

GEOPOLITICS AND STRATEGIC INTERESTS OF THE BRITISH IN THE TRIBAL AREAS OF THE NORTH WEST FRONTIER AND ITS ADMINISTRATION

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Abstract

The tribal region of the North West Frontier (NWF) of the Indian Sub-continent was geo-politically an important region for the British India. It provided a direct link to Afghanistan. During the colonial history of India, Afghanistan was used as a buffer between the expanding Russian Empire and India. So the tribal areas of the NWF were to be used as a buffer between Afghanistan and India in case Russia penetrate in Afghanistan. Beside this, controlling the tribal areas also helped in protecting the adjacent settled districts from the plunder of the tribesmen. The tribal areas also provided safe passages to the British convoys. The paper highlights colonization and administration of the tribal areas of the NWF, and the geopolitical interests of the British colonial power in this area. The paper explores all this through the lens of the colonial literature produced during that time.

Keywords: Tribal Land, Durand Line, FCR, Agencies, FRs and Malaks.

Introduction

The North West Frontier is the area that is located on border with Afghanistan. Afghanistan was used as a buffer state between British India and Russia. The tribal area that bordered Afghanistan was of utmost importance for the colonial British India. Their focus was on having a secured border in this area. Secured borders have been the top most priority of the great powers and empires. They strived persistently to secure their borders from intrusion. The more secure borders of the empire the more it

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was perceived powerful. Frontier region throughout history has been of primary concern for different regimes. The region is inhabited by the *Pakhtun* ethnic group with strong tribal structure having their own values, norms, customs and traditions. It therefore was important for the British rulers to be aware of the responses or reactions from this portion of population if any incursion or encroachment was made. Continuous resistance was seen from this portion of the population to the encroachment policies of the British. Lord Curzon rightly has stated that the most difficult and tiring struggle in which we have been engaged in India in modern times was undertaken with the Frontier tribes.¹

Strategic Significance of the Frontier Region

The area of the Indian sub-continent which borders Afghanistan in the North West is situated at the junction of three significant regions of Asia that is India, Afghanistan and Central Asia. It is one of the most significant geostrategic areas of the world that has played a remarkable role in world history.² Historically Indian riches had attracted the foreign invasions. Before the English invasion the Indians witnessed continuous attacks on their land. It seemed that they were accustomed to these invasions. History is evident of the fact that India remained a hub of conquests, trade and migration.³ Many writers have commented on the strategic importance of this region. In the book "*Frontier Facets: Pakistan's North West Frontier Province*" M. Athar (2007) has explained the importance of the region and also stating that this area is inhabited by the tribal people having their own characteristics like bravery and hospitality. David Dichter's observation about the region is that there are a few areas on the face of earth like the North West Frontier which have contributed a significant part as a transitional section between cultures and peoples.⁴ Its importance can be gauged from the fact that it was the area which was most focused during British Empire and where careers of the British officials including that of Viceroys and the Prime Ministers depended. It was the region where a trivial incidence could instantly shoot up into an international disaster. The Frontier was so important for different powers that not only Afghanistan, India and

¹ George Nathaniel Curzon, *Frontiers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), 6, <https://archive.org/details/frontiers00curz/page/n1>.

² Muhammad Y. Effendi, "The North Western Route and the Invasions of the Indian Sub-Continent: A Historical Study in Modern Perspective," *Central Asia*, no. 54 (2004), 37.

³ Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 69.

⁴ David Dichter, *The North-West Frontier of West Pakistan: A Study in Regional Geography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 3.

Britain were concerned about it but it also enticed Persia, China, Russia, Turkey and even France.⁵

British Empire during the rule of India was continuously into the problem of unsteady frontiers. Among these unstable frontiers the North West Frontier provided an additional anxiety. Besides the unstable situation at the frontier there was danger of Russian's expansion into Central Asia in the nineteenth century. This move of the Russians created fear and doubt in the minds of the British.⁶ They were afraid that the Russians may exploit the unstable situation in the Frontier region. Thus protection of India was dependent on the North West Frontier region. Different policies were adopted to control the Frontier Tribal belt. It became a strategic zone for the British policy makers, where they adopted different policies to control the tribal people and this part of land for the protection of India. This tribal belt provided a natural boundary to the Indian sub-continent. Any invasion from the Western side, on the Indian plains was much difficult because supplies and reinforcement to the invading enemies was not possible through this difficult terrain.⁷ Controlling this tribal belt thus seemed to be of great strategic advantage for the British Empire.

Imperial Defense and the Tribal Region

During the period (1801-1839) the British higher ups were worried regarding the growing Tsarist Russian threats of reaching the Indian borders. To counter this threat of Russian expansion towards India, some of the British officials advocated closed border policy, which was to keep the status quo in the bordered region of Afghanistan that is to let the Sikhs continue with their ruling and thus would be regarded as a buffer zone. There were other British officials who feared the unruly existence of the tribal belt between Peshawar and Kabul whose loyalties were not declared and who might be vulnerable to the Russian influence and designs. British officials who were keenly observing this situation were in support of Forward Policy. This policy meant that British should have direct control of the area beyond Indus up to the Kabul.⁸

⁵ Arthur Swinson, *North-West Frontier: People and Events 1839-1947* (New York: Praeger, 1967), 11.

⁶ Robert Johnson, "Russians at the Gates of India? Planning the Defense of India, 1885-1900," *The Journal of Military History* 67, no. 3 (2003), 699, doi:10.1353/jmh.2003.0230.

⁷ Javed Iqbal, "Khyber Pass: Geography, People and History," (PhD diss., University of Peshawar, 2005), 45.

⁸ Mukulika Banerjee, *The Pathan Unarmed: Opposition & Memory in the North West Frontier* (Oxford: James Currey Publishers, 2000), 23.

Britain position got strengthened by further annexation towards North Western regions. Punjab was annexed on 30 March 1849.⁹ Sindh was annexed much before Punjab in 1843 from Baluch Talpur rulers.¹⁰ The conquest of Punjab completed the shape of British India. They emerged as the masters of India who ruled India from 'the Indus to the Bay of Bengal'.¹¹ Thus they established the frontier of British India, the frontier which the British officials supported since the first Anglo Afghan war. British arrival in the region was welcomed with enthusiasm because they were fed up from the Sikh ruler's atrocities.¹² British annexation of this part of land brought them into contact for the first time with the *Pukhtun* tribes who inhabited the extensive chain of mountains that was a natural barrier or boundary between India and Afghanistan.¹³ This region of the North West got prominence as a strategically most important border because beyond these tribes was Afghanistan and beyond it the continuously advancing Russian Empire. Thus the British government was aware of the fact that stability of India lies in the fact that peace be maintained along the border of Afghanistan.

The tribal people of this border land were completely different ethnically, linguistically and historically from the Muslims of Punjab. This tribal territory was beyond British control and was known as *ghair-ilaga* (foreign/unknown land) or *yaghistan* (the land of rebels).¹⁴ The British in the beginning never tried to control or subdue them. They even did not try to pass into the lands of these tribes nor did they bothered about the mountainous Khyber Pass. British administration was in the valley of Peshawar, Bannu and Derajat, which was the administrative border line of the country. Beyond this administrative line the area was unknown and it recognized no one's authority.

The British officials' response to the tribal people was very conciliatory. They were allowed to trade and to have free movements in the British administered areas. Access to medical and other assistance was provided to them. Even they were given permission to be recruited in forces like the police and military forces so as to encourage goodwill and cordial relations.¹⁵ All this was to have them exposed to the benefits and developments of the British government to tame these unruly tribal people.

⁹ H. H. Dodwell, *The Cambridge History of India: British India, 1497-1858* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929), 556.

¹⁰ Ian Talbot, *Pakistan: A Modern History* (London: Hurst & Company, 2009), 55.

¹¹ Vincent A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India. (3rd Ed.)*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), 621.

¹² Sir O. Caroe, *The Pathans, 550 B.C.-1957 A.D* (London: Macmillan & Co Ltd, 1958), 326.

¹³ Sir W. Barton, *India's North West Frontier* (London: J. Murray, 1939), 56-59.

¹⁴ Caroe, *The Pathans*, 347.

¹⁵ Richard Temple, *Lord Lawrence* (London: MacMillan & Co., 1889), 79.

Besides this to maintain tranquility in the area, British government made agreements with the tribal people. The tribes agreed to these agreements because of monetary benefits. The financial benefits were in the form of allowances and subsidies. The tribes were to abide by the rules of agreements, to maintain peace and to secure the trading routes. If they did not keep these promises they were then inflicted with punishment in the form of economic blockades, taking them as prisoners, their properties might be seized and even in harsh circumstances military campaigns were waged against these tribes.

There were internal feuds among different tribes. The British also took advantage of the inter-tribal feuds to pit one tribe against the other. A system of collective responsibility was introduced by Herbert Edwardes.¹⁶ Under the system whole of the tribe was to face punishment for the wrong of a single individual. For maintaining internal peace and tranquility and protecting Western frontier, Governor General Lord Dalhousie empowered Henry Lawrence¹⁷ on 18 May 1849 to raise a force.¹⁸ Thus a Trans-Frontier Brigade was created which later on in 1851 was named as the 'Punjab Irregular Force'.¹⁹

Durand Line: Demarcation of the *Pukhtun*'s Territory

In the last decade of the nineteenth century the British foreign policy was on the front. The tendency was to push forward up to the valleys of Wana in Waziristan and the Tochi Valley in an effort to get closer to the tribes. Whereas on the other side of the Frontier, the then king of Afghanistan Amir Abdur Rahman was also trying to assert his suzerainty over various border tribes.²⁰ To materialize the scheme of demarcating the boundary, the Viceroy chose Lord Robert for this mission. But Amir opposed his appointment because of his role in the Second Anglo-Afghan war. To bring Amir to the table talks Viceroy withheld the shipment of guns and ammunitions, which was on way towards Kabul. It was to be released if Abdur Rahman accepted the British delegation to Kabul. After agreeing on the conditions, a delegation went to Kabul under the leadership of Mortimer

¹⁶ Major-General Sir Herbert Benjamin Edwardes was an English administrator, soldier, and statesman who was active in the Punjab (1819-68) and also served as Commissioner of Peshawar (1853-9).

¹⁷ Sir Henry Montgomery Lawrence, (born June 28, 1806, Matura, Ceylon [now Sri Lanka]—died July 4, 1857, Lucknow, India), was an English soldier and administrator who helped to consolidate British rule in the Punjab region.

¹⁸ Timothy R. Moreman, *The Army in India and the Development of Frontier Warfare, 1849-1947* (London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1998), 5-6.

¹⁹ R. North, *The Punjab Frontier Force: A Brief Record of their Services 1846-1924* (Dera Ismail Khan: Headquarters Waziristan District., 1934), 1.

²⁰ Jagannath P. Misra, *The Administration of India Under Lord Lansdowne, 1888-1894* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1975), 45.

Durand. In the agreement that took place on 12 November, 1893 Afghan government relinquished their claim to the North of Oxus region and agreed to draw a boundary line in the South.²¹ Both the parties to the agreement compromised on certain territories. British government gave assent to the Afghan claim on Asmar. Afghan government on the other hand agreed not to intervene in Swat, Dir and Bajawar. In the South of the Frontier, a compromise also took place in Waziristan Area where Birmal, a portion of Waziristan, was left to the Amir and in response Amir renounced his claim on Waziristan. Both the parties to the agreement agreed not to meddle with the internal affairs of the tribes on both sides of the border. British government agreed to let the shipments of guns and ammunitions to the Amir. Besides this his annual subsidy was also increased from twelve lakh to eighteen lakh rupees.²²

Boundary of the Durand Line divided the *Pukhtun* homeland and tribes disregarding of their common history, tradition and tribal affinities. Durand Line for some tribes was seen as illogical and an insult which was completely unfamiliar to their nomadic and independent life style.²³ The Durand Line thus did not stop the tribal people from crossing the line. Amir Abdur Rahman on the other hand considered these tribes to be under his suzerainty and paid subsidies to the tribes. Davies was of the view that Durand Line did not bother to take care of the ethnic sensibilities but the purpose was to serve the British interests that is to have a line of resistance against Russian expansion.²⁴

Demarcation of the boundary arose the problem of the political assimilation of the tribes straddling the border. As the border was porous and the tribesmen would move frequently across the border, made the British much more anxious and worried. All this compelled the British to make a legal framework for controlling the Frontier, which undoubtedly was a difficult task.²⁵ Both the Amir and the British failed to bring tranquility and peace to the Frontier region. The tribesmen resistance made the Durand Line an artificial and redundant borderline. Disturbances, uprisings, violence continued to happen in one part or the other part of the tribal belt.

²¹ Misra, *The Administration of India*, 62.

²² Ibid, 54.

²³ Stanley A. Wolpert, *Roots of Confrontation in South Asia: Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and the Superpowers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 66.

²⁴ Cuthbert C. Davies, *The Problem of the North-West Frontier, 1890-1908, with a Survey of Policy Since 1849* (London: Curzon Press, 1975), 30.

²⁵ Mukulika Banerjee, *The Pathan Unarmed: Opposition & Memory in the North West Frontier* (UK: James Currey Publishers, 2000), 23.

Establishment of the North West Frontier Province (1901)

British continuous contact with the Frontier led them to the idea of creating a new Frontier Province. It was Lord Dalhousie who for the first time suggested to create the new province but he abandoned his proposal because Colonel Mackeson, who was to be entrusted with the job, was assassinated at Peshawar.²⁶ The architect of this policy of a frontier as a separate province, Lord Curzon, in his speech to the parliament in 1898 said that it was then clear to advance to the external Frontier, to take up a forward position on the line of Kabul, Ghazni and Kandahar.²⁷ On becoming Viceroy of India he immediately turned his attention to the consolidation of the Frontier. He was of the opinion that relations with the tribes of the frontier should be dealt with directly and that it should be under the control and supervision of the Indian Government.²⁸ In the year 1901, he assessed the Frontier administrative structure by analyzing incidents on the border like the tribal uprising, strategic designs of the Russians and issue of the Durand Line.

The North West Frontier was established as a new province on November 9, 1901.²⁹ It was surrounded in the North and West by Afghanistan, in its East lies Kashmir, Gilgit, and the Punjab whereas on its South lies the Balochistan.³⁰ The tribal areas were beyond the provincial administrative structure. These areas became a buffer between Afghanistan and the British Administered districts. The first Chief Commissioner of the province was Lieutenant Colonel Harold Deane. He was succeeded by George Roose Keppel after his death in 1908.³¹

British Policy towards the North West Frontier of India

Policies of British administration were based on aggressive element of force and military expedition to subjugate the unruly tribes but with the element of non-involvement in the internal affairs of these tribes. The unique administrative and political system of these tribal areas make it distinguish from other regions. For the administrative purpose the British divided the tribal belt into different agencies. Agency was the counter part of the district

²⁶ Lovat Fraser, *India Under Curzon & After* (London: William Heinemann, 1911), 58.

²⁷ Henry C. Lipsett, *Lord Curzon in India: 1898-1903* (London: R. A. Everett & Co, 1903), 32,

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1260&context=afghanenglish>

²⁸ Sana Haroon, *Frontier of Faith: Islam in the Indo-Afghan Borderland* (London: Hurst & Company, 2011), 12-24.

²⁹ Lal Baha, *N.W.F.P. Administration Under British Rule 1901-1919* (Islamabad: National Commission on Historical and Cultural Research, 1978), 42-53.

³⁰ James W. Spain, "Pakistan's North West Frontier," *Middle East Journal* 8, no. 1 (1954): 27, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4322563>.

³¹ Fraser, *India Under Curzon*, 61.

which was an administrative unit in rest of the British India. Administrator of the agency was called a Political Agent who was parallel of Deputy Commissioner (DC), a district administrator. Political Agent was responsible to create cordial relations with the tribe of his jurisdiction and to serve as a middleman between the tribesmen and the Chief Commissioner later on the Governor. The British officials adopted policy of persuasion, pressure and armed intervention for controlling the tribesmen.³² Before this system there was no proper setup or any special agency dealing with the tribal people.

With the establishment of the agencies a proper administrative setup developed whereby the British official had direct contact with the tribesmen. The system was not developed until 1876 when a special officer was appointed for Khyber Agency during the Second Anglo-Afghan war. Lord Robert in 1886 stated that if we want to strengthen our military position on the border then we have to improve our bond and connection with the tribes of the Frontier.³³ The tribal areas by the end of the 19th century after great upheaval were consolidated by the colonial power. The outcome of the appointment of Political Agents in the tribal areas during 1890s was that the British came to know about the problems of the tribesmen.³⁴

Creation of tribal agencies and FRs brought the land of the tribesmen to be controlled by British India. With the special status of agencies these areas became an integral part of British India. The tribal zone of influence thus created, played the role of a buffer to the buffer. This buffer to the buffer was a great factor in the defense of the North West Frontier of India. A vacuum that was there in the shape of the tribal belt along the border with Afghanistan was thus filled. Objectives of the Empire in this region was summarized in the farewell speech by Lord Lansdowne delivered in Calcutta in 1894 by stating that in political geography nature abhors a vacuum. Under present circumstances if a vacuum is created that is if a place is left vacant on the Indian frontier, it certainly will be filled by others. Therefore, we should step in to fill such vacuum. He further stated that there is a special reason for which we cannot afford to observe a policy of mere abstention as regard the border region. He described the border region to be a sphere of influence of the Indian Empire within which no aggression from outside be allowed.³⁵ For British the primary objective in the region was to seek a frontier to defend India from the foreign aggression

³² Claude Rakisits, "Pakistan's Tribal Areas: A Critical No-Man's Land" (Paper presented at Webster University Forum, Geneva, April 25, 2008).

³³ Lord Montagu, "The North West Frontier of India," *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 11, no. 2 (1924): 139, DOI: 10.1080/03068372408724866.

³⁴ James G. Elliott, *The Frontier 1839-1947: The Story of The North-West Frontier of India* (London: Cassell & Company Ltd., 1968), 91.

³⁵ Colvin Auckland, "The Problem Beyond the Indian Frontier," *Nineteenth Century: A Monthly Review* 42, no. 250 (December 1897): 852.

of Russia and Afghanistan. Second objective was to secure the settled adjacent districts to the tribal land from the tribesmen incursion, and lastly to restrain the tribal territory to be used as a sanctuary by the criminals.

The Administrative Structure of the Tribes

The tribesmen for centuries were living in accordance to their own customs and traditions. Thus direct interference in the tribal land was not possible because of the expected violent reactions from the tribes. The British adopted the indirect form of rule for which they devised a hierarchical administrative system of their own. A small but highly authoritative system of administration was established to preserve and maintain peace in the tribal territory. Chief Commissioner, later on Governor, was at the top in the British hierarchical administrative setup. The tribal chief or *Malik* was at the lowest level whereas Political Agent was in the middle who acted as an administrator and mediator between the tribe and the high ups.

Political agents were the officers directly dealing with the tribes. Political Agent was vested with vast powers of administration. He was the central person in all this administrative set up. His role was identified as 'half ambassador and half governor'.³⁶ His successful administration was based on his personal relations and understanding with the clans and tribes. An essential duty of the political officer was to timely collect accurate information, which was a difficult task for the officer in a fractious tribal environment of the Frontier.

Local tribal people were recruited as Khassadars, tribal levies and tribal militias who assisted the Political Agent for policing the area. The paramilitary force, operated under the army, was to establish peace and security. Khassadars were recruited from the local tribesmen along with their own arms. Levies were appointed by the political administration on merit basis and were provided with arms and ammunition by the government. The tribal militia was a regular force recruited by the British Political administration for controlling the bordered areas along Afghanistan.

The British after encountering the tribal people realized that there should be someone with whom they could contact and who represent a specific clan or tribe. *Malaki* system was introduced in the tribal areas, where an elder or chief of the clan was bestowed with the title of *Malak* who would facilitate the political officer and who used to be a mediator between the government and his respective clan. The local tribal elders or chiefs were thus bestowed with a status to effectively play the role of a mediator between the colonial authorities and the members of his tribe and also to

³⁶ James W. Spain, *The Way of Pathans*. (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1963), 24.

help in executing the policies of the government. The intension of introducing the system of *Malaks* was to generate loyal and responsible local elite. Their faithfulness was remunerated with monetary benefits and official acknowledgment of authority over the tribes. Along with *Malaki* system there is a *lungi* holder or *Sufaid resh*³⁷ which is a bottom rank of *Malak*.³⁸ British relationship with the tribes was secured by allowances paid to the tribes, known as *muwajjab*. In return for this system of allowance, the tribe made agreements to secure the routes passing through their areas and to abstain from raiding the British-India territory.³⁹ The British believed that paying allowance to the tribes was in their own interest as it would keep the tribes quiet.

Some of the British officials were against the role of the middleman. They believed that the government should directly deal with the tribes. Commissioner of the Derajat, W. K. Merk, was not in favour of the *Malaki* system. He proposed that instead of giving allowance to the selected *Malaks*, it should be paid to the tribe directly.⁴⁰ Lord Lytton also was of the opinion that the government direct links with the tribes would be much preferable for better understanding of their system and culture. He opposed the role of a *Malak*, middleman, Arbab in dealing with the tribes.⁴¹ It was also believed that under the *Malaki* system an elite class in the tribal areas emerged in shape of *Malaks* which resulted in conflict, contradiction and dysfunction in the society.⁴² Instead of all this opposition, the *Malaki* system worked well and better served the interests of the British government.

Law of the Land: The Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR)

The British encounter with *Pukhtuns* of this land compelled them to devise a special administrative set up and a set of laws. The law thus formulated for them was known as the Frontier Crimes Regulation, popularly known as FCR. To control and suppress the *Pukhtuns* of tribal region, the law was made much harsher by the British officials. It was not that new rules and regulations were made but rather the codification was

³⁷ The *Lungi* system or the *Sufaid-Resh* (white bearded elders) is also a sort of formal recognition although of a slightly lower level than the *Maliki* system. A *lungi* signifies the holding of a position of favour with the Government and of influence in the tribe with corresponding advantage to the Government and the individual.

³⁸ Salman Bangash, *The Frontier Tribal Belt: Genesis and Purpose Under the Raj* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2016), 23.

³⁹ Herman G. Watteville, *Waziristan, 1919-1920* (London: Constable and Co. Ltd., 1925), 8.

⁴⁰ Bangash, *The Frontier Tribal Belt*, 23.

⁴¹ Lady B. Balfour, *The History of Lord Lytton's Indian administration, 1876 to 1880* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1899), 166-7.

⁴² Akbar S. Ahmad, *Pukhtun Economy and Society: Traditional Structure and Economic Development in a Tribal Society* (London: Routledge, 1980), 62.

done keeping in view of the tribal customs and traditions. It was first promulgated in Punjab as the Punjab Frontier Crimes Regulation in 1872 where NWF was part of the Punjab province at that time. In 1901 when NWFP was created as a separate province, these regulations were then promulgated as the FCR 1901.⁴³ The law dealt with both the civil and criminal cases and was different from the civil and criminal laws enforced in the rest of British India. FCR was not working as a parallel system but as a sole substitute code. FCR was to bridle the tribes of the borderland, to make secure the adjacent British controlled districts. At the time of its adoption in 1901, John William Kaye, head of the political and secret department of the India Office, commented, 'we cannot rein in wild horses with silken braids'.⁴⁴

To make FCR acceptable to the tribesmen, the British attempted to blend it according to the tribals' customs and traditions by bringing *jarga* and traditional punishment into its sphere. The institution of *jarga* was included in FCR to give impression to the tribal people that the British highly regarded tribal sentiments. Most of the rulings of the Punjab bureaucrats, established in Punjab after 1849, were codified in 1901 in the fully developed FCR. All the powers of the executive, revenue collector and magistrate under FCR were held by a single person, the Deputy Commissioner (DC). In civil and criminal cases the DC could bypass the judicial obligations and rules of evidence and send the case to the officially appointed councils of elders, *jarga*. The *jarga* would look into the matter, determine facts and would give their decision on the matter and would report it to the British official responsible for awarding punishment. There was no right of appeal to any higher colonial court.⁴⁵ In case any tribal man committed crime and then absconded then under FCR's collective responsibility clause his village or tribe would be inflicted with punishment. Members of the community at hands would be arrested and trade and access to Peshawar or other plain towns were to be banned.⁴⁶ The British asserted that members of a tribe under segmentary lineage system were accountable for each other and therefore collective punishment was applied for the crimes committed by an individual member of a tribe. This notion of joint tribal responsibility was enshrined in the FCR.

There were some notorious articles regarding penalties in the FCR, like section 21 which was about the blockade of antagonistic or unfriendly

⁴³ Muhammad M. Wazir, "FATA Under FCR (Frontier Crimes Regulations): An Imperial Black Law," *Central Asia Journal* 61, no. 9 (2007): https://www.asc-centralasia.edu.pk/Issue_61/00-TOC.html.

⁴⁴ Bangash, *The Frontier Tribal Belt*, 230.

⁴⁵ Robert Nichols, *The Frontier Crimes Regulation: A History in Documents* (Pakistan: Oxford University Press., 2013), xiv.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, xv.

tribe, section 31 about demolition or restriction of construction of hamlet, village or town in the Frontier, section 36 stating the removal of persons from their places of residence and section 40 which was the most notorious one was about the power of the Political Agent where he could arrest anybody with no right of appeal, keep a person in jail for unlimited time and can arrest any of his relative or tribe member in place of the accused.⁴⁷

British enforcement of such harsh and special laws in the tribal belt was because of certain intrinsic objectives. The objectives were to extend her influence into the tribal areas, to implement her imperialist plans towards Central Asia and to contain Russian advancement towards India. FCR thus proved to achieve two way objective for the British administrators. On the one hand they tamed the tribal people who were not given the right of habeas corpus, whose arrest on mere suspicions were allowed, and where collective punishment for the whole tribe was authorized and where restrictions could be placed on the movements and activities of the tribes, and on the other hand the inherent objectives of implementing imperial designs could be achieved.

Conclusion

The tribal region of the NWF not only came under control of the British but the region also developed in the sector of transportation and communication for colonial purposes. By 1890 there were 571 miles of carpeted and uncarpeted imperial roads extending from Kohat, Peshawar and Dera Ismail Khan. About 100 million rupees were spent during the years of 1884 and 1900 on extending the North Western railway line up to the tribal areas to open routes across the passes.⁴⁸ All this was done to expedite the military movements in times of crisis. British thus needed full domination of the region which was very much crucial for the defense of India.

The tribal administrative system was based on the extensive power of the Political Agents who were assisted by FCR, the *Malaki* system, the tribal levies and monetary incentives in shape of allowances. Besides this a chain of roads and railway lines was built to help in speedy movement of the troops in times of crisis to control the unruly tribes or to counter threats from beyond the border. Several expeditions were launched to subjugate these tribes. These tribes were contiguous to the settled districts of the then Punjab province which were the revenue generating districts. It was thus needed to be secured from the unruly tribes of the tribal belt. Tribes of the North West Frontier were of primary concern for the British of India. In 1849 when Punjab was annexed to the colonial government, relations of the British with the tribes of the North West were characterized by continuous strife. This led

⁴⁷ Bangash, *The Frontier Tribal Belt*, 230.

⁴⁸ Haroon, *Frontier of Faith*, 12.

the British officials to make agreements with the tribes. Objectives of the agreements were to safeguard the roads and preventing intrusion into the settled administered districts by the tribes. The tribal territory not only acted as a buffer but also as a defensive line between Afghanistan and British India.

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