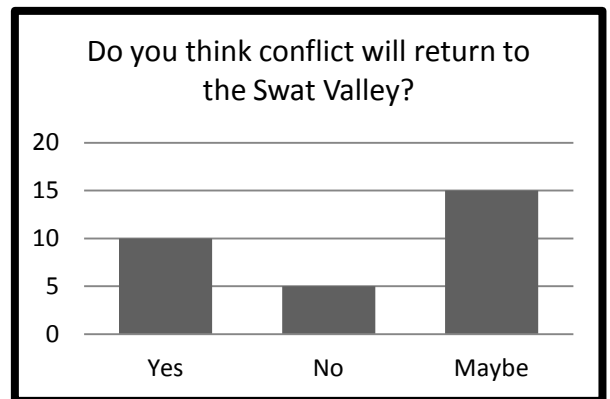
**Q11. Do you think if the rules and regulations of Wali Swat had continued Swat would be better off?**

Every respondent interviewed believed that if the rules and regulations of Wali Swat had continued the region would be better off now. Everyone agreed that the rules and regulations from that time were universally accepted across the whole region and no one had any opposition towards them. Rules such as deciding village level cases through the Village Qazi were aimed at saving people time and money. Such simple laws if continued would have made things easier for people. In addition to that, introduction of new rules and regulations after the merger confused a lot of people who were not used to the court system and the commissioner system.



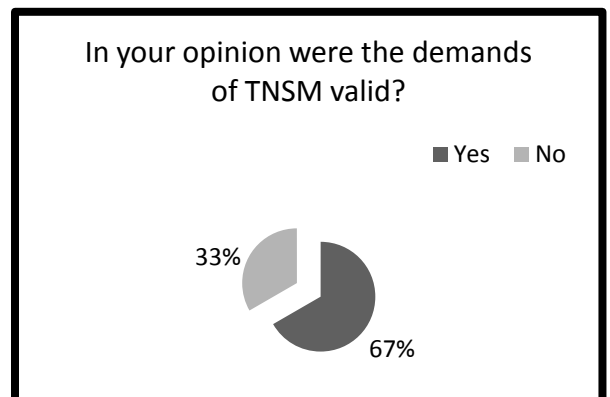
**Q12. Do you think conflict will return to the Swat Valley?**

About 30% of respondents firmly believed that conflict would eventually return to the Swat valley as the core reasons for it still existed. Nearly half of all respondents were not sure if it would return while only about 10% of the respondents were positive that the conflict would not return to the Swat valley anytime in the future. When inquired why people thought conflict might return, the overwhelming answer was that there are no strong institutions while the TNSM introduced institutions that actually worked and were not corrupt. It was also stated that's sooner or later, the TNSM would regroup and when the Army leaves Swat, it would come back in again from its current basis in Afghanistan, so long term peace in Swat was a question mark.



**Q13. In your opinion were the demands of TNSM valid?**

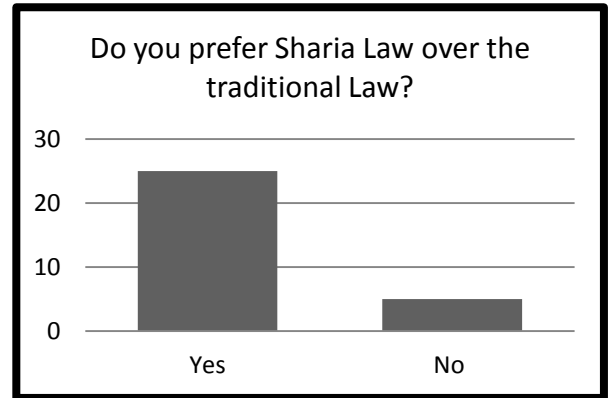
Surprisingly majority of the people interviewed thought that the demands put forward by the TNSM were genuine and that they supported them. About 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of respondents believed otherwise. They thought that the TNSM demand for imposition of Sharia would have further sidelined Swat within Pakistan. They also feared that TNSM demands would have let to similar



movements starting up in other areas of Pakistan. But majority of the people firmly did support what TNSM was demanding from the government of Pakistan.

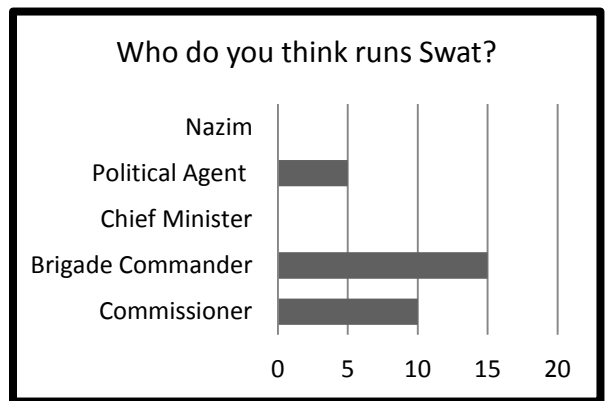
**Q14. Do you prefer Sharia Law over the traditional Law?**

As expected, an overwhelming majority of the people surveyed preferred Sharia Law over traditional. The most common reason that was stated for this answer choice was that the traditional law was slow and complicated while Sharia Law was quick and straightforward. Also people believe that the Sharia Law system was affordable for everyone while the traditional law was heavily influenced by money and power of the litigants. Respondents also mentioned that traditionally Swat had a version of Sharia Law under the Wali Swat which was quick and well understood by nearly all people. The Traditional Law on the other hand was something most people still did not understand especially in the rural areas of Swat.



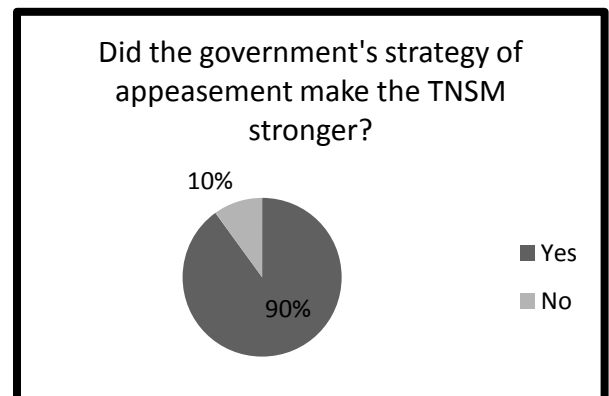
**Q15. Who do you think runs Swat?**

The main purpose of this question was to figure out the level of understanding common people had of the governance structure in Swat/Malakand. When asked who ran Swat i.e. was the person responsible for taking the important decisions, half the respondents replied by saying it was the Brigade Commander. About 30% of the interviewees thought it was the commissioner while about 20% thought it was the Political Agent. The correct answer is Commissioner of Swat is the final authority in the region as he takes the important decisions. But due to the heavy military presence in Swat, common people assume the Brigade Commander is the one in charge. This also proves the earlier question about how well people understood the political structure in Swat by reinforcing the notion that most people do not even understand the political structure.



**Q16. Did the government's strategy of appeasement make the TNSM stronger?**

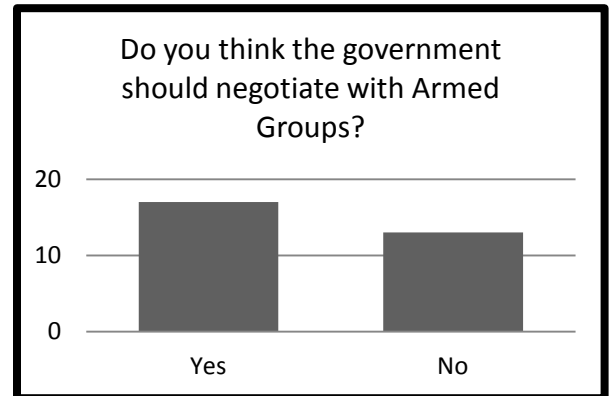
90% of the respondents believed that the government's strategy to continue negotiating with the TNSM after their proven track record of breaking peace accords only encouraged and emboldened the



TNSM. Respondents also blamed the strategy of appeasement for TNSM expanding its operations in Kohistan and Shangla, nearby areas which were not traditional TNSM strongholds. The respondents also pointed out that continuous negotiations with a group like TNSM also shows that the government was unwilling to commit to Swat and did not want to take the problem head on. Given this, the TNSM became more brazen in their attacks while gaining enough time to get extra fighters from Afghanistan.

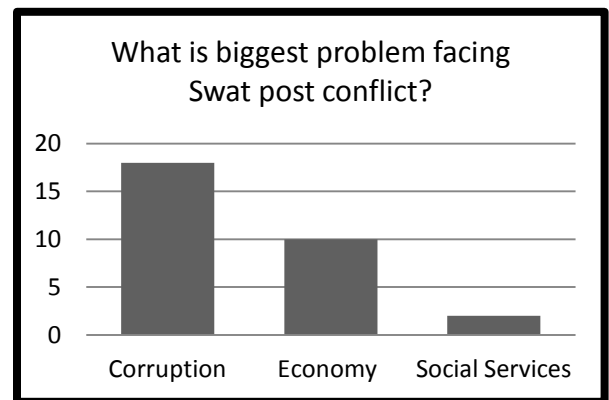
**Q17. Do you think the government should negotiate with Armed Groups?**

Even after failed negotiations and peace treaties with the TNSM, majority of the people maintained that the government should negotiate with armed groups in the first instance. About 40% of the respondents thought that in the aftermath of the TNSM and the conflict the government should never negotiate with armed groups as it just emboldens them.



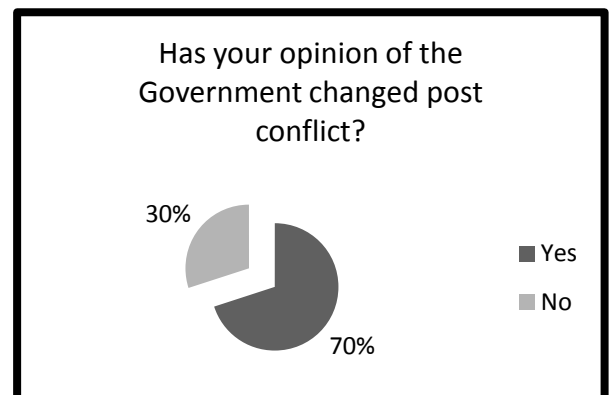
**Q18. What is biggest problem facing Swat post conflict?**

An overwhelming majority of the people surveyed thought the biggest problem facing Swat currently was corruption. Following that, Economy was the next major concern for a number of people. Respondents also mentioned that corruption at the government level was a major reason for slow recovery of Swat and that during the TNSM; corruption was at its bare minimum. The economic conditions although improving slowly have become worse due to the conflict as a number of crucial pieces of infrastructure were destroyed during the conflict and fixing them is taking a very long time. People also complained that the corruption was an over arching theme to all problems being faced in Swat ever since the conflict had ended.



**Q19. Has your opinion of the Government changed post conflict?**

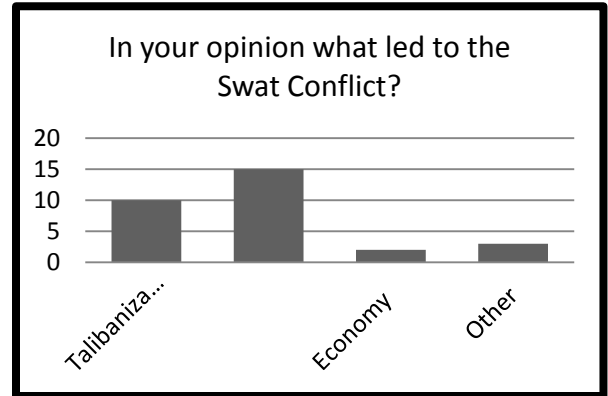
When asked if their opinion of government had changed for the positive after the conflict, majority of the people responded positively. They praised the army and security forces for their part in the conflict. They attributed their change in opinion of the government to the aforementioned institutions, while



there is still a minority of people who have the same opinion of the government after the conflict. It should be noted that all people who have an unchanged opinion of the government belong to the rural areas.

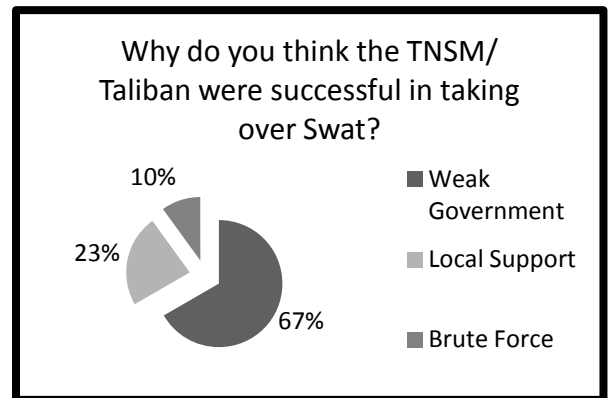
**Q20. In your opinion what led to the Swat Conflict?**

One of the most important questions asked was what led to the conflict in the first place. Nearly half the people surveyed thought weak government and institutions led to the conflict in Swat. They blamed weak government for allowing TNSM to stake a claim in the region. About 30% of the people thought it was Talibanization that had led to TNSM waging a war on the state of Pakistan while a small minority thought that the conflict had other drivers. This answer supports the hypothesis, that weak institutions and government were the driving force behind the conflict.



**Q21. Why do you think the TNSM/ Taliban were successful in taking over Swat?**

The answer to this question was as expected mostly related to how governance was weak and put up no fight against the TNSM. Although there were respondents who believed strong local support and brute force employed by the TNSM were the major factors that led to Swat being taken over. As this was an open ended question, these three reasons were the ones that were repeated most often. Based on all discussions held during the survey, TNSM were able to take over based on all these factors. It is debatable to what played a bigger part but the consensus is that they had local support that provided them information prior to their attacks which the weak district government was unable to repel. In addition to this, it was also pointed out that the local Levies force was nearly killed off by the TNSM in targeted killings. So when they entered the city, they hardly received any resistance from local law enforcement.



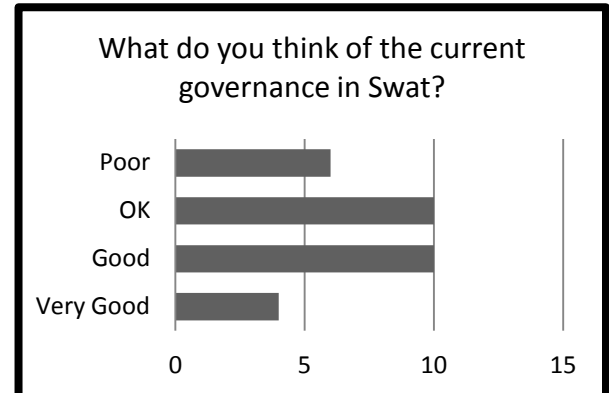
**Q22. What does governance mean to you?**

This question was aimed at gauging what the people understood as governance. The reason this question was asked was due to the earlier answers that quoted most people saying bad governance or weak government led to the conflict. This inferred that people had a good understanding of what governance meant in the first place. But when asked this question, respondents answered with very varied responses. Most people believed governance meant

how quick things would be done by the government. Another popular response tied governance with the amount of direct help provided by the government to the local people. Few other responses included governance as ensuring public safety, governance as better judicial system and governance as government involvement in daily life of people. Based on these answers it can be observed that most of the people have a very vague idea of what governance means, they understand some of the various components that go in to governance but are unaware of other many other crucial issues.

### Q23. What do you think of the current governance in Swat?

As a follow up to the earlier question, the respondents were asked what they thought of the current level of governance in Swat. Most people thought it was either good or OK. When asked to explain why they thought so, most respondents pointed out how the government had conducted the operation there to clean out the area and helped people through various direct help schemes, it was also pointed out that government had improved its operations by improving its district offices. Most people pointed out that Army's strong



presence is one of the major reasons they think that the governance is improving in Swat. People who referred to army also tie governance with human security.

### Q24. Has the government done enough in the post conflict scenario?

This question generated a lot of debate on what has happened since the conflict ended. A number of people argued that the government had done whatever it could, given the nature of the conflict and that total recovery would come over time. It was highlighted numerous times how the government's social security program and district offices had made life easier for people. Direct help along with help from International and Local NGOs was also provided as evidence of government doing their level best in a tricky scenario.

But on the other hand a large amount of respondents believed that the government has still not done enough since the conflict had ended. They believed that the government was genuinely interested in getting rid of the TNSM from this region but they were less interested in developing the region on a long term basis. The argument being made was that, the initial government interest was purely due to the security and strategic importance of Swat which had been addressed ever since the Army was stationed there. Once this concern had been addressed the government chose not to spend time and resources on this area and simply resorted to letting NGOs and other philanthropic organizations to lead the relief efforts. Respondents clearly stated that although the NGOs had done some good work, most of them were not interested in helping Swat develop over the long run and were simply there for the short haul, leaving the people of Swat on their own after just a couple of years.

Overall, the discussion led to the point that government had initially taken interest in the region and started multiple programs to help the local population, but since then the government interest in long term development of the region had waned.

### **Q25. What are your expectations from the government?**

Aimed as being a follow up of the earlier question, the responses to this question were very similar to those given earlier. Most of the respondents highlighted the following wish list they wanted the government to provide them with.

- **Jobs/Micro-Finance/Financial Aid**
  - Nearly all correspondents mentioned that they would like the government to provide them jobs. Given that since the conflict the local economy is in tatters with most people leaving Swat to find jobs elsewhere, those still living in Swat have no job opportunities. The respondents believed that government should start a hiring program so that at least one person from each family was employed by the government to ensure every family had an income. At this point, the respondents were told that what they are asking for might not be feasible for the government money wise. To this they asked that if the government cannot provide those jobs, they can at least provide them soft loans through micro-finance or even small one time grants so people can invest to create businesses in the region.
- **Food and Shelter**
  - During a conflict a number of people lost their homes due to collateral damage. At least 5 of the respondents lost homes during the operation and since then had received little or no help from the government. In addition to that a number of respondents had lost their crops due to badly damaged agricultural land as a result of the conflict. The respondents believed that initially the government had helped out with food supplies for about 6 months as many IDPs were returning but since then the government has hardly helped out with regards to rebuilding of houses and rehabilitation of agricultural land. Most people who lost their crops did not receive any compensation from the government and as a result have gone under serious debt. Food and shelter is still an issue in the area and every single respondent expects the government to do something about it. When asked to elaborate what the respondents would like to see happen, they mentioned that government could help by providing seeds for free and also helping out with fertilizer and other agricultural equipment. Another action that was suggested was creation of food banks to help out those in urgent need as

well as government subsidies in the region on basic staples such as Rice and Wheat.

- Education
  - Swat has only one Higher Education College that has been serving the needs of the whole region. The newly created University of Swat is still in the process of establishing itself as a major player in the Malakand region. Given this scenario most of the respondents want the government to create more higher education colleges across the whole region and not just in Mingora. Respondents also highlighted that even though Swat has over 200 primary and secondary schools, most of NGO and government focus was still on building primary schools. It was pointed out that although the intention of ensuring every child attends school was noble, the government and the NGOs needed to understand that after attending school these students have hardly any place to attend. So instead of investing resources in school level education, they needed to be spent on tertiary education. The respondents mentioned repeatedly the need for trade and technical colleges in the area that could train people in vocational skills that could help them get jobs across the Pakistan.

In addition to the Survey that was conducted, Key Personnel interviews were held in Peshawar and Swat as well. These interviews were conducted with personnel from various Organizations and Institutions that play a major role in the reconstruction and rehabilitation effort. While the survey presents the story from the point of view of the demand side and the end user, the key personnel interviews represent the story from the point of view of the supply side. In this regard all major institutions that are present in Swat were interviewed. These include:

1. Provincial Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Settlement Authority (PaRRSA), Peshawar
  - a. Interviewee: Shakeel Iqbal and Mohammad Yasir
2. Commissioner's Office
  - a. Interviewee: Naeem Akhtar, Assistant Commissioner Development
3. Pakistan Army
  - a. Interviewee: Brigadier Sajjad Chaudhry, Brigade Commander Swat-Malakand
4. Local Media
  - a. Interviewee: Rasheed Iqbal, Editor Daily 'Chaand' and Former Nazim
5. Civil Society
  - a. Interviewee: Farook Swati, Aid Coordinator Swat

The interviews are tabulated in the Institutional Response Matrix (IRM) for comparison purposes.



**Institutional Response Matrix**

Questions	Respondents				
	PaRRSA	Commissioner's Office	Army	Local Media	Civil Society
<b>How did your organization respond to the conflict?</b>	<p>The organization was formed in order to address the situation that was created after the conflict had ended. The organization is directly responsible for all aid and development work being conducted in the region since the conflict.</p>	<p>The commissioner's office acted first during the start of the conflict by managing the evacuation of civilians from Swat. The Commissioner's office was dismantled under the TNSM rule and since the conflict has ended, the office is responsible for ensuring government presence and control in the region while also coordinating aid efforts through PaRRSA.</p>	<p>Pakistan Army conducted the operation against the militant organization TNSM and its allies. The operation that began in late 2009 was completed within 45 day and militants were flushed out of the region. The Army ensured that collateral damage was kept to a minimum during this process. Since the end of the conflict, Army is posted in Swat to ensure long term peace in the region.</p>	<p>The local media was the first outlet to point towards the growing violence in the area mainly being carried out by the TNSM. Since the conflict started the media was reporting details which were initially ignored by the mainstream media. Once the TNSM had taken over Mingora, the national media started paying any attention. Since the end of the conflict, local media has been actively involved in reporting on local issues.</p>	<p>Before the conflict Swat had hardly any presence of the Civil Society. Since then the civil society in partnership with PaRRSA has been conducting various aid projects in the region. WFP along with PaRRSA distributed free food rations to returning IDPs. Other NGOs are actively taking part in leading the rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts.</p>
<b>Could the conflict have been avoided?</b>		<p>The power the TNSM had gathered made sure that the</p>		<p>The conflict could have been easily avoided if only the</p>	

		<p>conflict was bound to happen.</p>		<p>government had not appeased the TNSM for years, emboldening them in the process. Every time negotiated with them, it provided them time to consolidate their advances.</p>	
<p><b>Do you think the Conflict was handled properly?</b></p>	<p>Yes, the conflict was handled in the best possible manner. Nothing else could have been done in such a situation and the army operation was organized and well executed.</p>	<p>Yes. Nothing more could have been done.</p>	<p>The Army did its best to keep the collateral damage to the minimum. The minimal loss of life is proof of how surgical the operation was.</p>	<p>No, the conflict could have been handled better if the District Government and the Political Agent had acted early. The provincial government's delayed response because the conflict to become much bigger than it actually was. The following Army Operation was well executed though.</p>	
<p><b>Are you satisfied with your department's performance in</b></p>	<p>Yes, the department has been responsible for all aid efforts in the region and has done</p>	<p>Yes, since the conflict ended, the District Commissioner's office has acted a</p>	<p>Yes. The army has ensured peace in the region since the end of the conflict while also taking an active</p>	<p>Yes, the media has done its utmost to report on relief efforts and tell people how they can</p>	<p>NGOs working with PaRRSA have taken various steps to lead the relief efforts in the region. In the</p>

<p><b>the Post Conflict Scenario?</b></p>	<p>an excellent job ensuring aid money was delivered and relief work was started on time.</p>	<p>focal point for all development and relief efforts in the area. The relief efforts have been conduct in a professional manner and with proper accountability.</p>	<p>part in relief efforts and reconstruction works in the region</p>	<p>receive help.</p>	<p>last 2 years, NGOs working in the region have helped a large number of people getting back to normality.</p>
<p><b>In your opinion has the level of governance improved as a result of the conflict?</b></p>	<p>Yes. Since the end of the conflict, accountability has been of great concern in the region. That has directly had an impact on the level of governance which is much better than the rest of the province.</p>	<p>The level of governance in Swat has improved as there are more resources available now and the Federal Government is actively keeping an eye on the situation.</p>		<p>Initially the level of governance improved as the eyes of the country were focused on the region. There was severe accountability but within the last 2 years, things are slowly getting back to the way they were before the conflict. The provincial government is losing interest in the region as it is no longer a security concern.</p>	<p>Yes, things are smoother now with regards to getting access to government services. People have better access to justice now which was a key reason for the conflict in the first place.</p>
<p><b>Will simplifying Swat's political status help with</b></p>	<p>Swat's status would have no impact on its future stability</p>	<p>It would make a difference if Swat were directly under</p>		<p>It would make a large difference as currently Swat is</p>	<p>No it would make no difference as the Provincial</p>

<p><b>its future growth and stability?</b></p>	<p>and growth.</p>	<p>the provincial government instead of being under a division. This would help with improved funding decisions and resource mobilization.</p>	<p>under the Malakand Division. But if Swat were directly under provincial government, it would bring in more resources for the area and better development prospects</p>	<p>Government coordinates most of the things directly.</p>
<p><b>In hindsight, should the government have used the appeasement strategy with the TNSM?</b></p>	<p>Yes. Regardless of what happened, the government always aims to defuse tensions in any area through negotiations before starting an operation that can result in a loss of life.</p>	<p>Yes. Negotiations are always the first choice. Once that option is exhausted, armed intervention is taken up.</p>	<p>No, the government helped TNSM do more damage by negotiating with them. With each negotiation, the TNSM gained more power and garnered a larger support base as they directly started controlling various resources.</p>	

## Data Analysis

The field study along with key personnel interviews presents an interesting mix of data. In most instances the data supports the hypothesis of this paper that the Swat conflict was a result of:

- **Power Vacuum as a direct result of the Political Status Ambiguity**
- **Lack of Development**
- **Appeasement Strategy**

Based on the questions asked to respondents, there is clear trend that blames these three factors as being the primary reason TNSM was originally formed and then later thrived in to an organization capable of taking over the whole region. The critical response that supports this notion categorically was to the question 'In your opinion were the demands of TNSM valid?' to which 67% of the respondents said 'Yes'. This highlights the predicament of the local population who prefer the Sharia law as a matter of choice over the traditional law. This also proves why initially the TNSM were supported in the region. The data also highlights that even now, 2 years after the conflict, the local population's opinion of the government and TNSM is the same. While in TNSM days the population took issue with their brute force and militancy, these days it is the corruption that the people dislike.

The data also suggests that while the idea of appeasing the TNSM with multiple peace agreements was generally not like by the local population, the people still believe that negotiations should be held before any operation takes place. This shows an inherent divide that Swat as a region faces. They want to have peace and security but they are not willing to go to all out war against a faction.

Another interesting contradiction that was raised by the data collected is to do with governance. While nearly all respondents deem governance to be important to them, they have no clear definition of what it really is. Answer to the question 'What does governance mean to you?' was varied with most people tying good governance to mean how quick things got done while others including the justice system and law & order to be components of governance. Data reveals that although the respondents did not know exact terms such as 'governance', 'Appeasement' or 'Political Status', they all used various components and actions that are synonymous with the terms. An example of this was when asked 'In your opinion what led to the Swat Conflict?' most people replied by saying it was due to weak government i.e. the local government and levies force were unable to exert their control throughout the area while maintain minimal presence in Mingora and Saidu Sharif. This led to TNSM creating bases around the region without much resistance. Technically this instance is a form of bad governance where the local and the provincial government are completely out of touch with the happenings outside major cities.

Data also shows the link lack of development had with this conflict. Questions relating to the time of Wali Swat and government performance clearly highlight the drastic drop in satisfaction

levels. The drop as evidenced by the data was mainly due to the complicated Justice System and the low levels of development since then. Respondents categorically mentioned how roads and bridges were built and maintained on regular basis during the time of Wali Swat but since then getting even small road built had become multiyear task. An example that was highlighted during data collection was the availability of only 1 major Hospital in Saidu Sharif. The DHQ hospital received patients from all across the region and is severely short staffed. The respondents pointed out that in the years after annexation; Swat has had little or no investment in the sectors like Health Care, Technical Training and Agriculture Development. This lack of development has led to high unemployment in the region. While major cities are coping with it, the problem affects the rural areas more severely especially after the earthquake and floods hit the region. This situation was ripe for an organization like TNSM to take control of areas by providing help and assistance albeit at very low levels.

In addition to the survey results presenting an interesting picture that supports the hypothesis of this paper, the key personnel interviews tend to do the same. Based on the Institutional Response Matrix, it can be observed that the local government concedes that changing Swat's status would make a large difference as it would translate in to more funds and direct access to the provincial government. It was also established that the current ambiguity of Swat's status is the driving force behind slowing down any projects that need an approval. This according to the interviewees was a main reason for the lack of development in the region as it takes a considerable amount of time before a project can be undertaken. This issue compounded over several years resulted in low levels of development in the region that hurt the local economy.

Key Personnel Interviews also consolidated the notion that appeasement was a government priority as it did not want bloodshed but the relevant institutions conceded that eventually this strategy had caused more damage. The local media was firmly against such an approach as it feared the worse. But even after the failed appeasement of militants in Swat, all state institutions continue to believe it to be the natural first response as they would much rather have negotiations and concede control than have a full on conflict.

## Conclusion

The core question that this paper set out to examine was a straightforward one i.e. **what factor/s led to historically peaceful Swat/Malakand to enter an armed conflict in the first place and what it would take to ensure a lasting peace in the region post conflict.** While there is a large body of literature that answers this question by presenting the view that the growing trend of Talibanization combined with religious extremism and overflow of the Afghan War<sup>20</sup> was to blame for the Swat Conflict and that the weak early response by the Provincial Government helped prolong the conflict. This paper has attempted to present the alternative narrative that blames **Political Status Ambiguity of Swat, Lack of Development and Strategy of Appeasement** to be the reason why there was a conflict in the first place.

This paper through the help of a field survey and key personnel interviews has presented evidence that backs this hypothesis. Various questions and discussions that started out on how the conflict normally boiled down to what started it and what factors affected it. In order to make the case for this hypothesis, the historical background was presented as well to signify the change in situation since the annexation of the region. The data being presented in this paper comprehensively backs the hypothesis that it was the above mentioned three factors that led to the conflict. The data that has been presented in this paper also helps in chalking out the future sustainability of the volatile peace in the region.

It is apparent that bad governance played a large role not only in the conflict but in the very creation of the TNSM. Coupled with flawed public policy at the local level, governance issues only helped make matters worse. Even technical and bureaucratic decisions like the political and administrative status of Swat had a direct impact on creation of this conflict. The point that comes across this research paper is that while conflict might be managed in various ways using different strategies<sup>21</sup>. The reasons that lead to a conflict such as this are often ignored once the conflict ends and often end up bringing a conflict like situation back to the region. So while it is a straightforward notion that no long term peace can be gained without rooting out the core issues, in a case like Swat, that notion seems to be lost. This is evidenced by the responses in the survey that point towards the possibility of TNSM returning to the region once the Army leaves or at least lowers its numbers. This answer quite simply infers that while the peace has been achieved temporarily, the conflict is bound to come back as the issues that caused this are still persisting. And this goes back to the starting argument that prolonged bad governance led to this conflict and based on the data that seems to be continuing even now.

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<sup>20</sup> White, Joshua T. (2008). *The Shape of Frontier Rule: Governance and Transition, from the Raj to the Modern Pakistani Frontier*. Asian Security Journal, Vol. 4, No. 3.

<sup>21</sup> White, Joshua T. (2009). *Applying Counterinsurgency Principles in Pakistan's Frontier*. Brookings Counterinsurgency and Pakistan Paper Series, No. 2.

The case of Swat also gives weight to the notion that while military operation can create short term temporary peace in a region, only good governance backed by robust public policy can ensure a long term resolution. In this specific case straight forward steps such as simplifying the political and administrative status of Swat can have a major impact on the daily lives of its inhabitants. This small step translates in to better development for the region in the long run as it receives more funds as a district under the provincial set up rather than under the Division/Agency set up. While state institutions believe their actions are correct and for the best of the local population, the case of Swat also signifies the divide between the opinion of the public and the state. This is evidenced through the data presented earlier where by the State Institutions believe that their performance is satisfactory since the conflict while the survey respondents have the same opinion of the State as they do of the TNSM. This effectively means that the people equate the State with TNSM perception wise. Any state that is being equated to militant's perception wise is at loss of understanding their target audience i.e. their people. Hence this leads to the very real prospect of misunderstanding of public demands while policy formulation that eventually hurts the governance in the region. The lesson here is that it is a vicious cycle of policy and governance where public disconnect at formulation stage equates to public disgruntlement at the governance level.

The discussion throughout the paper focuses on the different elements that make up good governance. In a post conflict situation, the flaws pointed out in this and many other research papers on this issue will define how long the peace lasts i.e. without a concentrated policy process aimed at addressing the core issues, there is going to be no long term stability of the region. Hence the derived conclusion that conflicts may be ended with force but sustainable peace would require policy decisions. And often the policy decisions required to keep the peace would be similar to the ones that were missing at the time the conflict started.