

## Imperial Legacy And Pakistan's Policy Towards The Pak-Afghan Borderland

Dr. Naeemullah Khan<sup>1</sup>, Mr. Arif Shahbaz<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Muhammad Umar<sup>3</sup>, Mr. Salman Shah<sup>4</sup>, Mr. Waqas ur Rehman<sup>5</sup>

### Abstract

*This paper seeks to analyze political utilization of the Pak-Afghan borderland of Pakistan. Before British arrival in the area, the inhabiting tribes had no formal controlling authority and were being regulated through centuries old code of conduct called Pashtoonwali. The British devised a draconian law of Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) aimed at protecting the British Indian Empire from the North rather than serving its inhabitants. Pakistan after its creation in 1947 as a modern nation state continued the colonial inherited model of governance either lacking capacity or out of political compulsions. The area was purposely isolated from the benefits of the mainstream political system and became a battleground against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the 1980s. This research poses a question what imperatives compelled the independent state of Pakistan to continue British model of governance and the colonial policies towards its borderland? This paper argues that had Pakistan not continued with the British policies and exploited the area and its people for security and strategic interests, it would not be known to the world as a hub of Islamic militancy and extremism. This empirical study applies quality method of research. It uses primary sources and face-to-face interviews to substantiate argument.*

**Key Words** Tribal Areas, FCR, Pashtoonwali, NWFP, British, Pakistan.

### Introduction

The Pak- Afghan borderland also known as the tribal area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is located along the Durand Line between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The 1400 miles (2600 Km) long Durand Line was drawn in 1893 by the British<sup>1</sup> rulers of India dividing the Pashtoon tribes in the area between Afghanistan and the North West Frontier province of Pakistan which has been renamed as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2010 after the passing of eighteenth amendment by the Pakistani parliament.<sup>2</sup> Before the British arrival in the area during last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there had been no special Agency for dealing with the tribes and have therefore always remained fiercely independent and completely isolated from the rest of world. In order to rule and govern the tribesmen and to serve their political interests, the British Indian rulers divided

---

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor of History at Higher Education Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

<sup>2</sup>MPhil Scholar, Institute of Public Policy, Riphah International University Islamabad, Pakistan.

<sup>3</sup>Corresponding Author, Assistant Professor, Department of History & Politics, the University of Haripur, Pakistan. ORCID iD <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3654-6016>

<sup>4</sup>Lecturer, Department of History & Politics, the University of Haripur, Pakistan.

<sup>5</sup>Lecturer, Department of History & Politics, the University of Haripur, Pakistan.

<sup>2</sup> Naveed Ahmed Shinwari, *Understanding FATA: Attitudes towards Governance*, (Islamabad: British High commission, 2008),

the borderland area into several administrative units. Khyber Agency was created in 1877, Kurram Agency in 1892, Malakand in 1895, North and South Waziristan in 1896. Mohmand, Bajaur and Orakzai Agencies were later on created respectively in 1951 and 1973 by the Pakistani Government.<sup>3</sup> A political agent was appointed in each Agency as the representative of the central government of British India who was the supreme authority and king in the Agency and was only responsible to the central government.

This area has seen perhaps more invasions in the course of history than any other country in Asia. It has been a gateway into the Indian Subcontinent. All invaders from the north entered into the Indo-Subcontinent through this area and have served as the cross-roads of many ancient cultures and civilizations. The area has been strategically important for centuries and witnessed the passage, struggles and the great game of many powerful forces. The tribesmen residing here have experienced, but have always resisted, the invasions by Aryans, Persians, Greeks, Kushans, Huns, Mongols, Mughals, Durranis, Sikhs and the British.<sup>4</sup>

The inhabitants of the area are ethnically Pashtoons having common culture, language and traditions similar to the Pashtoons of Afghanistan and NWFP in Pakistan. They have organized themselves in different clans, tribes and sub-tribes who constitute a larger community or a confederation of tribes/ Jirga as a small assembly of the tribesmen has been the most striking characteristic and the central conflict resolution mechanism in the Pashtoon social structure in general and the tribal society in particular. It has been the final expression and collective decision in the Pashtoon society.<sup>5</sup> Each tribe has a member for its representation in the Jirga and its decision is binding on both the parties involved in a dispute. It is like the ancient Greek city states or a small democracy in which everybody has the right to speak. All the decisions are taken on the basis of traditions or Riway. Violation of the decision of a Jirga is liable to strict punishment like erasing or crushing the house of the violator or the expulsion of a person or whole family from the tribe.

The mullahs of the tribal areas have used to guide the tribesmen in religious matters. Historically, they used to lead congregational prayers, funeral ceremonies and other religious rituals. To quote James W. Spain, "His (Mullah) responsibility is the village mosque and the primary education of the children. He may also at occasion act as a councilor to the tribal chief or malik and the more important members of the community. A clever mullah is able to exert considerable influence over the community's thinking".<sup>6</sup> However, some of them have gathered large number of followers in their struggle against the British and have played considerable role in social and political matters of the tribes by using religious symbolism. Over history, the sharply divided and independent Pashtoon clans unified themselves periodically under the banner of charismatic religious leaders or mullahs, typically in response to external pressures.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, they have got prominence in the course of history. Haji Mirza Ali Khan betterly known in history as the Faqir of Ipi in Waziristan and Fazal Wahid known in history as Hiji Sahib of Turangzai in Mohmand Agency are some of the examples who have struggled militarily against the British for independence. Their objective was to get rid of the British Raj and was motivated by their Pashtoon nationalism as they have never tried to propagate their own version of Islam or to enforce Shariat in the region. They were the creation of the Pashtoon social structure and were bound to follow the Pashtoon code of life and traditions.

The aim of this research is to answer the question: what imperatives compelled the independent state of Pakistan to continue British model of governance and the colonial policies towards its

---

<sup>3</sup> Akber S Ahmed, *Social and Economic Change in the Tribal Areas, 1972-1976*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1977), 23

<sup>4</sup> Syed Iftikhar Hussain, "Tribal Areas of Pakistan", (Islamabad: Islamabad Policy Research Institute, 2005), 3

<sup>5</sup> Akber S Ahmed, 16.

<sup>6</sup> James W Spain, *The Pathan Borderland*, (Karachi: Indus Publications, 1963), 75

<sup>7</sup> Daniel Markey, "Securing Pakistan's Tribal Belt", Council of Foreign Relations (web Report, July 2008), CRS NO. 36,16. For detail see also <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900sid/ONIN->

borderland? The study has been undertaken critically thereby constructing a logical argument that had Pakistan not continued with the British policies and exploited the area and its people for security and strategic interests, it would not be known to the world as a hub of Islamic militancy and extremism. This empirical study applies qualitative method of research. It has been supported by primary books including those authored by British and Pakistani military officials as well as articles from journals and newspapers. For validation of the findings, it also uses few face-to-face interviews to substantiate argument.

The paper is divided into five sections. Section one deals with imperial legacy and policy towards the Pak- Afghan Borderland. Section two Pakistan's policy approaches towards its tribal areas. Section three focuses on Pakistan's security interests in the tribal areas. Section four critically highlights the Soviet-Afghan war and the beginning of religious militancy in the region. Section five is conclusion. It presents the main findings of this research and provided policy implications for the Pakistani state.

### **Imperial Legacy and Policy towards the Pak- Afghan Borderland**

Historically, the tribal areas have remained a part of Afghanistan and its people were under the theoretical control of the Afghan monarchs. But for all practical purposes, the tribesmen have been engaged with both Afghanistan and British India. In spite of all their internal tribal differences and disunity, they have united themselves for their common enemy to protect their land and safeguard their limited interests. Therefore, the tribesmen have been the king makers and king breakers in both Afghanistan and India. Zahir ud Din Babur (1526-1530), a descendent of Taimur, came down from Central Asia to Kabul in 1504. The support of the tribesmen helped him in his conquest of India.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, Babur's main adversaries were the tribesmen on their own home ground. Babur could not master their land as is clear by his comments: The Bangash, Afridis and Yousafzais tribes do not willingly pay taxes...He writes in a similar tone about Wazirs, but his hope of dominating them was never fulfilled.<sup>9</sup> After his demise, his successors ruled India for about two centuries, but no one was able to extend his rule or control these tribes successfully.

Similarly, Ahmed Shah Abdali (1747-1773), the founder of Independent Afghanistan and the hero of the most important battle of Panipat in the north of Delhi in 1761, which he obviously fought with the help of Pashtoon tribesmen defeated the great army of the Maratha confederacy in India. It was one of the most important battles of the world which eliminated the prospects of Maratha domination over northern India; it hastened the disintegration of the Mughal Empire, facilitated the rise of Sikhs in the Punjab and finally paved the way for the gradual extension of British authority to Delhi and later to the Punjab.<sup>10</sup> However, the tribesmen remained independent and outside the practical jurisdiction of the Afghan and Indian rulers and empires.

During the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the British had established their supremacy over most of the Indian subcontinent. The North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and the Punjab were under the control of Ahmad Shah Abdali but had become independent of Kabul during the Sikh ruler, Ranjit Singh in 1818 AD. The borderland area of NWFP however was neither part of India nor Afghanistan. These Pashtoon tribes were practically engaged with India for trade purposes and living under the nominal control of Afghan rulers. In 1849 the British annexed the Punjab after the collapse of the Sikh power and formally made it a part of the British Indian Empire.<sup>11</sup> The Durand Line agreement between the British Foreign Secretary, Mortimer Durand and the Amir

<sup>8</sup> IPRI Paper 10, "Northwest Tribal Belt of Pakistan" Islamabad Policy Research Institute, (Islamabad: Asia Printers, March 2005), 4.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>11</sup> Muhammad Yahya Effendi, "Watch and Ward on The Frontier (1849-1947)", The Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan, (Seminar organized by Area Study Centre, University of Peshawar, December 7-8, 2004, Islamabad: Hanns Seidel Foundation), 42.

of Afghanistan, Abdur Rahman in 1893 permanently decided fate of the Pashtoons between the North West Frontier of British India and Afghanistan. The agreement was rectified by the successors of the Amir on the condition that British Indian government will pay an annual stipend and maintain friendly relations with Afghanistan.

However, the borderland or the tribal areas became a continuous source of trouble for the British Indian stability. To rule and control the tribes, the British formulated a policy comprised of persuasion, control and armed intervention in these areas.<sup>12</sup> Between 1849 and 1939, there were around 58 military campaigns sent against the tribes by the British.<sup>13</sup> Approximately, 40000 British Indian army personnel were engaged in fighting against the tribesmen in the tribal areas.<sup>14</sup>

In order to control and properly subjugate the tribes under their colonial rule, these areas were given semi-autonomous status with allowances and subsidies granted to selected tribal elders and their respective tribes, something formalized through various treaties and agreements. These agreements usually contained clauses of general friendship and goodwill and the tribes undertook to refrain from raids into the settled areas of the North West Frontier Province of British India and to keep the main lines of communication safe as well as deny sanctuary to outlaws. In return the British agreed to pay them regular allowances in the form of 'Muwajib' for the whole tribe and individual grants like 'Lungi' and 'maliki' which recognized the status of the tribal leaders.<sup>15</sup> The main focus was to protect the Indian border and to provide security to its subjects from the incursion of the tribes who from time immemorial were in the habit of raiding the plains and plundering the foreigners in their passes.<sup>16</sup>

This led the British administration to devise special laws for both the Pashtoons in the NWFP and the tribal areas thereby enacting Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) in 1871. This was revised in 1873 and then again in 1876 with minor modifications.<sup>17</sup> With the passage of time, new acts and offences were added and by 1901, it was completely promulgated in the tribal areas.<sup>18</sup> The Political Agent was the master of the agency (now tribal district) and the final authority of decision making in the administration of the area. Until very recently when these tribal areas were merged with the adjacent districts of the province under the 25<sup>th</sup> amendment in 2018, his authority was unchallenged and powers unrestricted. Article 40 of the FCR allowed the political administration to punish the whole tribe or village for the crime committed by its single person. He performed all functions including executive and judicial powers that directly affect the individual and collective rights of the tribal people. Sections 2, 8, 11, 21-27, 31, 36, 38, 39, 40 and 43 gave the Political Administration and the selected tribal elite wide ranging powers to execute justice under the FCR.<sup>19</sup> It was a mixture of traditional customs and norms with executive direction.

The assumption for the promulgation of FCR was that the tribesmen living in the area needed special treatment because of their peculiar circumstances. The British Government of India believed that socio-political institutionalization of the area comprising the tribal agencies (districts) could be used as a buffer zone between British India and Afghanistan.<sup>20</sup> The identity of the region was linked more to the geo-strategic interests than the customs and traditions of

---

<sup>12</sup> Shinwari, *Understanding FATA*. 16

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*; 17

<sup>14</sup> Media Cell Governor Secretariat, FATA "Review of the Developmental programs in the NWA", (Peshawar: 2005), 6

<sup>15</sup> Ambassador (Retd) Hamayun Khan, "The role the Federal Government and the Political Agent" Islamabad Policy research institute, (Islamabad: Hanns Seidel Foundation, 2205), 103

<sup>16</sup> Lal Baha, *NWFP Administration under British Rule, 1901-1919*, (Islamabad: National Commission on Historical and Cultural Research), pp. 33-34.

<sup>17</sup> Constitutional status of FCR- paper presented by Dr. Faqir Hussain, Secretary Law and justice commission of Pakistan-Report of the constitution proceedings on the FCR Regulations 1901, organized by Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, October 2004.

<sup>18</sup> Naveed Ahmed Shinwari., 17.

<sup>19</sup> Khadim Hussain "The FCR controversy", *Daily Dawn*, Pakistan, April 14, 2008.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*.

the tribesmen. Mountstuart Elphinstone, Olaf Caroe, Lord Curzon and Winston Churchill, to name a few, took pains to construct the image of the people and geography of the area in such a way that it would suit their interests to first use it as a bulwark against Czarist Russia and later on against the Soviet Union, not to speak of Afghanistan.<sup>21</sup> The area was not practically considered as an integral part of British India and was variously referred as ‘excluded areas’ or protected areas.<sup>22</sup> The ultimate aim of the whole Frontier Policy was the security of India. The immediate object of the policy however, was to secure the life and property of the Frontier districts.”<sup>23</sup>

### **Pakistan’s Policy Approach towards the Pak- Afghan Borderland**

After the creation of Pakistan in 1947 as a modern nation state, the semi-autonomous status and existing socio-political setup of these areas was acknowledged by the newly Pakistani government. The founder of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah accepted the autonomous character of tribal areas at the Bannu tribal jirga in January, 1948.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, Jinnah outlined the policy of the new state towards the tribal areas in his address to the tribal chiefs in Peshawar in April 1948 and made it clear that “Pakistan had no desire to interfere in their internal freedom; rather it wanted them to put them on their legs through educational, economic and social uplift as self-respecting citizens, who would have the opportunities of fully developing and producing what is best in you and your land.” In his address, Jinnah also reaffirmed “the policy of continuing allowances”, and said that the “existing arrangements would not be modified except in consultation with them and so long as they remained loyal and faithful to Pakistan”.<sup>25</sup> Under these agreements the tribal chiefs and maliks declared that they would be loyal to the state of Pakistan and pledged to provide any help to the new country whenever the need arose.

Thus, the tribal areas retained in Pakistan the special status accorded to it in the British India. However, the departure of the British made possible the development of a new relationship between the Pakistani government and the people of the mountains. If Pakistan was more kindly disposed towards the tribes, they too were more willing to cooperate with Pakistan.<sup>26</sup> However, Jinnah was in favor of changing the status quo for the better. This is evident from what he said in the same address. While reaffirming that the new state of Pakistan would not resort to interfering in the internal affairs of the tribal people, he also made it clear that Pakistan did not want the tribal people to remain permanently dependent on “annual doles as has been the practice hitherto, which meant that at the end of the year you were no better off then the beggars, asking for allowances, if possible a little more.”<sup>27</sup> But, Jinnah’s desire was not translated into reality. The political leadership that succeeded him preferred to continue the policy that was shaped by the British to serve their imperial interests.<sup>28</sup> Compared with the settled areas of the NWFP, the tribesmen underwent very little change in their social practices due to their literal detachment from the national mainstream. Their way of living is still the closest to Pashtoonwali. One main factor behind this traditionalist outlook is a lack of urbanization and absence of many modern institutions affecting the very walks of life.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Rashid Ahmed Khan, “Political developments in FATA: A Critical Perspective, Islamabad Policy Research Institute, (Islamabad: Hanns Seidel Foundation, 2005), 27.

<sup>23</sup> Teepu Mahabat Khan, *The tribal Areas of Pakistan: A contemporary Profile*, (Lahore: Sang-e-meel Publications, 2008), 93.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> James W. Spain, *The Pathan Borderland*, (Karachi: Indus Publications, 1963), 220.

<sup>27</sup> Waheed Ahmed, *Quaid-e- Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah: The Nation’s Voice*, vol. vii, (Karachi, Quaid-e- Azam Academy, 2003), 346-349.

<sup>28</sup> IPRI Paper 10, “Northwest Tribal Belt of Pakistan” Islamabad Policy Research Institute, (Islamabad: Asia Printers, March 2005), 14.

<sup>29</sup> Teepu Mahabat Khan., *The Tribal Areas of Pakistan*, 70.

Since religion had played an important role in the creation of Pakistan therefore, every government tried to use religion for political purposes in order to have strong feelings of nationality and for the cause of jihad in Kashmir and Afghanistan. Religion has been exploited by the ruling elite to gain popularity and legitimacy and fight political opponents.<sup>30</sup> Thus religion has been used negatively rather than positively in terms of national integration.<sup>31</sup> Pakistan's leaders have played upon religious sentiment as an instrument of strengthening their own governments rather than real national identity.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, the role of religion in the context of post 1947 developments in the country assumed significance. The leaders of the country both civilian and military gave little importance to development of the tribesmen. Instead they used religion either to legitimize their rule or on the pretext of protecting the ideological frontiers of the country and its people.

### **Pakistan's Security Interests in the Pak-Afghan Borderland**

Pakistan was bequeathed an imperial legacy of tackling its North West Frontier and the adjacent areas, either as a security cordon or strategic depth from the British. Therefore, Pakistan's policy towards the tribal areas was determined by its relations with its immediate neighbors, Afghanistan and India. Since its creation in 1947, Pakistan has hostile relations with Afghanistan due to the latter's irredentist claims over the North West Frontier and the adjacent tribal areas of the Pashtoons. When Pakistan applied for the membership in the United Nations in September 1947, Afghanistan voted against its admission.<sup>33</sup> The Afghan representative Hosyn Aziz stated in the UN General Assembly: We cannot recognize the North West Frontier Province as part of Pakistan so long as people of the Frontier have not been given an opportunity, free from any kind of influence, to determine for themselves whether they wish to be independent or to become part of Pakistan.<sup>34</sup>

Afghanistan thus became the first and the only country in the world to lay claim to a part of Pakistan. This was done in the name of Pashtoonistan. According to the stand taken by the government of Afghanistan, all the Pashtoons whether they lived in Afghanistan or Pakistan constituted one nation and they should be united under the leadership of Afghanistan.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, successive Afghan governments patronized and supported the nationalist's leaders of the Pashtoons like Abdul Ghafar Khan in NWFP and Faqir of Ipi in Waziristan to raise their voice in favor of independent Pashtoonistan. However, the difference between the two nationalist leaders was that the former opted for a constitutional struggle and the philosophy of non-violence and the latter for armed struggle for the establishment of an independent Pashtoonistan. On occasions the Afghan government have tried to bring her troops and raised tribal lashkers against Pakistan.<sup>36</sup>

Matters between Pakistan and Afghanistan worsened when Afghanistan raised fighting groups and with Indian help created Pashtoonistan in various parts of FATA.<sup>37</sup> The staunch enemy of the British, Haji Mirzali Khan popularly known in history as the Faqir of Ipi was made the president of the southern Pashtoonistan assembly in 1960.<sup>38</sup> It should be noted that the Afghan stance on Pashtoonistan was supported by the Russian and Indian governments but for their

---

<sup>30</sup> Veena Kukreja, *Contemporary Pakistan*, (New Delhi: Sage Publications 2003), 154.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Hussain Haqqani, *Pakistan Between Mosque Military*, (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 2005), 2.

<sup>33</sup> S Fida Yunas, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan "Pushunistan" & Afghanistan*, (Peshawar, 2002), 20.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>35</sup> Rashid Ahmed Khan, "Political developments in FATA: A Critical Perspective, Islamabad Policy Research Institute, (Islamabad: Hanns Seidel Foundation, 2005), 32.

<sup>36</sup> S.Fida Yunas, 43.

\* Russian Prime Minister Khrushchev gave the following statement in Moscow: "Pakhtunistan is a region inhabited by independent Afghan tribes. In 1893, the region was included in the British Empire and in 1947, contrary to the interests of the tribes inhabiting it, 'Pakhtunistan' was incorporated in Pakistan.

<sup>37</sup> Khalid Aziz, "Causes of Rebellion in Waziristan", (Peshawar: Regional Institute of Policy Research and Training, 2007), 7.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*,

own national interests in order to have a common ground against Pakistan. However, the Afghan policy towards Pakistan led to Afghanistan's own destruction.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, from its inception, Pakistan has hostile relations with its eastern neighbor India over Kashmir for its accession to Pakistan. The Pakistani leaders and its military have opted for the religious card to fight political opponents inside and outside the country. In order to face the security threat from India and Afghanistan and to safeguard its national interests in Kashmir and Afghanistan, it was not difficult for the Pakistani establishment to manipulate the religious sentiments of its people. Pakistan has got God gifted warriors in the form of tribesmen of the tribal area. According to Hussain Haqqani, the Pakistani government hastily trained the Pashtoon tribesmen to enter Kashmir for its accession to Pakistan in 1947-48 and was supported by the Pakistani military. A lashkar of more than ten thousand tribesmen fought valiantly in Kashmir at the behest of Muslim league led Pakistani government and in defense of Islam.<sup>40</sup> Pakistan organized armed tribesmen and launched them in to Kashmir. Official sources and army officers were provided to lead the tribesmen from Waziristan in to Kashmir; the NWFP's Chief Minister Qayyum Khan organized the dispatch of the tribal warring parties from his office in Peshawar.<sup>41</sup> Later this jihadist model was used in the 1960s for its ill conceived operation Gibraltar, in Kashmir again and led to the 1965 war with India.<sup>42</sup> According to tribal elders in Waziristan, thousands of tribesmen were ready to die for the sake of the Pakistan and hundreds of them fought alongside the Pakistani army against Indian forces.<sup>43</sup> To counter the Afghan stance on Pashtoonistan and to have strategic depth in Afghanistan and also to have ready made forces for the jihad in Kashmir, the Pakistani leaders have chosen to align it to the Islamists forces within the tribal areas. In addition, the Pakistani military rulers have also used the religious forces to legitimize their rule and fight political opponents. It is worth mentioning that in Pakistan, civilian and military rulers with autocratic tendencies used Islam as an instrument.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, the Islamists forces have been allies in the Pakistan's military's efforts to seek strategic depth in Afghanistan and to put pressure on India for negotiations over the future of Kashmir.<sup>45</sup>

### **The Soviet-Afghan War and Militancy in the Pak-Afghan Borderland**

Since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, the Pashtoonistan question remained a constant source of tension between the two countries. After the emergence of nationalists in Afghanistan, who were pro-Moscow and the staunch supporters of Pashtoonistan, alarmed the Pakistani decision makers. Pakistan embarked on a pro-active Afghan policy soon after Sardar Daud, seized power at Kabul in 1973 while King Zahir Shah, his cousin, was on a foreign tour.<sup>46</sup> The Pakistani government decided to play the religious card and created centers of resistance through proxies inside Afghanistan. "We had permanent geopolitical interests in Afghanistan and that we should groom people from inside Afghanistan to guard that interest."<sup>47</sup> Those anti-Daud elements like Gulbaddin Hikmatyar, Ahmed Shah Masood, Burhanuddin Rabbani and Sibhat ullah Mujadeddi were brought to Pakistan for military training and sent back to create instability in Afghanistan against the Daud regime.<sup>48</sup> Hundreds of tribesmen from the tribal areas were already fighting alongside these Islamists rebels, as the Daud government was portrayed as pro-communists and hence the friend of an

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 1

<sup>40</sup> Robert Lane, "Mullahs and Maliks", (Masters Thesis: University of Pennsylvania, 2008), 22. See also, Pakistan and the Afghan Conflict by Grare.

<sup>41</sup> Mohammad Aslam Khattak, *A Pathan Odyssey*, (Karachi: Oxford University, 2005), 60.

<sup>42</sup> Altaf Gauhar, *Ayub Khan: Pakistan's First Military Ruler*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1996), 209-215

<sup>43</sup> Interview with a Tribal elder, Akber Khan, 12 December 2007, Village Ali Khel: North Waziristan Agency.

<sup>44</sup> Veena kokreja, 156

<sup>45</sup> Hussain Haqqani, *Pakistan between mosque military*, (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 2005), 3.

<sup>46</sup> Imtiaz Gul, *The unholy Nexus: Pak-Afghan Relations under the Taliban*, (Islamabad: Vanguard Books, 2002), 10.

<sup>47</sup> General Naseerullah Khan Babar, Interview with Imtiaz Gul and quoted in the *Unholy Nexus*, 11.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Salab Mehsud, A senior Tribal Journalist and the head of the "Union of Tribal Journalists"

infidel government.<sup>49</sup> Many Islamist rebels were arrested by the Daud government in the summer of 1974.<sup>50</sup> Most of the activists were based in Peshawar and their training centers in the tribal areas where they were protected by the Pakistani military establishment. Their offices were in Peshawar while others found sanctuary in Miran Shah, Parachinar, Mohmand and Bajaur in the tribal areas.<sup>51</sup> They launched a failed insurrection in Afghanistan in the summer of 1975.<sup>52</sup> The highly organized Jamaat-i-Islami led by Qazi Hussain Ahmed was openly supporting the movement against the Afghan government.<sup>53</sup> However, Daud and his entire family were killed in a coup known as Saur Revolution staged by pro-communist military officers of the People Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) on April 27, 1978 due to his authoritarian rule and repressive policy against the PDPA members.<sup>54</sup>

The PDPA leader Noor Mohammad Taraki and its members wanted to transform the socio-political set up of the Afghan society by introducing rapid reforms in the country on modern lines.<sup>55</sup> They were handling the Islamists and the traditionalists with an iron hand. All of the Islamists elements whom Daud had arrested in 1974 were murdered in a single night.<sup>56</sup> This enabled Islamabad to gradually organize the resistance by mobilizing carefully selected men and groups as messengers of ideology with geopolitical consequences, which converged with Pakistan's interests. Most of the opposition forces (Mujahiddin) against the PDPA government were establishing their basis in the tribal areas on Pakistani side of the Durand line.<sup>57</sup> Almost all the Pashtoon nationalists' leaders in Afghanistan and Pakistan welcomed the Saur Revolution and the PDPA government. However, there was general uprising both by the Islamists and the traditionalist tribal society against the PDPA government in Afghanistan. In order to save the pro-Marxist PDPA government, the Soviet Union militarily invaded Afghanistan on 27<sup>th</sup> December, 1979.

The invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union took the world by surprise especially, the United States, other Western powers and more particularly Pakistan with whom Afghanistan shares 1400 miles long border. It allegedly posed a direct security threat to Pakistan and its geopolitical interests in the region. The United States, the rival super power of the Soviet Union was concerned about the expansionist policy of the Soviet Union and wanted to teach a lesson to the Soviet Union and avenge her defeat in Vietnam War in the 1960s. The Pakistani military government of General Zia-ul-Haq got a chance to legitimize his authority within the country by taking the Islamic cause of jihad and to gain economic and military aid for the military to enhance its fighting capability against the Indian forces. The Pakistani government could not tolerate Afghanistan ruled by the Soviet Union which was the supporter of the Pashtoonistan issue and an ally of its arch rival, India.

However, the real and potential threat was to the Pashtoons on either side of the Durand Line who have historically resisted all foreign invaders. Since the Pashtoons on both side of the border share their happiness and sorrows due to their common historical, cultural and ethnic bonds, therefore, any development in Afghanistan will directly or indirectly affects the Pashtoons in Pakistan that constitute the second largest population in Pakistan after Punjabis. Thousands of Afghan refugees after the Soviet invasion started migrating in to the tribal areas of NWFP. Between January and December 1980, around 80,000 to 90,000 refugees crossed

---

<sup>49</sup> Akber, 12 December 2007, Village Ali Khel: North Waziristan Agency.

<sup>50</sup> Martin Ewans, *Afghanistan: A new history*, (Great Britain: Curzon press, 2001), 142.

<sup>51</sup> Rifat Hussain, "Pakistan's Relations with Afghanistan: Continuity and Change", 18. Cited on [http://www.issi.org.pk/journal/2002\\_files/no\\_article/3a.htm](http://www.issi.org.pk/journal/2002_files/no_article/3a.htm)

<sup>52</sup> Oliver Roy, "Islamic radicalism in Afghanistan and Pakistan", (Switzerland: UNHCR, January 2002), 6.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>54</sup> Frederic Grare, 6.

<sup>55</sup> Mohammad Tauqir Alam, *An analysis of the Afghan resistance against the Soviet Invasion*, (Phd thesis: University of Peshawar, 2005), 31.

<sup>56</sup> Martin Ewans, 142.

<sup>57</sup> Frederic Grare, 7.



the border every month. By the end of the 1981, their total number had gone up to 2,375,000.<sup>58</sup> The Pakistani government under General Zia ul Haq and the people of the tribal areas welcomed the Afghans. Approximately 2.2 million Afghan refugees were residing in 251 camps in the North West Frontier Province and its adjacent tribal areas.<sup>59</sup>

The Pakistani government backed by the US and other Western and Muslim countries started supporting the resistance groups against the Soviet Union. The cry of “Islam in danger” was raised and the movement for jihad was carried to the extreme in Afghanistan and the tribal areas.<sup>60</sup> Various groups of Mujahiddin commanders were created; especially the well known Peshawar based seven parties under different commanders for an easy control. The refugees were obliged to register themselves with one of the fighting commanders for receiving the foreign aid.<sup>61</sup> Most of the training camps for the Afghan jihad and Kashmir were situated in the tribal areas or along the tribal belt. In this jihadi atmosphere, the generous flow of money and arms to the Afghan field commanders and mujahiddin fighting in various parts of Afghanistan were all passing through these areas.<sup>62</sup> From 1978 to 1992, \$ 66 billion worth of weaponry was introduced into the region which works out, at \$ 134 million per person.<sup>63</sup>

Lt. General Akhter Abdul Rehman, the head of Pakistan’s Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), in partnership with the Central intelligence Agency (CIA), conducted the biggest covert operation in modern history.<sup>64</sup> The two organizations had secretly collaborated for years, yet General Zia was not ready to give a free hand to the CIA. He laid down strict rules to ensure that the ISI would maintain control over contacts with the mujahiddin. He made it clear that the distribution of weapons to the mujahiddin commanders would be handled only by the ISI. The anti-Daud Afghan elements which were working under the pay of Pakistan and had been living in Pakistan since 1973 were reorganized by the ISI. While the CIA supplied money and weapons, it was the ISI that moved them to Afghanistan.<sup>65</sup> If Pakistan became what the US called “a frontline state” in the battle to contain Soviet communism in the region, the NWFP became the “frontline province” and the tribal areas became the “frontline area” in the new “Great Game” between the US and the former USSR.<sup>66</sup>

The tribal areas therefore, continued to be the home of millions of Afghan refugees; and with them the commanders and the fighters belonging to different groups of mujahiddin. Roughly, the total organized strength of the major fighting parties as reportedly claimed was about 73,000 organized cadre and 151,000 total followers.<sup>67</sup> The whole area was under the control of these mujahiddin and the local administration of the area was helpless in dealing with the tribal affairs and the holy warriors were heavily armed and enjoyed the support of the higher authorities in Islamabad.<sup>68</sup> The traditional elders were replaced in the camps with mullahs handpicked by the “Peshawar seven” with the consent of the Pakistani authorities. In this vicious circle of vested interests, the clerics gained increased respect in their role as deputies to the Mujahiddin leadership.<sup>69</sup> All the religio-political parties like Jamiat-e-Ulama Islam of

---

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 40.

<sup>59</sup> Fazal-ur-Rahim Marwat, *From Muhajir to Mujahid, Politics of War Through Aid: A Case Study of Afghan Refugees in NWFP*, (Peshawar: Pakistan Study Centre, University of Peshawar, 2005), 1.

<sup>60</sup> Fazal-ur-Rahim Marwat, “The Genesis of Change and Modernization in Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan”, Islamabad Policy Research Institute, Islamabad. Volume. VII, Number. 2, Summer 2007), 76.

<sup>61</sup> Frederic Grare, 82.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.77

<sup>63</sup> Steve coll, *Ghost Wars, the secret history of the CIA, Afghanistan and bin Ladin*, (London: Oxford University Press, 2004), 2.

<sup>64</sup> Zahid Hussain, *Frontline Pakistan: struggle with militant Islam*, (Lahore: Vanguard books, 2007), 16.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid;

<sup>66</sup> Fazal-ur-Rahim Marwat, “The Genesis of Change and Modernization in Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan”, 76.

<sup>67</sup> Fazal-ur- Rahim Marwat, *From Muhajir to Mujahid: Politics of War through Aid*, 75.

<sup>68</sup> Rashid Ahmed Khan, 39

<sup>69</sup> Fazal-ur- Rahim Marwat, *From Muhajir to Mujahid: Politics of War Through Aid*, 24.

Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman and Sami-ul-Haq, and the highly organized Jamaat-e-Islami openly supported the Afghan Jihad in Afghanistan and their militant leaders in the tribal areas.<sup>70</sup> In addition, thousands of new Madrassas were opened throughout the country to impart religious education and prepare them for the Afghan jihad. In 1971, there were only 900 madrassas in Pakistan. By 1988 there were 8000 registered and 25000 unregistered madrassas.<sup>71</sup> Almost one thousand madrassas in the NWFP and 300 in the tribal areas were established. Thousands of Muslims from across the world and hundreds of students were brought for the cause of jihad by the Pakistani government. Most of them were admitted in the Islamic madrassas to prepare them for their religious duty to fight the infidels in Afghanistan. It was reported that “the Khdam-ud-Din madrassa is training students from Burma, Chechnya, Bangladesh, Nepal, Afghanistan, Yamen, Mongolia and Kuwait. Nearly half the student body at Darul-Ulum-Haqqania in Akora Khattak was from Afghanistan and a number were from Central Asia.<sup>72</sup> Millions of dollars were contributed by Arab organizations and rich individuals mostly from Saudi Arabia. If the sum spent was \$3 billion then half would have been Saudi Arabian government money.<sup>73</sup> Nothing was to occur without the knowledge and approval of the Pakistani authorities in Islamabad and Rawalpindi.<sup>74</sup> All these events and policies ultimately led to the rise of Taliban in Afghanistan in 1996, the 9/11 event and the subsequent United States attack on Afghanistan and the war continued for twenty long years till the US mysterious withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2020. Despite the Afghan Taliban take over in Afghanistan, the tribal areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are once again under the shadow of militancy and religious extremism. The area is under the indirect control of militant groups hiding in the hilly areas of the Pak- Afghan borderland.

## Conclusion

The Pak- Afghan borderland or the tribal areas of NWFP (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) have seen perhaps more invasions in the course of history than any other country in Asia. Historically, it has been a gateway into the Indian Subcontinent. The Pashtoon tribesmen inhabiting the area have experienced, but resisted, the invasions by Persians, Greeks, Mongols, Mughals, Durranis, Sikhs and the British. They proved themselves problematic for the British imperial rulers of India who succeeded in devising a policy of control and persuasion under the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

After the British withdrawal from India and the creation of Pakistan as a modern nation state in 1947, the later bequeathed the British legacy and retained the special status of the tribal areas for serving vested political and security interests in the region. However, the Pakistani policy makers used religion as a political tool for dealing and countering the Afghan claims over Pakistani territories of the Pashtoons and also to wage jihad against the Indian forces in Kashmir through mujahidin. Soon after creation of Pakistan, its rulers hastily organized the Pashtoon tribesmen for jihad and a lashkar of more than ten thousand tribesmen supported by the chief minister of NWFP, Qayum Khan and Pakistani military was taken to Kashmir who fought valiantly.

The communist backed Saur revolution in Afghanistan in 1978 and the subsequent Soviet Union's invasion in December 1979 that took the world by surprise especially, the United States, western powers and more particularly Pakistan with whom Afghanistan shares 1400 miles long border. It allegedly posed a direct security threat to Pakistan and its geopolitical interests in the region. The United States on the other hand was concerned about the

---

<sup>70</sup> Fazal-ur- Rahim Marwat, *From Muhajir to Mujahid: Politics of War through Aid*, 87.

<sup>71</sup> Steve coll, 2

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 45

<sup>73</sup> Mohammad Yousuf Mark Adkin, *The Bear Trap: Afghanistan Untold story*, (Lahore: Jang publisher, 1002), 90.

<sup>74</sup> Fazal-ur- Rahim Marwat, *From Muhajir to Mujahid: Politics of War through Aid*, 12.

expansionist policy of the Soviet Union and wanted to avenge her defeat in Vietnam War in the 1960s.

The Pakistani military government of General Zia-ul-Haq got a chance to legitimize his authority within the country by taking the Islamic cause of jihad and to gain economic and military aid for the military to enhance its fighting capability. Several Mujahiddin groups along with thousands of their supporters were trained in the Pak- Afghan borderland. The Jihadi project continued that caused the disintegration of the former Soviet Union and the rise of Taliban in Afghanistan in 1996 that gave rise to events like the 9/11 in the United States.

Despite being a modern state, Pakistan failed to bring the tribal area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa into the mainstream political system of the country for decades. Instead, the area and its people were used as political tools for vested interests by the military dictator General Zia-ul- Haq and his successors. Since, the Afghan Taliban take over in Afghanistan in 2020, the Pakistani rulers and its strong military have been trying to bring the situation in the tribal areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under control and establish modern state institutions. However, the area is still under the shadow of militancy and different militant armed groups are hiding in the hilly areas of the Pak-Afghan borderland. The area is still far away from durable peace and the tribesmen are suffering both at the hands of the militant groups as well as the Pakistani security forces. The Pakistani military leadership and policy makers need to learn from their past mistakes and revisit policy approach towards the Pak-Afghan borderland. The state needs to refrain and abandon Islam and militant groups for securing geo- strategic, financial as well as political interests in the tribal areas.

## **Bibliography**

### **Personal Interview**

Interview with a Tribal elder, Akber Khan, 12 December 2007, Village Ali Khel: North Waziristan Agency.

Interview with Salab Mehsud, A senior Tribal Journalist and the head of the “Union of Tribal Journalists, 3rd December, 2007, Peshawar

### **Newspapers**

The Daily Dawn, “FATA Population Grows by 57 Percent”, 30<sup>th</sup> August 2017.

Khadim Hussain “The FCR controversy”, Daily Dawn, Pakistan, April 14, 2008.

### **Books and Thesis**

Akber S Ahmed, Social and Economic Change in the Tribal Areas, 1972-1976, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1977)

Akber S Ahmed, David M. Hart (edit), Islam in tribal societies, (London: Rutledge & Kegan Paul, 1984)

Altaf Gauhar, Ayub Khan: Pakistan’ First Military Ruler, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1996)

Colonel H.C. Wylly, From the Black mountain to Waziristan, (Lahore: Sang-e-meel Publications)

Fazal-ur-Rahim Marwat, From Muhajir to Mujahid, Politics of War Through Aid: A Case Study of Afghan Refugees in NWFP, (Peshawar: Pakistan Study Centre, University of Peshawar, 2005)

Fida Yunas, Abdul Ghaffar Khan “Pushtunistan” & Afghanistan, (Peshawar, 2002)

Hussain Haqqani, Pakistan Between Mosque Military, (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 2005)

Imtiaz Gul, The unholy Nexus: Pak-Afghan Relations under the Taliban, (Islamabad: Vanguard Books, 2002)

James W Spain, The Pathan Borderland, (Karachi: Indus Publications, 1963)

- Martin Ewans, *Afghanistan: A new history*, (Great Britain: Curzon press, 2001)
- Mohammad Aslam Khattak, *A Pathan Odyssey*, (Karachi: Oxford University, 2005)
- Mohammad Tauqir Alam, *An analysis of the Afghan resistance against the Soviet Invasion*, (Phd thesis: University of Peshawar, 2005)
- Mohammad Yousuf, *The Bear Trap: Afghanistan Untold story*, (Lahore: Jang publisher, 1002)
- Oliver Roy, *Islamic radicalism in Afghanistan and Pakistan*, (Switzerland: UNHCR, January 2002)
- Robert Lane, *Mullahs and Maliks*, (Master's Thesis: University of Pennsylvania, 2008)
- Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah Kaka Khel, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism: Muslim Politics in the NWFP, 1937-1947*, (UK: Oxford University Press, 1999)
- Steve coll, *Ghost Wars, the secret history of the CIA, Afghanistan and bin Ladin*, (London: Oxford University Press, 2004)
- Teepu Mahabat Khan, *The tribal Areas of Pakistan: A contemporary Profile*, (Lahore: Sang-e-meel Publications, 2008)
- Veena Kukreja, *Contemporary Pakistan*, (New Delhi: Sage Publications 2003)
- Zahid Hussain, *Frontline Pakistan: struggle with militant Islam*, (Lahore: Vanguard books, 2007).

### **Journals, Seminars and Reports**

- Ambassador (Retd) Hamayun Khan, "The role the Federal Government and the Political Agent" Islamabad Policy research institute, (Islamabad: Hanns Seidel Foundation, 2005)
- Azmat Hayat Khan, "Inaugural speech of the Tribal Areas of Pakistan", The Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan, (Seminar organized by Area Study Centre, University of Peshawar, December 7-8, 2004, Islamabad: Hanns Seidel Foundation)
- Constitutional status of FCR- paper presented by Dr. Faqir Hussain, Secretary Law and justice commission of Pakistan-Report of the constitution proceedings on the FCR Regulations 1901, organized by Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, October 2004
- Daniel Markey, "Securing Pakistan's Tribal Belt", Council of Foreign Relations (web Report, July 2008), CRS NO. 36, <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900sid/ONIN->
- Fazal-ur-Rahim Marwat, "The Genesis of Change and Modernization in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan", Islamabad Policy Research Institute, Islamabad. Volume. VII, Number. 2, Summer 2007)
- IPRI Paper 10, "Northwest Tribal Belt of Pakistan" Islamabad Policy Research Institute, (Islamabad: Asia Printers, March 2005)
- Lt. Col. Sir Ralph Griffith & Field Marshal Sir Philip Chetwode, "The Frontier Policy of the Government of India", The Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan, Media Cell Governor Secretariat, FATA "Review of the Developmental programs in the NWA", 2005
- Muhammad Yahya Effendi, "Watch and Ward on The Frontier (1849-1947)", The Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan, (Seminar organized by Area Study Centre, University of Peshawar, December 7-8, 2004, Islamabad: Hanns Seidel Foundation)
- Naveed Ahmed Shinwari, *Understanding FATA: Attitudes towards Governance*, (Islamabad: British High commission, 2008)
- Rashid Ahmed Khan, "Political developments in FATA: A Critical Perspective, Islamabad Policy Research Institute, (Islamabad: Hanns Seidel Foundation, 2005)
- Syed Iftikhar Hussain, "Tribal Areas of Pakistan", (Islamabad: Islamabad Policy Research Institute, 2005)
- Rifat Hussain, "Pakistan's Relations with Afghanistan: Continuity and Change", 18. Cited on [http://www.issi.org.pk/journal/2002\\_files/no\\_article/3a.htm](http://www.issi.org.pk/journal/2002_files/no_article/3a.htm)

- Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah, *North-West Frontier Province: History and Politics*, (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research Centre of Excellence, 2007), XV  
Seminar organized by Area Study Centre, University of Peshawar, December 7-8, 2004, Islamabad: Hanns Seidel Foundation
- Susanne Thiel, "Pakhtunwali: Code of Honor of the Pakhtun", *Biannual Research Journal, Central Asia*, Area Study Centre, University of Peshawar, NO.48, summer 2001.
- Rashid Ahmed Khan, "Political developments in FATA: A Critical Perspective", Islamabad Policy Research Institute, (Islamabad: Hanns Seidel Foundation, 2005), 32.
- Khalid Aziz, "Causes of Rebellion in Waziristan", (Peshawar: Regional Institute of Policy Research and Training, 2007), 7.
- Waheed Ahmed, *Quaid-e- Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah: The Nation's Voice*, vol. vii, (Karachi, Quaid-e- Azam Academy, 2003)