

## Why Waziristan cannot be conquered

by A. H. Amin

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"Beware of despising the tribals. They brought both Muslim and non Muslim Emperors to grief whether it was Jahangir, Shah Jahan, Aurangzeb, Ranjit Singh or the British king."

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Those who know the Pathans and their history will know exactly what is happening in Waziristan today and which Lashkar is doing what and for what reason. The tribal Pathans have traditionally been supreme fighters who defied the Mughal occupiers, the Sikh occupiers, the British occupiers and now the latest occupiers, i.e. the US coalition chasing the Pathans and Muslims of various castes and creeds motivated by sheer ideology.

While the tribesmen know the art of resistance they also know the art of extortion from occupiers who try to buy them. Thus while the tribal Pathans killed many thousand occupiers in the British era they also managed to extort many subsidy payments from the British. Thus the same tribesmen who worked as contract laborers making roads for the British during day time, enjoyed sniping and shooting many British officers after sunset or during daytime when not on duty.

Thus when a lashkar of tribesmen appears to be on the payroll of political agents fed by US CIA dollars, all is not what it seems. In this case the tribals are performing an overt function of collaboration and a covert function of increasing their financial muscle which may be subsequently channelised into gun running, drugs or Jihad.

The tribesmen were not loyal subjects of the British. They spent their lives in sniping and ambushing the British and their mercenary Indian troops. Their life script was not to get a BA degree and become a minor civil servant or an ICS officer more loyal than the King. Nor did they get barristers degree and conduct profitable law practices in the courts of the British occupiers. These men defied the British, killing over 10,000 British or Indian troops from 1849 to 1947, bleeding the British Empire white, forcing the British to maintain a division plus force in the Trans Indus tribal tract. These tribesmen gave sanctuary to Mughal Prince Ferozshah and to the followers of Syed Ahmad Shaheed of Rai Bareilly at Malka and Ambela. These tribesmen greeted the British Indian army with fire while many today are famous as great Muslim leaders accepted knighthood and were ridiculed for doing so by Maulana Zafar Ali Khan of "Zamindar" fame.

The tribesmen acceded to Pakistan out of their free will. They were not conquered by the Pakistan Army. As a matter of fact no army including the Mughal, Sikh or British ever succeeded in conquering them. The tribal areas were occupied, overrun but never conquered. Their mosques were never used as stables and powder magazines as many in the tract East of Indus including the Badshahi Mosque of Lahore.

The tribesmen were not saved by the army of the English East India Company unlike the Muslims of Delhi or UP or the Muslims of Punjab and settled Pathan areas were from Hindu

Marathas and Sikhs in 1803 and 1849. The tribesmen's mosques were not restored after humble petitioning to the English East India Company as was the case with Badshahi Mosque of Lahore in 1856.

The tribesmen were not willing mercenaries of the British and many Mehsuds, Wazirs and Afridis defected to the German lines in WW-I and returned to Tirah and Waziristan to wage Jihad against the British. The tribesmen cannot be compared with mercenary Muslim troops who opened fire on the Holy Ka'aba on British orders or who gunned down freedom fighters like an FF unit did at Jallianwalla Bagh in 1919.

The tribesmen acceded to Pakistan on the solemn assurance by Mr Jinnah that their customs and their Pathan way of life would not be interfered with. The tribesmen waged Pakistan's first successful Jihad in Kashmir in 1947-48. The tribesmen were used as cannon fodder during the Afghan War of 1979-89 when many generals became rich overnight and won cheap glory without exposing themselves to within 300 miles of hostile fire. The tribals braved salvos of Soviet Katushkas and shrapnel of Hind Gun ships while sons of ex military tailors became billionaires.

The tribals were more Pan Islamist than Jamaluddin Afghani, more martial than any so called martial race of Indo Pak. More resolute than any general from Cape Komorin to Khunjerab Pass. The tribals are raised as snipers, not as sycophants, their life script is not to please 15 different seniors and get a good ACR, practicing sycophancy with civilian prime ministers and launching coups without a shot being fired against unarmed civilian heads of state.

What is happening in the tribal areas is not in Pakistan's national interests. The venom which has been forced into the tribal Pathan's soul is counterproductive for Pakistan in the long run. The tribal areas has seen many occupiers. They are classic practitioners of Liddell Harts strategy of indirect approach. Their guerrilla tactics are far more subtle than that of Mao, Ho Chi Minh or Che Guevara. They apply Mao without knowing what he had written. They apply Sandino's Nicaraguan tactics which brought US Marines to grief without ever having heard of him. They are warriors par excellence.

For each militant handed over the tribals gain goodwill from greedy political agents who they deceive and thus succeed in sheltering 50 militants. There is a method in the apparent outward collaboration of the tribals. They cannot be overawed by a telephone call or bought by a million dollar retainer.

No cadet school or college can tame the tribals for whom music is the whistling bullet and its ricochet in the rocky gorges of Waziristan. The tribals don't need a federal government to make money. Their very location is an asset.

Beware of despising the tribals. They brought both Muslim and non Muslim Emperors to grief whether it was Jahangir, Shah Jahan, Aurangzeb, Ranjit Singh or the British king.

These are not the men who would sell their mother for a thousand dollars as some US senator said about some Pakistani leaders. These leaders may be found in Dera Ghazi Khan

or somewhere East of the tribal areas. The tribals are sons of their fathers and there is no confusion about their paternity.

A man who does not know the tribal Pathan way of life is not competent to judge the subtleties of their character. It appears that the same mistake is being made today in the highest echelons of Pakistan's present military usurpers.