

The British Colonial Policies in the North West Frontier of India: 1849-1901

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The paper examines different colonial policies that the British administration envisioned for India's North West Frontier during 1849-1901. The policies were devised to bring the Pashtun dominated areas of the North West Frontier under single central authority. The paper argues that the British policies were formulated for the defence of the Indian colony, while it did not provide a chance to the Pashtuns to get integrated into the British imperial system. Furthermore, the policies were framed purely from a military perspective ignoring the political and economic outlooks and the British administration used brutal force to implement them. However due to the Pashtuns' distinct tribal social structure and lack of the concept of centralized rule, these policies could not achieve the desired colonial objectives .

Keywords: colonial policies, North West Frontier, Pashtuns, British Raj, Durand Line, forward policy, tribal social structure, *Maliks*,

The people, who inhabited the India's North West Frontier bordering with Afghanistan, the Pashtuns, proved to be the most difficult subjects the British Raj had to deal with. Due to the area they inhabited and the history they possessed, the British Raj remained at loggerheads with these people living in their area for centuries without having any concept of centralized authority and any concept of subjugation to any foreign rule. The unique geography, history and particularly coherent social structure played a vital role in determining the Pashtuns' reaction to different Colonial policies of the British administration. The Pashtuns' socially coherent tribal structure did not pave the way for direct foreign rule.

The British Raj had experienced some kind of contact with the Pashtuns during the First Anglo Afghan War (1839-40). However, sustained and direct contact began in 1849, after the annexation of the Punjab in 1849. The area remained part of the Punjab till 1901; however, it was separated for administrative convenience. The new province was then divided into five settled districts and five tribal areas. The areas in which Pashtuns settled were previously considered as part of Sikh dominions. Hence, the Pashtuns directly came under the suzerainty of British administration with the elimination of Sikh rule in the Punjab.

Historically, Pashtuns presented tough resistance to numerous invaders and rulers who wanted to subjugate them under single central authority. It is also true for the British Raj, which one way or the other tried to subdue them. For instance, during the year 1897-98, the British Raj employed 10,000 British and 20,000 native troops in different Pashtun areas of NWF (National

Documentation Center Islamabad, (hereafter NDC), NDC Acc. No. 3946, p.,4). Therefore, the British Raj could not extend its sphere of influence in this area as smoothly as compared to other parts of India. Many factors contributed to the difficulties of the extension of the British Raj in the India's North West Frontier. The most important, however, were the unique geography of the Pashtuns, distinct tribal social structure, their ethno-centrism, their war-like temperament, their desire for independence, and religiosity mixed up within said social structure. The mixture of religion with culture is the main point in understanding the Pashtun resistance against the British Raj. This mixture of religion with culture can be termed as 'religio-culture complex' in which different social groups have their own space for manoeuvring. The introduction of the British Raj in the Pashtun areas threatened the position of different social groups previously enjoying a space in the 'religio-culture complex' (Khan, 2014). Moreover, the British rule largely met failure as they tried to impose certain policies in NWF that had proved successful elsewhere in India but, could not prove fruitful in this area due to the unique nature of the Pashtun society. Moreover, the British Raj did not differentiate between the strategic problem of Indian frontier, which was purely a military one, and that of the administration of the areas, which was purely a political problem. Furthermore, there was negligence and lack of information about the areas inhabited by Pashtuns on the part of rulers. The British Raj instead of tuning the prevailing socio-political system in the Pashtun areas, introduced machinery, which was not suited to the people. The administrative settlement destroyed the power of the local Khans and brought them against the alien government functionaries, who had no knowledge of the tribe concerned. Earlier, the Khans had a say in almost all aspects of the tribes' concerns, however, the introduction of administrative system did not give them that chance to represent the tribe in its dealings with the government. The main purpose of the present article is to critically review the British Colonial policies in the North West Frontier of India from 1849-1901. Moreover, the present study will look into the causes behind the failure of different British Colonial policies in the North West Frontier of India.

Importance of the North West Frontier for the British Raj in India

Due to its geographical position the Pashtun dominated NWF has played a vital role in the history of India and so it did in the days of British rule. It is pertinent to mention that once the area had been made a separate province in 1901, the total area of the province, amounted to 8,436,202 acres, 2,639,727 acres or 31 percent cultivated and 5,796,475 acres or 69 percent uncultivated (Administration Report NWFP 1901-1903, NDC Acc. No. 4536, p.13). The area had no economic significance for the British Raj. The revenue collected from the province always remained less than the actual expenditure on the administration of the province. For instance, the total revenue collected for the year 1903-04 was Rs.33,02,584/- while expenditure was Rs.55,18,902/- (NDC Acc. No. 4536, p.29). Moreover, during the year 1910-11 total revenue collected was Rs. 46,57,275/- while expenditure was Rs.99,33,435/- (Administration Report of NWFP 1910-11, p.75.).

However, it is not to suggest that the Pashtun dominated area had no significance at all for the British authorities. For instance, its population was very important. The total population was 2,425,076 in the year 1931 (Census of India 1931 cited by Rittenberg, 1988, p.187- 201). Therefore, one cannot neglect the importance of the North West Frontier of India inhabited mostly by the Pashtuns. However, the area became more important for the British government when it was realized that Russia was stretching its arms in Central Asia and there was a chance that Russia may one day knock on the doors of Afghanistan. According to one of the authors, "The danger was that the spread of Russian influence into Iran and Afghanistan would cause unrest in India" (Yapp, 1980, p.15). The writer is of the view that Russian or any other power increase influence on the borders of

British India can incite the internal enemy. The external enemy was feared because of his potential effect upon the internal enemy. (Yapp, 1980, p.15). Furthermore, the British Raj strategists' concern was always to keep Russia at an arm's length. "In one way or another, the external enemy (Russia) should be kept at a distance so that his vexations would exhaust themselves in places remote from British territory" (Yapp, 1980, p.16).

At that time, it was decided to keep Afghanistan as a buffer state between the two giants- Russian Bear and English Lion- and strengthen the British India defence in the trans-Indus areas neighbouring Afghanistan. In some quarters of British authorities, a constant fear was if Afghanistan ceased to be a buffer state, then what would the best possible strategy be for the defence of India against any possible Russian threat. "The day may not be far distant when Afghanistan ceases to be a buffer State" (Colonel Dews' Note, NDC Acc. No. 244, p.6). From the conquest of the Punjab, in 1849, frontier policy towards NWF of India can be termed as "non-intervention", but, the arrival of Lord Lytton in 1876 marked the end of "masterly inactivity" and the military strategist divided into two opposing camps, the Forward and the Stationary. Both these schools of thought can further be divided into extremists and the moderates. The extremists of the Forward policy did not know where their advance would stop; while the moderates wanted a best strategic frontier with least possible advance. While on the other hand, the extreme exponent of non-intervention would hold the Indus as a strategic point, however, the moderates would incline an advance if there were any real Russian menace (Colonel Dews, 1932/1974, p.3-4). Moreover, from 1887-1898 a marked development in policy toward NWF had been brought about under the Viceroyalty of Lord Lansdowne and of his successor Lord Elgin. In 1887, the government of India informed the Punjab government that "the time has arrived when it becomes of extreme importance that an effort be made to bring under control, and, if possible, to organize, for purpose of defence against external aggression, the great belt of independent tribal territory which lied along our North-Western Frontier, and which has hitherto been allowed to remain a formidable barrier against ourselves." (Memorandum by Viceroy Lord Linlithgow on Frontier Policy, NDC Acc. No. file No. S. 169, p.5). In other words, the emphasis at that moment was, in the mind of the Government of India, primarily on the establishment of a kind of defence in relation to *external aggression*. Therefore, NWF of India should be seen in the larger imperial defence of India for the continuity of British Raj in India (From Chief Commissioner to the Governor General NWF, NDC, Acc. No. 244, p. 54). As stated by Sir John Maffey, Chief Commissioner and Agent to the Governor General NWFP, "It was the fear of Napoleon Bonaparte and his Eastern ambitions which brought Mountstuart Elphinstone to Peshawar in 1810. It was fear of the Russian menace to India which carried Sir William Macnaghten, Sir Alexander Burnes, and thousands of Englishmen and women to a dark death in Kabul in 1841. Again, fear of Russia led up to the murder of Cavagnari in Kabul in 1879, and to the disaster of Maiwand. This last chapter has its glories associated with the name of Roberts. But surely no conquering Napoleon or Czar, no corrosive Lenin, no exuberant Amir can again tempt us forth beyond our mountains if we remain sane" (From Chief Commissioner to the Governor General NWF, NDC, Acc. No. 244, p. 54). Many British officials were of the view that, "The very safety of India depends on the success of our administration of this Frontier" (Memorandum on Frontier Administration, NDC, Acc. No. 244, p. 29). However, in point of population, area, or wealth, it is true that the NWF was almost an insignificant piece as compared to other areas of India, in the "Indian jigsaw puzzle." The province proper, that is the five administered Districts of Hazara, Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, and Dera Ismail Khan has only 2,425,000 inhabitants or 1/112th of the population of British India and 1/145th of that of all India including the Indian states (Records of the North West Frontier Secretariat, NDC, Acc. No. File No. S. 160, p.2). Therefore, the British imperial policies in this region should be seen in the context of its imperial defence of India.

Closed Border and Forward Policies and its Impacts

The British authorities keeping in view their imperial obligation to defend India, formulated many policies, which they pursued in this region. However, the two policies formulated for this region can broadly be defined as, non-interference with the tribes, which was the essence of the Closed Border, and the Forward Policy, advocating penetration into the tribal belt so as to secure the defence of India. Moreover, both these policies played a vital role during the period under study. Foreign Secretary Government of India defined these two policies as:

The Closed Border policy may be defined in its extremist form as the confining of our (British) activities strictly to the administered border, leaving the tribes on the other side of that border to look after themselves, interfering with them and endeavouring to influence them in no way; refraining from crossing the border ourselves, save as might be necessitated for the purposes of a punitive expedition, and then only for the period necessary for that punitive expedition; and refusing to consider any extension of the area under control beyond its existing limits. This policy in its extreme form is that laid down by Sir John Lawrence and maintained more or less up to 1890. (Records of the North West Frontier Secretariat, NDC, Acc. No. File No. S. 160, Appendix VI, p.46).

Moreover, there was a "Modified Close-border policy" as well, which can be defined as:

In essentials identical with the strict close-border policy described above, put representing a relaxation of that policy to the extent that contacts with the trans-border tribes are easier, that certain commitments have been undertaken and must be honoured outside the administered territory. Thus from 1895, certain undertakings of protection are extended to the Daurs in the Tochi Valley and revenue collected from them. But the underlying principle is still to maintain the peace of the Settled Districts from the border of those districts and to avoid, so far as practicable, any permanent occupation, or the acceptance of any permanent commitments, in the tribal territory between the administered border and the Durand Line. (Records of the North West Frontier Secretariat, NDC, Acc. No. File No. S. 160, Appendix VI, p.46).

During the Close-border policy period there was less chance of collision with the independent Pashtun tribes on the immediate border of the British Raj. However, this system could not continue for long and a shift of policy occurred during the last decade of the 19th century in which the British Raj made incursions into the tribal belt. This shift of policy can be termed as Forward Policy and can be defined as: "In extreme form the 'forward' policy involves the subjugation and the occupation of tribal territory up to the Durand Line." (Records of the North West Frontier Secretariat, NDC, Acc. No. File No. S. 160, Appendix VI, p.46). Besides, there was a "Modified Forward Policy" which can be defined as:

The modified "forward" policy, while accepting that penetration and occupation up to the Durand Line may ultimately be-

1. Necessary conquest on tribal misbehaviour,
2. Necessary for the fulfilment of our (British) international obligation,
3. The inevitable outcome of a policy of peaceful penetration, and of endeavouring to extend our influence over the tribes lying between the administered border and the Durand Line. Contemplates a slow progress, peaceful penetration, the extension of

influence gradually and by peaceful means, save where tribal misconduct makes it essential for us to adopt military measures. In that latter event, advantage to be taken of the occasion to consolidate further and extend our influence in the areas affected, notably by building of roads (Records of the North West Frontier Secretariat, NDC, Acc. No. File No. S. 160, Appendix VI, p.46).

However, both the policies had their strengths and weaknesses. The inherent defects of the Closed Border Policy were that it made no attempt to solve the economic problem by finding employment for the Pashtun tribesmen who could never hope to submit on the miserable products of their own country. It established a kind of a blockade and perpetuated ill-feeling and hostile collision between the tribesmen and the alien frontier constabulary. Furthermore, it kept the British Raj ignorant of the doings of the tribes and threw them politically into the hands of Afghan Amir (NDC, Acc. No. 244, p. 9).

From the outset, the British Raj introduced 'The Punjab System' or 'alternate violence and inaction' or a policy of 'butchery or scuttle' (Speech by the Earl of Northbrook in the House of Lords, 1898, NDC Acc. No. 4187, p.7-8). The Punjab System continued for many years. However, the British Raj concluded to introduce the Sandeman System, which earlier proved successful in Balochistan but failed to achieve its desired objectives in NWF. Numerous reasons contributed towards the failure of policies, which were elsewhere successful but did not get the desired objectives in the Pashtun dominated areas (Memorandum on Frontier Administration, NDC Acc. No. 244, p.24). It was unfortunate for the British Raj that Sikhs were their immediate predecessors in the NWF, and the first 'colossal' mistake while annexing the Punjab from Sikhs' dominion was "the taking over of the frontier districts from the Sikhs, and the acceptance of an ill-defined administrative boundary"(Davies, 1932/1974, p.21). Furthermore, for Sikhs, frontier administration was of "the loosest type"(Davies, 1932/1974, p.21). As the Earl of Northbrook made a statement in the House of Lords, "The other side of the Indus was only held by the Sikhs by force of arms. They (Sikhs) sent a military force there from time to time to collect revenue, but they had no real hold of the country" (Speech by the Earl of Northbrook in the House of Lords, 1898, NDC Acc. No. 4187, p.6). The Sikh rule of the area, however, made it difficult for the British Raj to run the administration. The British Raj had to develop new administrative strategies for coping with the situation. The British authorities had to introduce new administrative reforms, a well-defined boundary, satisfying ethnological, political, and defence purposes, as well as road and railway systems for the movement of troops.

The model, which followed the British authorities for annexing NWF, was similar to the Sandeman System, which proved very successful in Baluchistan. The Sandeman system could also be termed as 'friendly and conciliatory intervention'. It proved successful in the hierarchical society of Baluchistan but did not produce the 'desired objectives' in the Pashtun areas. The most significant distinction between Pashtun society and Baloch society to be mentioned over here is that the Pashtuns had an egalitarian democratic character and well-organized social structure. These two aspects of the Pashtun society did not allow British forces to extend their sphere of influence in the Pashtun dominated areas as easily as they did in Baluchistan. The weak social structure and hierarchical character of Baloch society helped them to capture areas of strategic importance. Moreover, the desire for independence of the Pashtuns made things much more complicated for the British authorities. Earl of Northbrook while commenting on the problem of North-West Frontier in the British Parliament said that, "I can conceive nothing more likely to create suspicion among these tribes than for them to see our officers at the top of their hills, surveying and making maps of their country; for these Pathan tribes are as jealous of their independence as the natives of Switzerland

and other mountainous countries” (Speech by the Earl of Northbrook in the House of Lords, 1898, NDC Acc. No. 4187, p.11).

Furthermore, the Sandeman system was quite successful amongst Baloch tribes where there were tribal chiefs powerful enough to control the tribes for which they were responsible (Davies, 1932/1974, p.34). While at the same time the Balochs according to C.C Davies were, “Less turbulent, less fanatical, and less blood thirsty, he (Baloch) is far easier to control than the Pathan” (Davies, 1932/1974, p.47). However, in Baluchistan, the essence of the system was the administration on tribal lines, the growth and development of their own institutions and customs. It focused on the preservation of the natural feudal system, and the encouragement, even among Pashtun tribes who tend to be democratic, of the influence of the tribal leaders. It is government by the people and for the people. The Pashtun chieftain is always considered as “First among equals”; he could not become godfather for his people as was common in Baloch society.

Wherever possible the tribes’ people themselves provided the machinery of government; the law was interpreted easily; the revenue system was simple and easily understood. The result was that the people, from high to low, understood and appreciated what was the actual truth - that the first and last object of the administration was to satisfy and help them; and there followed the closest co-operation between officials and non-officials. In the North West Frontier, the system had been widely different. The British Raj attempted to force upon the tribes of the North West Frontier, laws and ideas which were foreign to them, and could therefore do them no good. Moreover, the introduction of new ideas stopped their natural development by substituting a civilization grown for the personal use of the British. Between the people and the British officials, the old link - which was the Khan - had disappeared; and the two grew farther and farther apart (Memorandum on Frontier Administration, NDC Acc. No. 244, p.24). However, the hierarchical social structure and powerful chiefs made British Raj’s penetration easier into Baluchistan, but it was not only due to the presence of powerful tribal chiefs. R.I Bruce, the person who introduced Sandeman system in Waziristan was of the view that Sandeman system could not have succeeded with the Pashtun tribes higher up the frontier to the same extent that it did with the Balochs; because it is said that Pashtuns are more democratic and not so amenable to the authority of their chiefs. But, according to Bruce, the success of Sandeman in Pashtun areas of Baluchistan like Harnai, Quetta, Peshin, Thal-Choteali, Bori, and Zhob, proved that this system could also be successful in other Pashtun dominated areas. According to Bruce, it is the *Sirkar* who makes or unmakes these men (tribal chiefs) by supporting them materially (Bruce, 1900, p.18-19). Furthermore, Sandeman supported the right man in the right place, and it was that support which had made them what they were (Bruce, 1900, p. 170).

On the other hand, the Pashtuns’ tribal conditions and social structure was vastly different from Baluchistan, and thus one policy could not be made successful in both areas (Memorandum by His Excellency the Viceroy Lord Linlithgow on Frontier Policy, NDC Acc. No. IV C-1, file No. S. 160, p.18). Moreover, the fighting strength of Pashtun tribes during the period was far superior than the Baloch tribes. For instance, the Mahsuds numbered some eight thousand fighting men, while the total fighting strength of Marris and Bugtis combined did not exceed six thousand (Bruce, 1900, p.170). While the estimated fighting strength of different tribes stood as: Yusufzai of Dir, Upper and Lower Swat, Buner, Swabi, and Mardan tehsils - 122,600; Mohmand of Mohmand country, and Peshawar - 34,448; and Afridis of Kohat district, Peshawar district, and Khyber Agency - 51,230 (Aitchison, 1933, p.391). Moreover, the democratic character of the Pashtun society made *Maliks* weaker as compared to Baloch *sirdars* or *Tumandars*. *Maliks* had been incorporated in Pashtun

society for different services and this can also be termed as Maliki system, through which British Raj exercised its powers indirectly in tribal areas particularly. The Maliks were selected by British authorities and graded according to their supposed power and influence and paid allowances for the services they rendered. Most of the Maliki allowance was made in two forms, as 'Tumani' that would be distributed amongst the sections of the tribe according to tribal shares, and as 'Maliki' that is to be distributed for 'Khidmat' namely for services rendered. The British authorities usually did not inform Maliks how much of their allowances were 'Tumani' and how much Maliki ('Khidmati'). Later, an effort was made to get the entirety of the allowances to be regarded as Maliki ('Khidmati'). This later arrangement made the situation complicated, as the tribesmen did not receive share in the allowances and that made the position of a Malik vulnerable. The tribesmen then termed their respective Maliks as mere representatives of the government instead of the tribe. (Note on the General System of Tribal Maliki Allowances, by C.E. Bruce, NDC Acc. No. 4, p.vi). For instance, 280 *Maliks* were recognized by Mr. Bruce in Mahsud country, while 254 *Maliks* were recognized by Mr. Anderson in the Darwesh Khel country on the Tochi side. (*Selection from the records of the North West Frontier Province Secretariat*, NDC Acc. No. IV C-1, file no. S.160, p.46.). For the services these *Maliks* rendered, they were given allowance in return. For instance, in Tochi valley three tribal sections, Utmanzai, Ahmadzai, and Dauris received Rs.63,736/- on September 1st, 1895. (*Selection from the records of the North West Frontier Province Secretariat*, NDC Acc. No. IV C-1, file no. S.160, p.67). Instead of making a *Malik* stronger by receiving allowances from British Raj, the position of a *Malik* became weaker in Pashtun society. For instance, immediately after the conclusion of Kelly's murder case, two of the Maliks, who acted on the jirga under the superintendence of the Commissioner and convicted the prisoners, were assassinated (*Selection from the records of the North West Frontier Province Secretariat*, NDC Acc. No. IV C-1, file no. S.160, p.67). In many cases, the funeral ceremonies of different *Maliks* were not observed by his clan due to the propaganda of different *Mullahs*. For example, in Waziristan area, Mullah Powindah, who had great influence on tribes raised ill-feeling against Maliks, who were receiving British allowances and ordered that no funeral ceremonies shall be performed at the death of any one receiving allowances from British authorities (*Selection from the records of the North West Frontier Province Secretariat*, NDC Acc. No. IV C-1, file no. S.160, p.47). The British Raj wanted to convert *Maliks* from mere representatives of Pashtuns to servants of Raj, and in return turned the tribes against the *Maliks*, who were receiving allowances from the British authorities (*Selection from the records of the North West Frontier Province Secretariat*, NDC Acc. No. IV C-1, file no. S.160, p. 47).

While introducing the *Maliki* system, Mr Bruce committed many mistakes, which his senior Sandeman did not in Baluchistan. Firstly, Bruce did not occupy any place strategically important as Sandeman did in Baluchistan; this made the work of *Maliks* difficult, as they could not be assisted by the British authorities in case of an emergency. Secondly, the presence of powerful tribal chiefs in Baloch society made it easier for Sandeman to manoeuvre, while the absence of such powerful tribal chiefs in Pashtun areas made the task complicated for Bruce. Lastly, the democratic character of Pashtuns made it extremely difficult to control them through their *Maliks* (Davies,1932/1974, p.124-125).

A Baloch tribe has at the head of it a single leader, a *Tumandar*, a man whose family have occupied the same position for generations, a man of wealth, high position, and dignity whose word is law amongst his people. While in Pashtun areas, however, the British authorities came to confront scores of men instead of a single leader. "They (Pashtuns) are disposed to say, as I heard of some tribe saying not long ago, 'we have no Maliks among us,' or again 'we are all Maliks'" (*Selection from*

the records of the North West Frontier Province Secretariat, NDC Acc. No. IV C-1, file no. S.160, p.46). The Pashtuns claim that they belong to one tree. Different tribes are various branches while the roots and trunk are the same. This leads to the Pashtuns' feeling of pride in belonging to one big tribe and gives them the sense of equality and fraternity among the fellow Pashtuns. So, the characteristics of Baloch society were different from that of Pashtun society, and due to the reasons mentioned above, the Sandeman system did not prove successful in the North West Frontier of India.

During the three decades of British occupation of North-West Frontier i.e. 1849-79, the British faced a lot of problems including administrative and political. "What right have we (British) to take away the independence of the tribes?" was a question asked by different military officials whom were deployed at NWF in different campaigns; the answer had always been that "None whatever unless we give them something better to replace what we are taking away" (C.E. Bruce, 1938, p.14). One can easily find in the aftermath of the British arrival in Pashtun areas, a story of continued struggle between the two parties; Pashtun for independence and British Raj for giving 'Pashtuns better to replace what had been taken away'. This struggle continued for almost a century. Further, the intransigent behaviour and desire for independence of the Pashtuns compelled the authorities to use brutal force. The three decades from 1849-79 proved fatal both for the British armed forces and the Pashtun rebels, who rose against the foreign yoke. Nevertheless, between 1849 and 1890, no less than forty-two expeditions had been considered necessary to counteract the 'marauding proclivities' of the 'turbulent tribesmen' (Davies, 1932/1974, p. 27). The presence of the British forces was considered as against their customs and traditions and a threat to their independence; hence the penetration of British Raj should be halted.

Afterwards, the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-80) started, which proved a disaster for British forces, but the British established its pro-British king at Kabul and signed a treaty of Gandamak on May 26th, 1879. This treaty provided an opportunity for British Raj to station a permanent resident in Kabul. Furthermore, control of Afghanistan's foreign affairs was placed in the hand of the Government of India. Article 3 of Gandamak Treaty states that the Amir of Afghanistan and its dependencies agrees to conduct relations with Foreign States, in accordance with the advice and wishes of the British Government. His Highness the Amir will enter into no engagements with Foreign States and will not take arms against any Foreign State except with the concurrence of the British Government (C.U Aitcheson, NDC Acc.No. 4480, p. 240-42). Moreover, the Amir granted Britain the districts of Kurram, Pishin and Sibi, and, most importantly, the strategic Khyber and Michni Passes. In exchange, the Amir received an annual subsidy of six lakh rupees along with a promise of British support against aggression by a foreign power. Article 9 of the Treaty of Gandamak states that His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan and its dependencies agrees on his part that the districts of Kurram, and Pishin, and Sibi, shall remain under the protection and administrative control of the British Government; that is to say, the aforesaid districts shall be treated as assigned districts, and shall not be considered as permanently severed from the limits of the Afghan kingdom. The revenues of these districts after deducting the charges of civil administration shall be paid to His Highness the Amir (C.U Aitcheson, NDC Acc.No. 4480, p. 242).

As it is obvious from the treaty in which lot of territorial concessions were being made by Afghan Amir, the result was that Pashtuns, earlier under Amir's suzerainty, were brought under the British Raj. The Second Anglo-Afghan War also gave a chance to the British authorities to get more and more information about the independent Pashtun tribes. This was gained by the British forces while crossing the area. Moreover, one can see that the same information was used by British forces

while dealing with the Pashtuns. The decade following i.e. 1879-89, the British forces constantly struggled to pursue "Forward Policy" to get hold of these people living in the difficult hill terrains of areas bordering Afghanistan. The problem, which the British forces were facing, was that they annexed an area without any formal information and administration. The British Raj first had to establish itself in the area, and secondly, they had to introduce efficient administration, which could enable the British authorities to rule these areas smoothly. For this purpose, the British pursued different policies and mechanisms.

For effective administration of the area, the British government formed Commissionership of Peshawar, which comprised of three northern districts, while three Southern districts were kept under the Commissionership of Derajat in 1876. The system of political agencies was not adopted until 1878, when a special officer was appointed for the Khyber during the Second Afghan War. Kurram became an agency in 1892, while the three remaining agencies of the Malakand, Tochi, and Wana were created between 1895 and 1896 (Davies, 1932/1974, p.24).

Three types of methods were employed by the British forces for forcing the tribesmen to terms: fines, blockades and expeditions. All these three methods were frequently used by British forces during their stay in the Pashtun areas. But there lies weakness even in the method itself, particularly expeditions, as Russian General Skobelev pointed out, 'In dealing with savage tribes the best plan is, to fight as rarely as possible and when you do fight, to hit as hard as you can. By incessantly attacking them, you teach them the art of war' (Quoted in Davies, 1932/1974, p.25-26). This error had been made by British forces, which fought so frequently with these warrior tribes, that they learned how to fight against British forces, and at the same time the tribesmen got an opportunity to gain access to modern warfare mechanics and weapons. It is evident from the fact that how frequently British forces fought against these tribesmen that, "Between the outbreak of the second Afghan War and the Pathan revolt of 1897 there were sixteen expeditions against the frontier tribes. Of these eight took place before peace was concluded with Kabul and were in the nature of punishment inflicted on the clans (Imperial Gazetteer of India Provincial Series, p.21). This frequent interaction of British forces with Pashtuns provided the Raj an excellent chance to know the enemy well, but, at the same time it also provided an opportunity to Pashtuns, who nevertheless became experts in dealing with British forces.

During the last decade of 19th century British forces occupied almost all the areas inhabited by different clans of Pashtuns adjacent to Afghanistan. In some quarters of the British authorities, it was assumed that the Kurram Valley, the Tochi Valley, and Wana were entered and occupied. However, it was done at the express request of the local tribes concerned, as they were living under threat from stronger tribes and were therefore anxious for British protection. This may be true for Kurram Valley, where the Turi inhabitants were mainly Shia, who had constant fear and threat from the Sunni Amirs of Afghanistan, and it is clear that Turis were anxious for British protection. However, the claim of other two i.e. Tochi and Wana had no ground to believe that they were anxious for the British protection. There was no such fear of Sunni domination in Tochi and Wana as was in the case of Kurram Valley. On the evacuation of the Kurram Valley in 1800, the Turis had been declared independent of the Afghan Government. A reign of anarchy at once set in. The raids of the Turis on their Afghan neighbours led to constant complaints from the Amir, who demanded that the British should keep them in order. In 1891, the independent Sunni tribes surrounding Kurram were instigated from Kabul to combine for a crusade against the Shia Turis. The latter petitioned for assistance, declaring that without British help they saw no alternative but submission to the Amir.

Under the circumstances such an appeal could not be ignored. The Amir himself suggested the occupation of the country, and in 1892, troops were moved up from Thal, and the valley was reoccupied. Since then the whole valley, though not considered a part of British India, had been ruled by the Political Officer on a rough, but effective system (Administrative Report of the North West Frontier Province, 1901-03, NDC Acc. No. 4536, p.9).

Moreover, the British Raj exploited the inter-tribal rivalry of different Pashtun tribes particularly those living near Durand Line. On June 20th, 1891, a full *jirga* of Darwesh Khel Wazirs on account of internal trouble with Mahsuds requested the British Raj to take possession of Darwesh Khel country. Similarly, Malik Mani Khan an influential Malik in Darwesh Khel country invited the British authorities to take possession of the country of the "Waziris who are British subjects" (From the Secretary to the Government of India to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Punjab August 15, 1892, NDC Acc. No. 952, p.1). So, the first major success for British Raj was the annexation of important strategic areas like Khyber, Tochi, Wana, and Kurram Valley into the permanent possession of British Raj.

Now, to extend its sphere of influence in those annexed areas, permanent administration was needed, but once the proponents of 'Forward Policy' failed to achieve its desire objectives, new methods were employed in shape of Native Levies, which comprised of native people. There were four trans-border Corps - the Chitral Scouts, the Kurram Militia, the Tochi Scouts, and the South Waziristan Scouts; the two latter having replaced the old North and South Waziristan Militia. Their primary duties were to prevent raids, ensure the safety of communications, and deal with minor tribal disturbances (C.U Aitchison, 1933, p.390). This system proved successful but owing its vulnerability particularly in case of big revolts, the loyalty of these native forces could not be trusted. Moreover, shortly after the Third Anglo-Afghan War of 1919, a force of Khassadars or tribal levies on a purely tribal basis, supplying their own arms, was raised to replace those Corps (C.U Aitchison, 1933, p.390). The main duties of Khassadars were: The execution of the orders of the local officials passed after consultation with the Maliks and elders, the summoning of persons whose attendance was required (on safe conduct) by the local officials, the investigation of reports relating to the area in which they are posted, the tracing and recovery of any person kidnapped from British territory, the opposition of raiding gangs violating their area, the escorting of Government officials, and in general the duties of *chal weshta* (tribal police) and *badragga* (tribal escort) (C.U Aitchison, 1933, p.604-605). The British authorities did not make the allowances paid for services as hereditary. The payment of allowances depended on the good and friendly conduct of the tribe towards the British Raj. In case of the death of a Khassadar, his allowance did not automatically descend to his heir or any other relation, unless that relation was also approved as representative of his group and serviceable to Government (C.U Aitchison, 1933, p.604-605).

However, the failure of the militia was due to two reasons; firstly, their separation from political authorities, and secondly, their over training. Many Pashtuns confirmed this to one of the officers, that it is like 'a crow trying to learn the gait of the peacock.' These frontier corps should be levies and levies only and absolutely divorced from military control. It is absurd to expect work from them which one would hardly demand from the best trained troops (*North West Frontier Policy*, NDC Acc. No. 244, p.6).

Later the situation changed, when 'remarkable men' were replaced by those, whose interest was not a peaceful subjugation of Pashtuns but wars. Apart from personal acumen of the British

officers employed in North West Frontier of India, the Pashtuns of the area were not taken in confidence for drafting of strategies, and later for the implementation of policies. By not taking Pashtuns into confidence, during decision making, this brought adverse impacts on the affairs especially during and after the demarcation of border between Afghanistan and British India.

Durand Line agreement and its Consequences

The British Government always remained concerned over the demarcation of a permanent boundary with Afghanistan, to bring the independent tribes under British control, and to secure a permanent sphere of influence against any external aggression. It was well before 1893, that British authorities wanted to demarcate a boundary and bring independent tribes under its control. 'It appears to the Government of India that the time has arrived when it becomes of extreme importance that an effort be made to bring under control, and, if possible, to organize, for purposes of defence against external aggression, the great belt of independent tribal territory which lies along British north-western frontier, and which has hitherto been allowed to remain a formidable barrier against the British Raj' (*Military Operations on the North West Frontier of India Vol.1*, NDC Acc. No. 4187, p.9).

The demarcation of linear boundaries was the crucial innovation of the British in the subcontinent. Such boundaries did not exist in India before the nineteenth century... (Embree, 1977, p.25). Moreover, a distinction must be kept in mind between a 'frontier' and a 'boundary'. Properly used, frontier means, according to Sir Henry MacMahon, a wide tract of border country, hinterlands, or a buffer state. Historically such frontiers had no external boundaries. However, a momentous change came, especially in the northwest, when the Government of India delimited and demarcated boundaries. Delimitation means describing the boundary in written, verbal terms in documents and as a line on a map; demarcation is the physical transference of these definitions to an actual line on the ground (Embree, 1977, p.27-28). This demarcation of the boundary has had devastating impacts on the affairs of North West Frontier of India. The Pashtun stood against British Raj and from 1893, when Durand Line agreement was signed till the Pashtun revolt of 1897, there was scarcely any area where British troops did not take part in a war against the independence loving Pashtun elements especially in the adjacent areas of Durand Line. There was a constant fear of Pashtun revolts against the British Raj with the help of Amir of Afghanistan, who was supporting the independent tribes inside the territory of British India. Amir Abdur Rahman, while commenting on the Anglo-Afghan relations stated, "Therefore it was not possible that the hostile feelings, the enmities, the hatred, the mistrust and suspicion which had existed between the English and Afghans for about fifty years past - which had caused friends and kinsmen of the two nations to fight against each other and to be killed by their hands- could be forgotten all at once" (Khan, 1900, p.117). Furthermore, the Amir said, "On my part, I was unable to show my friendship publicly to the extent that was necessary: because my people were ignorant and fanatical. If I showed any inclination towards the English, my people would call me an infidel for joining hands with infidels, and they would proclaim a religious war" (Khan, 1900, p.117-118). Before the demarcation of the boundary, Amir Abdul Rahman while elaborating on the boundary for the tribesmen near Jandola stated, "The Viceroy has appointed a number of his trustworthy officers, termed in their language 'Mission' to ascertain and determine the boundary of Afghanistan and British territory which has not yet been determined.... After the boundary is settled the persons who remain in the Afghan territory of their own accord and subject to the allegiance of the Government of Afghanistan shall have their affairs managed by this Government (Afghanistan), while those who may come within the boundary of British territory and accept their rule shall be looked after by their officers and the Government of India" (Anglo-Afghan relations file no. 5, NDC.

Acc. No. 897, p.9). However, the tribes which did not accept the British rule after the demarcation of the boundary were treated with iron hand by British authorities. Amir of Afghanistan was himself unaware of the details of the agreement and map. When he asked for a map to get the detail of which parts of "Yaghistan"(land of unruly) (Sultan Mahomed Khan, 1900, p.159), that included areas Chitral, Bajaur, Swat, Buner, Dir, Chilas, and Waziri, were taken over by the British Raj, to the Amir's surprise many areas of Afghanistan were included in British India. For instance, all the countries of the Waziri, New Chaman and the railway station there, Chaghi, Bulund Khel, the entirety of Mohmand, Asmar, and Chitral, and other countries lying in between, were marked as belonging to India (Khan, 1900, p.157). However, Amir himself renounced his claims from the railway station of New Chaman, Chaghi, and the rest of Waziri, Buland Khel, Kuram, Afridi, Bajaur, Swat, Buner, Dir, Chilas, and Chitral. Moreover, by renouncing his claims from these areas, the Amir's annual subsidy was increased from 12 lakhs to 18 lakhs. Besides, Afghanistan Government was allowed to buy and import any arms and war materials that they wished (Khan, 1900, p.161-162).

Now the question arises, why the British Government was so anxious to demarcate a boundary with Afghanistan? There may be so many reasons and arguments in favour of demarcation of a boundary. The Secretary of State for India at the time of conclusion of Durand Agreement, the Earl of Kemberley, in the House of Lords said, "It is not an agreement for extending our frontier, nor did it necessitate our moving forward; its object was to mark the line between us and the Ameer, beyond which the Ameer on his side, and we on ours, should not interfere with the tribes. It was a negative agreement as to what we were not to do, but it did not bind us to a Forward Policy. The tribes may have regarded it as handing them over to us, and they may have concluded that the consequences would be an interference with their independence. The Government of India ought to have acted with the greatest possible caution, and to have had the tribes clearly to understand that the Durand Agreement did not affect their independence" (Speech by The Earl of Northbrook in the House of Lords on Monday, March 7, 1898, NDC Acc. No. 4187, p.13).

Furthermore, the objects of the Government of India while concluding Durand agreement were, "to bring the tribes into line with ourselves (British) by the establishment of intimate and friendly relations identifying their interests with ours, rendering the resources of the country available for our requirements, *and thus making our border land and its tribesmen a factor of strength in the great scheme of imperial frontier defence, instead of a source of weakness* (author's italics) as it is while left in the normal condition of anarchy" (*Military Operations on the North West Frontier of India Vol.1*, NDC Acc. No. 4187, p.9). Moreover, the opening of strategically important passes and routes and "the amelioration of the condition of the frontier tribes by the extension of humanizing influences over them, redeeming them from their semi-barbarous condition, and putting them in the way of earning an honest livelihood"(*Military Operations on the North West Frontier of India Vol.1*, NDC Acc. No. 4187, p.9).

Therefore, it is obvious that the British Raj in India had many objectives to be achieved by demarcating a permanent boundary with Afghanistan. On one hand it sent a clear signal to Russia that any future aggression or violation of Afghanistan's territory would be considered as a danger to British India and, secondly, to control tribes from committing raids in British territory as British and Afghan officials would be responsible for the tribes under their sphere of influence. In the early years of 'Nineties' there was a chaos and uncertainty throughout North-West Frontier. To quote a contemporary government report:

A general uncertainty prevailed as to the limits of the two Governments and the tribesmen constantly took advantage of this uncertainty playing of the one against the other... the people of Bajaur and Swat were in uncertainty whether they might not any day be exposed to an Afghan invasion. There was anarchy in Kurram, where Turis were kept in fear by local disturbances fomented by Afghan officials, ... And, South of Kurram, the whole Waziri tribe, was in a state of ferment, and intrigues were in the Zhob and Gomal valleys (Davies, 1932/1974, p.160).

The significant point to note here is that the British Government wanted to finish this uncertainty and anarchy prevailing in the North-West Frontier. The ultimate solution was to demarcate a boundary with Afghanistan. But instead of solving the problem, this agreement in itself contained the germs of chaos and uncertainty. The years following the signing of agreement brought more unrest and instability instead. However, this was the birth of the Frontier Problem. The *Maliks* and *Motabirs* (Chiefs) of one area came to the British delimitation officer of the border with the suggestions, which clearly showed the anxiety prevalent in the minds of Pashtuns on the occasion of Durand Line agreement. Moreover, it also highlighted the grievances of the Pashtuns against the demarcation. A petition by 394 Daur Maliks and *Mutabirs*, and 142 Waziri Maliks and *Mutabirs* of Tochi Valley, and other parts of Waziristan stated that services and allowances should be granted to them; local rights and customs be respected; cases should be decided by Muhammadan law and *jirga* when possible; that they should be exempted from court fees; that revenue, if demanded, should be assessed once for all; their jungle and iron mines should remain in their possession; the jails for their prisoners should be local, and in the event of Powindahs using the Tochi route, *Badragga* rights and grazing fees should be paid to the people of the valley (*Military Operations on the North West Frontier of India Vol.1*, NDC Acc. No. 4187, p.9). The years following the Durand Line agreement did not give the Pashtuns the desired objectives. The Pashtuns' customs and traditions were not followed, Muhammadan law was not introduced into their area, and in many cases revenue was demanded and most importantly the routes, which were being used by caravans for trade, were occupied by the British Raj and hence Pashtuns were deprived of the toll tax.

So, the demarcation of boundary between Afghanistan and British India increased the responsibilities of the latter. Now the British Government had to provide protection to the tribes on their side of Durand line and at the same time had to prevent the marauding tribesmen not to enter Afghanistan's territory. Since 1893, this agreement not only increased the responsibilities of the Government of India, but also increased the chances of collision with the frontier tribes and of war with the Amir (Afghanistan) (Davies, 1932/1974, p.161). The chances of collision with tribes increased as the Durand Line agreement was signed without keeping in view ethnography and geography of the area, as the line was drawn through the middle of villages, sometime placing farmers living on one side of the border while their fields were on the other side. In many places the tribes were divided in such a manner that half of the tribe came under Afghanistan control while other half came under British control.

To place responsibility for this fatal mistake, it would be worth noting to quote a letter written by Amir Abdur Rahman to Viceroy Lord Lansdowne, in which he clearly outlined a method for dealing with these tribes living on both sides of the border and made very interesting prophecies for future affairs, which were to take place in that area. It is also important to note, that the letter was written even before Durand Mission reached Kabul. The Amir wrote:

As to these frontier tribes known by the name of *Yaghistan*, if they were included in my dominions I should be able to make them fight against any enemy of England and myself, by the name of a religious war, under the flag of their co-religious Muslim ruler (myself). And these people being brave warriors and staunch Mohamedans, would make a very strong force to fight against any power which might invade India or Afghanistan. I will gradually made them peaceful subjects and good friends of Great Britain. If you should cut them out of my dominions, they will neither be of any use to you nor to me. You will always be engaged in fighting or other trouble with them, and they will always go on plundering. As long as your Government is strong and in peace, you will be able to keep them quiet by a strong hand, but if at any time a foreign enemy appears on the borders of India, these frontier tribes will be your worst enemies... In you cutting away from me these frontier tribes, who are people of my nationality and my religion, you will injure my prestige in the eyes of my subjects and will make me weak and my weakness is injurious to your Government (Khan, 1900, p.157-158).

The history following the signing of Durand Line agreement proved that all prophecies of Amir Abdur Rahman were true. The British Government did not succeed, first to subdue them all; and in cases where these tribesmen were subjugated, there was a lack of administrative machinery to give them protection. The words used by Amir that "these frontier tribes will be your worst enemies" proved true, wherever there was a disturbance elsewhere, these tribesmen stood against the British forces.

It was not a tripartite agreement, which may include Pashtuns, but an agreement between Amir of Afghanistan and British Government. As one historian observed, "It seems that this (Durand Line agreement) could not have been a tripartite agreement, for there is no evidence that the tribesmen were consulted before 1893" (Davies, 1932/1974, p.162). As Pashtuns were not consulted, so, there were chances of Pashtun revolts in certain areas where they were forced to divide, putting aside all their similarities and geographical considerations. Durand Line agreement was an abnormal division, in which Pashtun nation was split into three, in British India, in tribal territory, and in Afghanistan. This unnaturally divided tribes from one another, and in many places put the tribe on one side of Durand Line and their fields on the other. The main defect in the Durand Line agreement was that it neither satisfied the ethnological nor geographical concerns of the Pashtuns living on both sides of the Durand Line.

Keeping in view all the defects of the agreement, the British Government nevertheless achieved its desired objectives. The Government of India secured not only a permanent line of defence and sphere of influence but also deprived the Afghan Amir from his territories like Waziristan, Chaghi, and Balochistan.

The Amir of Afghanistan has claims over these areas, but neither these claims were admitted, nor Pashtuns were taken into confidence as to whom they want to join, British India or Afghanistan. Once Durand Line agreement had been signed then these tribesmen had no other chance, but to resist it. The demarcation of the Durand Line was regarded as a step to annexation (Administrative Report of the North West Frontier Province 1901-1903, NDC Acc. No. 4536, p.10). Moreover, to include the Pashtuns into the direct rule, the British Government missed a crucial point, which was observed by a historian, "The region's (North-West Frontier of India) cultural ecology also makes direct control by outsiders problematic, and so in dealing with frontier tribes the British found

themselves caught in the same entanglements as those faced by their predecessors, the Mughals and Sikhs” (Titus, 1998, p. 657-658). Once the Pashtuns were incorporated in the dominion of British government, it became difficult for British authorities to control them.

The lack of knowledge about the Pashtun socio-political institutions made the administration of the tribal areas difficult for the British Raj. The British authorities never exerted an influence in the support of tribal Constitution. It is often claimed that the officers who served at NWF knew all what they should know about the tribal constitution. If they possessed that knowledge, they have left no record regarding the tribal constitution, and there is not in existence at present any treatise or manual, official or otherwise, on the subject of the political constitution of the Pathan tribes (Control of Tribes, NDC Acc. No. 3700, p.11). Furthermore, there has been a progressive deterioration of the tribal constitution since the commencement of the British connection, and that at some time prior to the arrival of the British on the Frontier, the tribal constitution was definitely stronger than it is now (Control of Tribes, NDC Acc. No. 3700, p.12).

The period between the annexation of the Pashtun areas and the beginning of the 20th century proved as the most tumultuous period for the British Raj in the North-West Frontier of India. During this period, the British administration pursued their Forward Policy very actively and formed political agencies in the areas bordering Afghanistan. Furthermore, the British authorities also managed to draw a permanent boundary line between Afghanistan and British India. In pursuit of Forward Policy, the British Raj occupied different Pashtun dominated areas and this encroachment compelled Pashtuns to revolt against the British Raj. The British Raj was only interested in North West Frontier of India from a defensive point of view, whereby they wanted to secure the defence of India keeping in view the Russian expansionism in Central Asia. The British authorities wanted to merge the Pashtuns in their imperial control with force. The Raj did not evolve any type of political strategy, which could win over the Pashtuns’ hearts and minds. The British wanted to create a new loyal class in the Pashtun society, through which they could control the Pashtun tribes. However, the creation of a new class in the form of *Maliks* failed to achieve its desired objectives. They were successful at times to control the Pashtuns politically, but as pointed out earlier, failed in winning their hearts and souls.

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