

Approaching the Frontier: British Manoeuvres to Govern the Ungoverned

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to understand the mechanism of colonial difference and domination in the 'Waziristan' region of Pakistan; it argues that uneven patterns of colonial development in the aforementioned region were dictated by the imperatives of imperialism on the one hand and environment (geography) on the other. The colonial knowledge led to the formation of a discourse of power, which not only contributed to the transformation of the indigenous society but also legitimized colonial control of the region. The British colonizers introduced brutal laws and tactics to control these tribes which were labelled as savages and bloodthirsty. The colonials believed that these tribes can only be civilized through force and punishment. The outcome of these tactics at the start proved to be successful in each of the frontier regions of British India but later on, these tactics resulted in severe resistance from the locals as the British had never experienced such resistance in other regions of the empire which made them to come up with alternative plans to control these tribes but unluckily, it was too late to be done anything as the hill tribesman initiated a holy war against the British

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Empire.

Introduction

Any great power that fails to secure its frontier fails in achieving greatness; any empire that neglects the importance of the frontier is eventually overthrown. It is an imperial duty to secure its frontier from any threat they encounter.¹ Keeping this mission in mind, the British Empire, was not ready to accept the idea of limits, continued expansion, conquests, and annexations. With such progress, more political and administrative responsibilities came up to be undertaken.² Many British statesmen were against this idea as acquiring more colonies will bring more expense and nuisance than profit. However, the British Empire succeeded in acquiring and controlling more and more territories in the case of India. But one such territory where this expanding force of empire was brought to a halt was India's North West Frontier. It would become an important episode in the history of the British Empire.

Before going any further into the details, the author will emphasize specifically on one region 'Waziristan' which later became an administrative agency of the North West Frontier; it uncovered how the British little succeeded in penetrating this region at the same time was remotely significant and dangerous for any empire to take control of. On the other hand, it remained true to say that the British administrator succeeded in transforming and keeping these tribes backward politically, economically, and socially at large for the benefit of the empire rather than making this region developed as other regions of the empire.

1 Dewitt C. Ellinwood and C. Collin Davies, "The Problem of the North-West Frontier, 1890-1908: With a Survey of Policy since 1849," *The American Historical Review* 81 (5): 1207; <https://doi.org/10.2307/1853102>.

2 Raymond E. Dumett and Timothy Parsons, "The British Imperial Century, 1815 1914: A World History Perspective," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 34 no. 3 (2001): 733; <https://doi.org/10.2307/3097608>.

An Impossible Frontier

The North West frontier region consisted of intractable terrain, and irregular mountainous geography, the terrain is so harsh and rough that cultivatable land was scarce and most of the communities were relying on animal grazing. But other territories within this frontier such as Kurram Agency and Waziristan had plain lands and access to water from nearby rivers that allows communities to grow food and domesticate animals to survive. In comparison to other administrative districts, both regions had fertile and arid land at places more suitable for farming and grazing. Early English expeditionists in Waziristan described in their diaries that they encountered for the first time a warlike tribe, who were ferocious, independent, and savages.³ Out of this intractable land, the British attempted to carve out a frontier and control its inhabitants. The following definition gives the idea of how the British observed this region:

A Frontier more than 1,000 miles in length, with a belt of huge mountains in its front, Inhabited by thousands of warlike men, over whom neither we nor any other Power had Control, and with a wide impassable river in its rear, seemed to me then, as it does now, an impossible Frontier.⁴

Before the British, the frontier territory was assumed to be possessed by the Sikhs from 1818 till 1848. The Sikhs administered this region in its loosest type because most of the districts refused in paying the revenue and withdrawing the troops. Also, ethnographically and geographically, it had ties with Afghanistan, which supported the tribes in case of war and other political affairs that often remained unclear to whom the frontier belonged to. Since after the takeover of the frontier by the British in 1849, for three decades the British administrators left this region as it was and depended on the “Non-intervention” policy or “close border policy” recognizing the independence of the tribes and not to interfere in tribal

3 Arthur Swinson, *North-West Frontier People and Events, 1839-1947* (London: Hutshinson, 1967), 18.

4 Lord Roberts, *Parliamentary Debate, Commons*; March 7, 1898.

affairs. Although during this period existing forts were being repaired and new ones were built along the border, connecting them by metal road so the troops can be mobilized fast in case of emergency and these roads were just only used for military purposes.⁵

In doing so, agreements were made with tribes obliging them to maintain peaceful and friendly relations with the government. However, from 1849 till the 1890s, under this policy the British army held Dera Ismail Khan and Bannu, stationing regular troops and establishing advanced posts along the foothills of Waziristan. Even though, in this non-intervention period, up to sixty-two expeditions were sent out to fight the tribes,⁶ followed by withdrawal every time. These expeditions were called 'Butcher and Bolt' or 'Burn and scuttle'⁷ This approach of the British was assumed to be the kindness and act of conciliation towards the tribes:

But when kindness, conciliation and confidence, all fail; when outrages from their serious character, or their constant repetition, exceed the bounds of toleration; when the blood of our subjects cries from the ground; when our Territory has been invaded, and our sovereign rights flagrantly violated, and all this in the utter absence of provocation; then we either make reprisals from, or lay an embargo upon, or use military force against, the offending Tribe or section of Tribe.⁸

In the 1880s, the policy of non-intervention was largely ignored and debated as to what needed to be done to defend the British-India from Russian aggression in Afghanistan. After much consideration and discussions, the British came

5 Charles Chenevix, *The Frontier Scouts* (New York: Routledge, 1986).

6 A complete list of expeditions is given in Harris, Appendix G, and 433-40. See also, *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India*, Vol. I; *Tribes North of the Kabul River*, Vol. II, *North-West Frontier: Tribes Between the Kabul and Gomal Rivers*, P.S.D.L., B.234; H. L. Nevill, *Campaigns on the North-West Frontier, 1849-1908*; H. C. Wyllie, *From the Black Mountain to Waziristan & Baha L.* (1968).

7 D. Lyon, *Butcher and Bolt* (Random House, 2009).

8 Sameetah Agha, "Review of the Limits of Empire: British Paktun Encounter 1897," Thesis, UMI Press. Report Showing the Relations of the British Government, 2001.

up with a new policy known as 'forward policy', aiming at moving into the tribal 'no man's land' stating that this move was a necessity for establishing close and friendly relations with tribes and the government desiring nothing other than peace on its border. However, the British vacillated between both policies over a long period. It was also believed to have a clear demarcation between British-India and Afghanistan. In other words, the forward policy was an effort to civilize the hill tribes under colonial law and order who were labelled as murderers, robbers, and fanatics as they resisted the supreme authority.

Following this policy for decades, the British introduced criminal laws which were inhumane and disturbing for the frontier tribes. Such laws involved detaining lands and property as security, and seizing cattle and men as hostages. A message would be sent out to a tribe and in case they do not come to the terms, their property would be sold. The passes would be closed on that tribe. Any property or market belonging to the tribe in British territory would be seized and destroyed. Further, in case of any resistance or not coming to terms, a military expedition was sent out to that tribe resulting in destroying their houses, seizing cattle and grain, and burning crop fields. One way or another the entire tribe would have to suffer or be punished for the offense of a few. There was an enforced administrative line that divided these tribes from the communities living in the plains and the mountains; for instance, members belonging to the same tribe can be found in the hills and plain areas because they were connected through marriages or other groupings. Similarly, the tribes living in the hills would move to the plains area in winter to cultivate as the summer approaches they reap the crop and retire to the hills again. Further, in case of any skirmish at hills, people would descend to the settled areas under the British. Further, this line meant that the bordering communities did not remain connected as before, looking into frontier history, the problem not only lies with the tribes living in the hills as they were constantly raiding and killing British subjects but also it is clear that both the plains' tribes and the

hilly tribes resisted the enforcement of the administrative line and regarded British presence as a political encroachment.⁹ It is described that these expeditions were not undertaken to protect British subjects from the hilly tribes, but it was taken against those who being British subjects resisted and violated the British encroachment.

With the above policy, the British had two options either to move forward or stay where they were. It was finally decided that retreating would be a loss in prestige and resources simultaneously. For the time being the policy of non-interference was kept in place for the countries beyond and towards the hills tribes till up to 1887. The commander in chief of India Fedrick Roberts and other high-rank British officers proposed that it was essential to defend the North West Frontier of India for the sake of the Indian empire,¹⁰ and the British must have command of the frontier as well knowledge beyond the hills. They must get hold of the tribes living in the hills.¹¹ The implementation of this new policy brought the tribes inhabiting the frontier region under British influence and was considered allies for imperial defense.

Governing Hearts and Minds in Waziristan

It will be argued here that in the history of the North West Frontier the 'Waziristan' region was one of the most challenging regions to be brought under the control of the British Empire. For the British, the terrain was inaccessible to a remarkable degree and its habitants were 'vindictive, cruel, and bloodthirsty savages'¹² who kept blood feuds for centuries. It's also assumed that the largest number of punitive expeditions had been carried out by the British government against tribes of this region. Generally, the literature that is still available to the reader can depict that this region offered a tough challenge to the British Empire; officers

9 Agha, "Review of the Limits of Empire".

10 Swinson, *North-West Frontier People and Events*, 300-1.

11 Agha, "Review of the Limits of Empire".

12 D. Ibbetson, *Panjab Castes: the Races, Castes and Tribes of the People* (India: Government Printing Punjab, 1883).

who served in the frontier saw this region as a world apart. From the middle of the nineteenth century, the British from time to time had been involved in a military expedition against the frontier tribes. The involvement of British administration more directly inside Waziristan can be traced back to 1884 when the Amir Abdur Rahman Khan of Afghanistan claimed sovereignty over the land and the people of Waziristan got alarmed and suspicious of the forward moves by the British on the Indo-Afghan border in the tribal area by recruiting local tribesmen as levies and militia defending the check posts and forts. Later the Amir was approached by the British officers for an agreement of delimitation of the boundary line between India and Afghanistan which was finally concluded with the agreement of the "Durand line" in 1893.¹³

When the British came further south of the frontier, they realized that these tribes have always prevented any close contact with India and Afghanistan and its inhabitants claiming that they were free tribesmen, who resisted and fought back against any sovereign power before them. The Amir at multiple occasions asserted that Waziristan and its people belonged to him. After four years of the Durand Line, the British government insisted and reminded the Amir that the people of Waziristan are independent tribes and do not accept any sovereignty above them. The Amir was asked to evacuate Wana and was forbidden to advance any further into Waziristan for settlement. Thus, the position of Waziristan was clearly defined to the Amir (agreement of Durand Line) that it was now under the control of the British; under the new forward policy. It had been the policy of the British to abstain as far as possible from the internal affairs of the tribes and let no interference from anyone else; moreover, they wanted that the Wazirs should always look to them (British colonials) or no one else.¹⁴ Gaining the advantage of confidence of the

13 K. S. Lambah, "The Durand Line," *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal* 7 no.1 (2012): 42–60; <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45341803>

14 Catalogue Reports, Operation in Waziristan, 8, General Staff Army Headquarters India, Calcutta; 1919-1920. (1921).

tribesmen was the most important task for the government.

Policies of Penetration and Settlement

To further penetrate inside Waziristan and better running of this new forward policy in the frontier, experts in the field were asked for recommendations regarding how to run the frontier, in which Sir Robert Sandeman's policy in Balochistan of 'penetration and control' through the tribes was ought to be successful. Sandeman suggested that his policy was not applicable in Waziristan as the tribal system is dissimilar in Balochistan but Later, Robert Bruce came up with the 'Maliki System' which gave power to some Maliks of the tribes, and allowances were given in return as they were required to supply a number of tribesmen as levies for the protection of Gomal Pass, considered by British their gateway to Waziristan.¹⁵ Thus, Wazir and Mehsud were convinced into terms to negotiate in opening the 'Gomal Pass' which was much used by the trade caravans from Afghanistan. However, Bruce's policy failed to bring any positive results. It is also believed that Mehsud tried to break the agreements over the Gomal Pass for several reasons such as an increment in the allowances given to them to secure the pass, which was deemed not enough to feed their families. Secondly, the extended families requested the British government to grant them and continue those allowances which were given to their inherited fathers who served the Britishers, but the government refused as these allowances were not given on a heredity basis, but to those who had served the government.¹⁶ Commissioner Bruce explains these allowances in this manner in his book; 'Khidmat or no Allowance' means to serve or no allowance.¹⁷ Third, if the pass gets secured, the British will control this pass which will be difficult for the raiding parties to loot the caravans.

15 Wyllly, *From the Black Mountains to Waziristan*.

16 For details see, *The Red Shirt Movement*, Part II, *The Afridi and Red Shirt Rebellion*, 1930-31, in the Official History of Operations on the N.W. Frontier of India 1920-35 Parts I, II and III, NDC Ace. No. 4326, 83-84.

17 *The Red Shirt Movement*, Part II, 83-87

The British tried to introduce new strategies of controlling the tribes one way or another, but it kept falling as the British had no experience of a region such as Waziristan. Second, the people of Waziristan were not ready to accept these modifications which were presented to them by the British because it was considered as western and outsourced from the communal tribal setup which was already existing in Waziristan¹⁸. The Maliki System had its drawbacks which created more rebellious sentiments among the Mehsud tribe resulting in the killing of a British officer and the other three Maliks because they sentenced some of the Mehsud tribesmen in Jirga who were involved in criminal activities and the withdrawal of survey party from the Gomal pass.¹⁹ Later agreements were struck with the tribes giving them subsidies and allowances to defend the Gomal Pass, in return, they will allow the Britishers to build forts and check posts in their area. But from time to time these agreements were breached by the tribes resulting in imposing fines and blockades and when all these proved unavailing expeditions were sent out to these areas.

The chief occupation of tribesmen in Waziristan was mostly agriculture and pastoralism and those of far-west Waziristan were associated with mostly raiding with cultivable land was scarce. Water channels were used to grow seasonal crops and while other tribes were getting income from the timber trade and working in iron ores. Tribes like Mehsud, Dawars, Darwesh Khels (Waziri), and Bhattanis inhabited Waziristan. The Wazirs were mostly nomadic and pastoral tribes. They used to graze their flocks in British territory in winter while some of them remained in the independent territory all year round. Some Mehsud tribes living in the West were dependent on raiding due to poverty and scarcity of natural resources for survival. It is hard to say that raiding was a response to poverty, but they felt fighting was an honorable activity.

18 M. Williams, *The British Colonial Experience in Waziristan and its Applicability to Current Operations* (Pickle Partners Publishing, 2015).

19 Williams, *The British Colonial Experience in Waziristan and its Applicability to Current Operations*.

Although the raids were conducted by hill tribes, such raids were done at the request of tribes living in the British territory as they were resisting being British subjects; a political agent stationed in Bannu writes; that there was nothing else for the raiding party to survive on because the area which was once cultivated now had been dried out.²⁰ One specific tribe of Wazirs such as Zilla Khels in southern Waziristan joined the Mehsud in raiding the caravans passing along the Gomal pass were regular raiders.

Moreover, it is not justifiable only to say that the Mehsud tribe was the only raiders, other tribes including Bhattanis, Sulaiman khels, and Karoti powindas, inhabiting hills and plain areas took part in raiding and plundering because they resented that the government had not compensated them for the right of loss as other tribes. Likewise, by doing such activities they knew that government would try to negotiate terms and agreements with them benefiting their tribes; but unfortunately, the government took these offenses seriously and punished them with heavy fines and seizing their properties.²¹ So a gap of conciliation got created between the settler and the settled. The British considered raiding a criminal activity and labelled those raiding parties as criminal tribes. As aforementioned, these tribes were raiding for centuries due to their natural environment which made this activity a norm and acceptable in tribal society, it was replaced by giving them allowances and service in the army but it was largely ignored in some areas while others accepted this opportunity as a tool of power to be acknowledged by the British government.

To secure and defend the British-controlled territory from the marauders, especially the Mehsuds tribesmen, the British government refrained from direct intervention in the tribesmen's affairs. So, they decided to deal with them through

20 A. M. Roe, *Waging War in Waziristan: The British Struggle in the Land of Bin Laden, 1849-1947* (Modern War Studies) (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010).

21 Williams, *The British Colonial Experience in Waziristan and its Applicability to Current Operations*.

intermediaries like the Nawab of Tank, who was thought to have some control over these tribes; but this method proved to be short-lived as the tribes in 1860 attacked Tank, resulting in launching another expedition towards the Mehsud area.²² After this expedition, the British government was able to be directly involved in the Mehsud and Wazir's affairs. Therefore, in 1865-66 the British came up with a new experiment of settling the Mehsud tribe on the plain area of Tank by allotting them wasteland in return making them responsible for border defense. This experiment also proved unsuccessful as many of them remained in Hills while the others who got settled were involved in raiding and killings of British subjects within their territory. The British development projects were uneven compared to the developments that were made in other parts of India, especially in the Punjab. The Punjab Canal settlement colonies were far more advanced than what appeared in the frontier region. The funds and revenue which was generated from the Punjab region were purposely upgraded and utilized carefully compare to the wastelands in Tank. The British strategy in Waziristan was to ensure the transformation of the hilly tribes to settle them in the plain areas from where the tribesmen could be easily controlled. Secondly, dividing the families from their tribes would give the leverage of control to the British government. The British had no intentions of developing the geography of Waziristan as it was considered unproductive in the sense of revenue-generating due to the topography while significant in the sense of political and strategical for frontier defense.

Looking at the above manoeuvres used by the Britishers against the tribes, on one hand, can be appealing as they being colonials tried to consolidate these tribes to pursue them to secure the border, while on the other hand, these strategies were meant to transform the people living in the hills who were dependent on raiding caravans and killings; other than this being independent tribes, they were always resistant to any order and law above them. However, the British

22 Agha, "Review of the Limits of Empire".

believed that they could only be controlled if they are divided and compensated with something more substantial as giving them allowances and subsidies to defend the border would make things right but unfortunately, these strategies failed from time to time, resulting in more coercion rather than conciliation.

Establishing Control in Waziristan

As the British colonials were gaining slow and steady control over these territories through constant expeditions and fortifying the hills, they had to face more and more resistance from the tribes. For instance, the Bannuchi chief, who was responsible to collect revenue from Waziri villages, created grievances among the Waziri tribes against the British authority. In response to this in the early 1850s, the Wazir with a force of fifteen hundred tribesmen attacked the post at Gumatti which was located to the North of Bannu but was repulsed finding it too strong to attack. Following this another attack was planned, this time the Wazirs joined with the Mehsuds making them thousand in force, and attacked Bannu itself but they found it well defended again so they were dispersed.²³ These attacks from the tribesmen were made on a daily routine to settle terms with the British authority, but the British were reluctant to grant them any favors. In response to these incursions, under the command of Major John Nicholson deputy commissioner of Bannu was sent out to punish the tribes, resulting in destroying the houses and crops of the tribesmen while seizing cattle as state property. These British advances made the tribes get humbled and submit to British authority.²⁴ The tribes usually had to use force to make their claim in fulfilling their demands, but the British in time had to refuse these demands by sending out a punitive expedition against the tribes. Such strategies further deteriorated the relations between the tribesmen and the British government, creating space for criticism and resistance against the

23 Agha, "Review of the Limits of Empire".

24 H. C. Wylly, "The Indian North-West Frontier," *The Geographical Journal* 40 no. 6 (1912): 632; <https://doi.org/10.2307/1778225>.

government itself.

This enormous expedition left no other choice but for the Waziri tribe to reconcile their favors from the British. Hence, the Wazir invited Britishers to occupy their country. After two years, military posts were established in Wana and an outpost along the line of Gomal pass to prevent attacks from Afghan authorities,²⁵ the powindah (nomadic tribes), and Mehsud raiders. However, soon the Mehsud attacked the Wana camp under the command of Mullah Powindah,²⁶ which resulted in a third military expedition against the Mehsud tribe. It was also expected by the British official that, Mullah Powindah was given a huge amount of allowances by the Kabul government to fund his resistance movement against the Indian government.²⁷

Similarly, for the greater part of the security at the frontier at the request of Tochi Dawar, the British occupied their country by establishing posts along the valley of Tochi as far as the Sherani country with troops and local levies. Thus, Wana and Tochi were considered as 'Protected Areas' which were administered by political officers. In the aftermath of Powindah attack, in 1899 it was decided by the British administrators to call on the inhabitants of various localities to take part in their defense, meanwhile, enrolling locals in militias and levies to supply the local garrison. Hence, these enrolled tribes were not part of a regular army, but they were subordinate to the Indian army as they were part of civil administration only trained and equipped as military tribesmen.²⁸ It can be argued that; the local inhabitants were forced to accept British terms to avoid punishments and blockades. Moreover, the

25 Construction of levy post at Wano, Ex-DD. S. No. 1183. B.No.12, Peshawar archives, 1895.

26 Mullah Powindah: A Danatic & Notorious Mullah from Mehsud tribe, who was against his own tribe Maliks and the British who were controlling these Maliks.

27 S. E. B. Howell, *Mizh: A Monograph on Government's Relations with the Mahsud Tribe* (Oxford University Press, 1931), 46-7.

28 Catalogue Reports, *Operation in Waziristan 1919-1920*, 10, General Staff Army Headquarters India, Calcutta. (1921).

inhabitants realized that establishing good relations with British colonials will ultimately make them trustworthy and will help them to fulfill their favors from the British government. At the request of tribesmen to occupy their country the British made forts, garrisons, and posts along with their country and enrolled them as scouts and levies to defend the British government from any threat.

Several expeditions from 1860 to 1879 were sent out against Mehsud tribes as they were constantly raiding and disturbing the peace in British-controlled territory. Aforesaid, the cause of the first expedition was the raid of the Mehsud tribe on Tank; burning and plundering the Bazaar led to the other expedition into their areas. Henceforth, the British decided to initiate a blockade in 1880 which stopped the Mehsud marauders from entering British control territory. Until 1881, the Mehsud tribe made agreements with the British government that they will abstain from entering the British territory and offered them peaceful submission and invited them to negotiate terms of the settlement.²⁹ Hence, the British taught the Mehsud tribe that no natural difficulties in their country can protect them from the punishment of the British Empire.

Act of Defiance & Waziri Offence

Nevertheless, offenses from the tribesmen continued for years and they kept resisting the British authority over their country. From 1895 onwards the tribesmen were specifically targeting and killing the British officers and all those who or somehow were involved in British service.³⁰ For instance, an officer was stabbed to death near Boya; a lance-Naik was shot dead in Miranshah. Meanwhile, a Dawar party tried to enter the post of Miranshah stabbing two sepoy and killing a higher

29 H. Akins, "Tribal Militias and Political Legitimacy in British India and Pakistan," *Asian Security* 16 no. 3 (2020): 304-322.

30 Waziri offences. Kirgi and Gwaleri Murders and consequent strengthening of the Jandola and Kajuri Kach Garrison. Ex-DD. S.No.947.B.No.10, Peshawar Archives. 1894

rank officer.³¹ These offenses brought the British into the position to station the regular Indian army at the Tochi Valley. As soon as the government settled terms with the Tochi Wazirs, Mehsud again began to give trouble the authorities. From 1898-99 frequent raids occurred by the Mehsud tribe following the raid on the levy post at Zam and the Public Work Department bungalow at Murtaza both attacked.³² In October 1900, a police post at Nasran near the tank border got attacked by the Mehsud raiders killing two sepoy and stealing ten rifles. But the raiders were intercepted by the British pursuit party and recovered the stolen items. Later, a Mehsud Jirga was summoned to Tank with a fine of Rs.1,00,000 imposed for the offenses committed in the past, the Jirga was informed that if Rs.50,000 is not paid within fifteen days then a blockade would be imposed. Hence, the Mehsud tribe was unable to manage Rs.50,000 and requested that they needed two months to manage this amount, but they got refused by the British government and later blockade was operationalized.³³ The above-mentioned tactics were used by the British colonials to control the inhabitants living in the periphery of the empire.

The Amir of Afghanistan from time to time intervened in the affairs of Waziristan as he seemed to have the intention of unifying the tribes against the British and to fulfill his other agenda such as establishing control of Waziristan. Moreover, the tribes in their hard time turned to Amir for help; the Amir had to request the British government to cooperate with the tribes, also if any fine and blockade were imposed on the tribe, the Amir would summon the tribe in the form of Jirga at Kabul and help the tribe in money or anything valuable that could release them from British sanctions imposed on the tribe.

31 Two cases of stabbing of sepoy near Miranshah, Ex-DD...SN. 1304. B. No.12. Peshawar Archives. 1895.

32 Settlement effected in the case of the Murder of Mr. Kelly, overseer, and Public Works department and in the case of a sowar in the Zam Pass. Waziri offences. Ex-DD. S.No.949. B. No.10., Peshawar Archives, 1894.

33 H. Beattie, *Tribe and State in Waziristan 1849-1883* (London: University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1997).

Besides, those who were involved in committing a crime within the British territory used to flee to Afghanistan where it was impossible to trace the offender and bring him back. Also, he was protected under the customary law of Pashtunwali.³⁴ But on the other hand, in return the Amir of Afghanistan wanted these tribes to resist the British advancement in their territory.

The Amir also gave out a large amount of money to the tribes to buy weapons on several occasions which were supposed to be used against the British government. Keeping this in mind, the British government tried its best to stop Amir's support to the tribes through blockades and posting informants along the border. Maliks were accorded stipends and allowance as bribes by the British government to work as an intermediary and convince the tribesman to serve the government; within tribes, several local tribesmen were enrolled as spies supposed to be ears and eyes of government used as informers to give out information regarding Amir movements and those tribes who were plotting against the government. The British government took careful measures against any threat coming from the Amir which might turn devastating for the British. This led to the carving out of the "scientific frontier" between Afghanistan and the British India. The geographical transformation done by the British such as building railways and roads in the frontier were all for strategic use it was never meant to facilitate locals while at the same time, it was developed in other regions of the British domain for economic use. But these arrangements did not bring any good to the British as we shall see in the next section how the Amir of Afghanistan and the Waziristan tribes stood against the British government.

As mentioned earlier, the British government refrained from direct intervention in tribal affairs as long as they knew that they were on the safe side. Secondly, once the tribe offered submission to the authorities it was considered a great success as these tribes resisted colonial authority in every

34 H. Beattie, *Imperial Frontier: Tribe and State in Waziristan* (London: Routledge, 2002).

way they could. Moreover, the submission was also considered a success because the inhabitants were assured that they would be treated as free tribesmen as long as they remain friendly and peaceful to the British government.³⁵ But in reality, the local populace was kept aloof from the bigger game, and development projects in other regions of the empire such as the Punjab where at the same time development project like colleges, courts, municipal councils, universities, railways, and roads were under progress. While in Waziristan border strategies and employing the local populace as militia and scouts were being arranged to defend the border from any threat the British possess. It can be also argued here, that the British wanted a transformation based on peaceful resolutions but soon they realize that it would be entirely difficult to approach and transform these tribes through negotiation and terms which led them to use force and hence made the terrain of Waziristan as 'buffer zone' and backward for decades which can be still observed to this date.

Government's Methods of Peace and Penetration in Waziristan

For some period, a semblance of peace reigned on the Waziristan border, until in 1904, the murder of the Political Agent in Wana and in 1905, the commandant of South Waziristan Militia and the Brigade Major at Bannu inflicted heavy fines on the tribes and the dismissal of all Mehsuds from the South Waziristan Militia.³⁶ In response to this act of British Tribes in 1911, the Mehsuds cut out the telegraphic line and completely isolated Jandola and Wana. While, attacks were being made on upper Tochi, Spinwam, Kaitu, and Spina khaisora where the British had camps till 1913, no further operations were undertaken against tribes before the

35 A complete list of expeditions is given in Harris, Appendix G, and 433-40. See also *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India*, vol. I; *Tribes North of the Kabul River*, vol. II, *North-West Frontier: Tribes Between the Kabul and Gomal Rivers*, P.S.D.L., B.234; H. L.Nevill, *Campaigns on the North-West Frontier, 1849-1908*; H. C. Wylly, *From the Black Mountain to Waziristan & Baha*, L (1968).

36 Beattie, *Tribes and State in Waziristan 1849-1883*.

outbreak of the Great War.³⁷ The reason why the British refrained from the counterattack against the tribe was for two reasons: First, the British did not want to engage their troops in Waziristan as they were needed more importantly somewhere else. Secondly, with limited resources and troops, it might provoke the tribes living along the border which might be devastating for the British to encounter.³⁸

With the beginning of the Great War, the Afghan lashkar from Khost known as Khostwal crossed the border of Afghanistan and looted the Sarai at Miramshah but was withdrawn by the Northern Waziristan Militia. In 1915, another attack was attempted by the Khostwals and Zadran with several other tribes from Khost with a force of 10,000 men attacked Spin Khaisora and upper Tochi but were retreated by the Northern Waziristan Militia again.³⁹ Seeing these attempts the Mehsuds' tribesmen were eager to join these tribes and raid together but were restrained by the government due to their connection with the murder of political agent Major. G. Dodd in Wana and stoppage of allowances and restrictions imposed on them. Without letting go away this opportunity the anti-British party led by Mullah Fazl Din, son of Mullah Powindah was eager to join the Khost tribes against the British by encouraging the Mehsud tribesmen to join his party but was restrained by the Mehsud Maliks from following his lead.⁴⁰ Later Mullah Fazl Din managed to recruit a gang of 80 Mehsud tribesmen to attack and raid Kajuri Kach and Tanai. Slowly and gradually the force of Fazl Din grew larger and stronger with his exchange visit with Lala Pir, who was a fanatical Mullah of Khost and a member of the Turkish-Afghan party, encouraged the tribesmen by his stories in Mesopotamia and early invasion of India.⁴¹

37 Beattie, *Tribe and State in Waziristan 1849-1883*.

38 Beattie, *Tribe and State in Waziristan 1849-1883*.

39 Beattie, *Tribe and State in Waziristan 1849-1883*.

40 Beattie, *Tribe and State in Waziristan 1849-1883*.

41 Huguh Beattie, "Negotiations with the Tribes of Waziristan 1849-1914—the British Experience," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 39

To settle these outrages by the Mullah Fazal Din and other Mehsud tribes the British tried to negotiate with them through Jirgas in which they proposed to give a contract of the road to the three main clans of Mehsud and were asked to arrange and supply laborers required. The scheme was received favorably by the Maliks, but Fazal Din bitterly stood against it and claimed that it would give easier access to the British to invade them.⁴² Hence, the scheme was all abandoned. It can be argued here that, the British wanted to lure the local Maliks by giving them developmental projects such as roads for their benefit and keeping them indebted for what the British did for them, while on the other hand, it was a bait that was given to them to press down the resistance and accept the British as their colonial master. Mullah Fazal Din being a fanatical religious figure in the Mehsud tribe, opposed this contract as it would give easy access to the British to crush them and turn them away from their Islamic faith.

As mentioned earlier, these roads were only accessible for military purposes, civilians were prohibited to use the road and were allowed only if proper documentation was presented to the represented authorities. As soon as Mullah Fazal Din found out that he became threat to the British authority and most of the Mehsud tribes shifted from settled areas to hills after grazing and reaping crops in plain areas, he publicly announced that he wanted to attack the British as the foreigners were breaching their faith. He went from town to town and village to village to gather people for his mission until his lashkar reached a force of 1500 tribesmen; he was later joined by the Wazir Mullah Hamzullah and some Shakai Wazirs.⁴³ All the telegraph communication lines were cut off by the lashkar, as the rumors of the attack reached the British, the troops were ordered to take a defensive stance at their stations. The lashkar reached a strength of 3000 men who

(4): 29-30; <https://doi.org/10.1080/03086534.2011.615597>.

42 Beattie, "Negotiations with the Tribes of Waziristan,".

43 C. Tripodi, *Edge of Empire: The British Political Officer and Tribal Administration on the North-west frontier 1877-1947* (London: Routledge, 2016).

attacked Saewekai Post in 1917, which resulted in killing twenty-one British troops with ten wounded and eleven taken prisoners including Major Hugh⁴⁴ who was commanding the Post.

This incursion encouraged the tribesmen as they were shooting the post for consecutive three days and raiding the nearby town and killing the British officials on their way into the British territory. This attempt by the local tribesman proved to be a success against the British government. The lashkar kept on moving and attacking every post on their way plundering and stealing cattle from nearby villages. Their main objective was to damage British strongholds as much as possible. Several troops were dispatched from Tank, Murtaza, and Nilli Kach to suppress the lashkar, but they never succeeded in capturing or suppressing the lashkar, as the lashkar kept moving on and took refuge in some village which was impossible to be traced by the British. For the British raiding parties and lashkar, mostly Mehsuds were hard to be defeated. It was later decided by the British official to send out an expedition against the Mehsud tribe in the hills which either by occupying their country for a considerable period or instituting a blockade until the Mehsud tribe handover those involved in the crime against the British government within their territory. The Mehsud were hard to be tracked or get punished for their crimes because they were more familiar with the geography and were able to hide in this remote terrain secondly, they were helped by local resistance militia and were able to move to and fro to neighbouring country Afghanistan that helped them attack the British settlement from time to time. These tactics cost the British Empire in human loss as well as economically, which later made the British alter their maneuvers in order to have control over this region.

Conclusion

The British never accepted their loss in prestige they kept their

44 Beattie, "Negotiations with the Tribes of Waziristan,".

ego high no matter what the circumstances were. Whenever they felt that they were losing to the tribes they used to send out an expedition against the tribes who were involved in some way in crime. The tactic was widely used by the British government to apprehend the criminals by forcing the tribe to seize their livestock, imposing fines, and blocking their passes, which in return gave no other choice to the tribes rather than surrender as hostages until the offender is brought before the British authorities for his crime.

The British government used to implement diverse strategies at the same time in different regions, ensuring control of its subjects and suppressing any resistance that could threaten the supremacy of the empire. Hence, the government started multiple development projects and worked for transformation of the social and political structure in Waziristan to have a strong grip on the tribesmen who were very valuable for the empire to defend the border. At the same time, they were kept deprived from the privileges to ensure their obedience to the colonial masters; no matter what the circumstances are. Furthermore, the British tried new experiments in Waziristan with bringing changes in the geographical infrastructure; the lands which could be developed and utilized for farming and agriculture to bring betterment in the lives of the tribesmen, were deliberately transformed into garrisons, check posts and cantonments. These back-and-forth strategies by the British government kept the tribesmen backward for centuries and relied on the government for support till to this date, as their geographical, social and political structure was greatly crushed just for the cause of defending the British empire. Similarly, when the British Empire arrived in Waziristan they surveyed the topography of Waziristan to get their hold and defend the empire against every odd, but later they realized that they never properly understood its inhabitants as they were rebellious and unpredictable to whom their alliance was committed to.