



The GCC- EU FATA Friendship Plan

Concept Paper

Security and Development in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan is a key to both regional and international stability. The FATA region is one of the most critical areas in the world today. What happens over the next years in this part of the world has crucial repercussions well beyond its most immediate neighborhood. As such, there exists an urgent need for action. It would be both negligent and irresponsible to allow events in the FATA region to simply take their course and to hope for the best. This is insufficient. Instead, the international community needs to get involved to assist FATA in its immediate development. In this context, the European Union and the Gulf Cooperation Council states are particularly positioned to assist in a positive manner.

At the international Berlin FATA Roundtable of the World Security Network Foundation May 28-29, 2008 a consensus emerged to establish a GCC-EU FATA Friendship Fund (FFF). The FFF is a means to stimulate the development in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan in a more effective and quick manner, pursuing three important objectives:

- 1: The containment of recruitment and training of terrorists and of activities of Al Qaeda.
- 2: Neutralization of the increasingly destabilizing effects of terrorism and radicalization in Pakistan
- 3: Reducing the cross-border threat by the Taliban forces to the military mission of NATO and stability in Afghanistan which use this area for recruitment and refreshment.

The FFF would comprise a €100 million per year investments of the GCC States for a period of five years with an equal contribution from the EU. This is expected to bring the FFF to a total of €1billion over five years. This fund could supplement the

Sustainable Development Program (SDP) of the FATA Authority that requires a total of \$2.06 billion and would focus on economic development and education sector in the FATA region. It could also supplement the promised but not disbursed US funding of \$150 million per annum for five years for which there is currently a funding short-fall of approx. \$310 million.

The key factor that differentiates this initiative from others would be that FFF would be led by GCC representatives in close cooperation with the Europeans and Pakistani FATA Administration. This provides the fund a degree of legitimacy that is so far sorely missing from other initiatives. The Fund would also be carefully monitored and audited in a transparent manner by an independent team headquartered in Peshawar.

The Role of the GCC States

The GCC's partnership with the EU for this initiative is not only timely but urgently needed at a critical juncture in time where the region has become the focus of the international community for the potential security threat it contains. Controlling the threat of extremism and cutting off logistical and ideological support in the FATA that has become the backyard for the Taliban insurgency and a refuge for al Qaeda has become the critical factor to determine the success of the international coalition efforts to contain terrorism, target al Qaeda and stabilize Afghanistan.

It is also a fact that Pakistan is currently struggling despite its best efforts to contain the looming militancy of its indigenous Taliban along with the ensuing crises of waging military operations against its own people, containing terrorism especially suicide attacks conducted by al Qaeda in cahoots with local terrorist groups, and dealing with territorial violations of sovereignty during air-strikes led by the US and NATO in its tribal areas and the resulting civilian and military casualties.

Given the above, the GCC states interest in addressing security concerns of terrorism and extremism especially in the current scenario of trans-national terrorist threats can only be assumed to be one of high priority. Considering the extent of intelligence and security cooperation the respective GCC states have with Pakistan in terms of counterterrorism, it is only natural that the regional states will take a keen interest in diffusing the threat of radicalization and helping Pakistan and the international community to overcome this malaise. If unchecked, the consequences of instability would be felt within the GCC States themselves. There is thus also an element of national self-interest involved.

In addition, the GCC states have also developed deeper economic interests in Pakistan. Recently, multibillion dollar investments in energy, telecom sector, infrastructure and real estate development have consolidated long standing ties. The traditional brotherly ties have thus been further strengthened and exist beyond momentary help during times of natural disasters or economic or political crises.

It is in this context that a GCC involvement in developing the FATA region as part of the sustained strategic aim of improving security and stability in the region and to contain radicalism and terrorism is bound to have a positive impact. Pakistan will more than welcome the GCC initiative and efforts towards solving the critical problems it faces. Any future development plans for the FATA therefore should include the GCC states as an integral partner with a leading role. This would be immensely beneficial in two ways. Firstly, it would counter the widespread hostility in the area towards western aid and the fears about a broader 'design' to subvert the people of the area from their religion and beliefs. Secondly, the locals, who would perceive these projects as an Islamic initiative, would resist sabotage attempts by militants.

Key Sectors that Require Development Funds

To make the initiative more concrete, it is important to develop the FFF alongside a clear and concrete course of action. The urgent requirement is for a comprehensive regional development plan encompassing training and provision of jobs, besides development in infrastructure, education, health, agriculture, mining, small industries and trade.

Envisioned projects would, for example, substantially address the concern about unemployed youth getting drawn to extremism as they would aim to provide jobs to young people regionally. It is clear that for immediate impact, providing jobs to the people from the area either locally or internationally is vital. As such, ideas to be further explored include providing some of the large youth population (approximately 15 percent in Waziristan alone) with jobs in the Gulf States. Such export of labor force would certainly add to the employment opportunities. The local tribes can be apportioned a quota that could be flexible and based on performance and good behavior. Recruitment of locals for unskilled and semi-skilled labor can be facilitated by providing training opportunities in remote areas. Mobile training teams would travel throughout FATA with tribal support and create awareness about opportunities among the local population. The Political Agent and the tribal elders could also be involved in the process in order to facilitate the endeavor besides propagating the initiative regionally.

The existing recruitment centers in the Frontier Province and other parts of the country could be utilized for providing further training in various fields to those who have had some basic education and other technical training. It is expected that there will be a larger turnout for labor recruitment in the construction and services sector. This will be mutually beneficial for the FATA area and Pakistan as well as the Gulf States due to the booming construction and real estate development in the Gulf.

Given that the political security dimension would be particularly significant as far as immigration control is concerned, such a program would only be considered in close

cooperation and careful monitoring from the Pakistan side. It is understandable that there will be due concern in the Gulf on opening recruitment for labor force from FATA that is a highly radicalized area. To alleviate these concerns Pakistan would have to in collaboration with their GCC counterparts implement a control mechanism whereby intensive monitoring of recruits will take place.

Another key area that is in dire need of resources is the roads infrastructure. Any development in the roads network would have an immediate impact on the people's lives and make the region more accessible. This would also boost trade and commerce in the region. Home to 3.96 million people, FATA suffers from lack of development in the education, health, energy and agricultural sectors. The literacy rate for FATA is a mere 17.42 percent, according to a 1998 census, compared to 43.92 percent for the rest of Pakistan. The female literacy rate at three percent is the lowest in the country. Similarly, the health sector also demonstrates poor indicators. The total number of hospitals in the entire FATA region is a mere 33 with 301 dispensaries. There is only one doctor for a population of 6,970.

The agriculture sector has also been neglected due to a lack of resources. Addressing the issues of water scarcity, land reclamation and forestry development, introduction of tunnel farming for off season vegetables and fruits, and livestock farming could give a boost to overall development in the region. Similarly, mining of coal, marble and important minerals is a potential goldmine waiting to be tapped. The region also badly needs energy for village electrification and irrigation purposes. Besides, tapping sources of hydroelectric power, solar energy is another area that could be explored.

Realization of the Initiative

The FATA Friendship Fund can only come to fruition with concerted efforts and commitment by the EU, the GCC as well as the Pakistan government. There is no need to start things from scratch because a lot of work in defining the needs of the area and the people has already taken place. What is instead required are resources and the need to carefully evolve a strategy at implementation. It is in this regard that the GCC role will be crucial as it will dispel any anti-west hostility towards development aid that is typically viewed as *haram* or blood money. An Islamic initiative will not only be openly welcomed but will also be protected by the local tribes from any overtures to deter such projects by the militant groups that are in alliance with terrorist organizations and/or are not in favor of improving the lives of local people in order to keep them drawn towards extremism.

It is thus hoped that the international community, especially the GCC states, will reach out to extend cooperation for the development of the FATA region. Given the sincere and growing interest of the European Union to work closely with the GCC countries to further develop this initiative, it is an opportunity that should not be missed. Following the first high-level meeting in Berlin, it is clear that a broad

coalition of forces representing the various relevant political forces in Europe can be put together in order to make the Friendship Fund a true alternative. It is now for the GCC states to provide their input and indicate their support in order to move one step closer to realization.