**Mainstreaming FATA**

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Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa will retire on November 29, this year. During his tenure, Gen. Bajwa brought many positive changes in various provinces of the country. But, his herculean role in mainstreaming the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) is praiseworthy. During his visit to South Waziristan on February 12, 2017, Gen. Bajwa lauded the troops’ bravery which enabled the re-establishment of the state’s writ in the tribal belt. He also appreciated the resolve of tribal brethren for supporting the Army’s effort. Owing to Army Chief Gen. Bajwa’s efforts, the Assembly of the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province passed a resolution on December 15, 2016, in favour of merging FATA into KP. In a historic move, the National Assembly on May 24, 2018, with a two-thirds majority voted in favour of a constitutional amendment to merge the FATA with the KP. Two allies of the ruling party, the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl and the Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party opposed the bill. The bill also amended Article 246 of the Constitution according to which areas of Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA) are to be merged in Balochistan and KP. The polling was held for the elections of the KP Assembly in the merged tribal districts of FATA on July 20, 2019. Almost all the mainstream political parties, including independent candidates, participated in the elections, while voter turnout remained decent. In this context, spokesperson of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Nadeem Qasim appreciated Army’s role in making a peaceful election happen. Earlier, the government planned to spend Rs100 billion annually on the development of the erstwhile FATA—the uplift of the local population to bring them at par with the citizens of the other areas of the country and to remove their sense of deprivation. During Gen. Bajwa’s term, continuing military operation the Zarb-e-Azb, in February 2017, the Pakistan Army launched ‘Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad aimed at indiscriminately eliminating the residual/latent threat of terrorism, and further ensuring Pakistan’s border security. The tribal regions remained troubled for over a decade due to the US-led so-called war on terror. Nevertheless, under Gen. Bajwa’s command, through military operations, Pakistan’s Armed Forces and especially Army have successfully broken the backbone of the foreign-backed terrorists, while the country’s primary intelligence agency ISI has broken the network of these terrorist groups by capturing several militants. Besides other provinces, peace has been restored in the KP.

[Election on vacated Senate seat from Sindh to be held on Dec 8](https://www.nation.com.pk/23-Nov-2022/election-on-vacated-senate-seat-from-sindh-to-be-held-on-dec-8)

Notably, the Taliban fighters on August 15, 2021, entered the Afghan capital Kabul and seized power, taking control of Afghanistan. Their government clarified that Afghan soil would not be used for any terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda, ISIS, and TTP for terror attacks against neighbouring countries, including Pakistan. But, regarding some recent terror attacks in the country’s various provinces, particularly KP, sources suggested that some terrorists of the TTP which is based in Afghanistan have entered Pakistan from Afghanistan. Hence, military leadership has warned Kabul to check this infiltration. To sustain the hard-earned peace, Pakistan Army also started fencing along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in June 2017, and has, almost, been completed this year to improve the security situation. It would stop preventing illegal cross-border movement—including those of terrorists who enter Pakistan from Afghanistan’s side and bring the drug-weapon trade to a halt. The fencing of the Pak-Afghan border which is 2,611-kilometre—843 border posts were planned, out of which most have been completed.

[Imran Khan must ask administration for helipad services: IHC](https://www.nation.com.pk/23-Nov-2022/imran-khan-must-ask-administration-for-helipad-services-ihc)

For growing trade activities, more than 800 kilometres of roads have been constructed in the tribal districts for connectivity with the country’s other Areas. It is mentionable that external powers which have been supporting the Baloch Sub-Nationalists (BSNs) are also behind the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) as part of their unfinished agenda against Pakistan. But, it is because of the Army’s development works in the tribal areas that the PTM has failed in instigating the public against the federation, while an amalgamation of FATA/PATA with KP will result in multiple benefits for the people. Therefore, the merger was welcomed by the tribal people—giving them representation in the KP Assembly and the National Assembly. The merger has been a long-awaited move, as FATA was administered through Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) which was officially enacted in 1901 has its origins in laws that were enacted by the British colonialists to counter the opposition of the Pashtuns to British rule, and political agent acted as a justice along with other executive tasks. The tribal Sardars (Lords) who continued British practices were in favour of the division of FATA/PATA and KP.

[Court extends interim bail of Imran Khan, others in prohibited funding case](https://www.nation.com.pk/23-Nov-2022/court-extends-interim-bail-of-imran-khan-others-in-prohibited-funding-case)

Meanwhile, with the support of the Army, the former government has opened Angoor Ada in South Waziristan, Ghulam Khan, North Waziristan, and Kharlachi, and a border crossing with Afghanistan in Kurram tribal district. The reopening of the border with Afghanistan in tribal districts will create business opportunities for the locals. Nonetheless, the people of the tribal areas are thankful to Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa who played a major role in the integration of the tribal regions with the mainstream of the country. Therefore, whenever he visits these regions, tribal people raise slogans in his support and that of the Pakistan Army.