

CONSERVATION OR IMPLICIT DESTRUCTION: DEFORESTATION IN THE PRINCELY STATE OF DIR ON THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER AND THE IMPERIAL STRATEGY OF BRITISH INDIA

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Abstract

The Czarist Empire during the nineteenth century emerged on the scene as a Eurasian colonial power challenging British supremacy, especially in Central Asia. The trans-continental Russian expansion and the ensuing influence were on the march as a result of the increase in the territory controlled by Imperial Russia. Inevitably, the Russian advances in the Caucasus and Central Asia were increasingly perceived by the British as a strategic threat to the interests of the British Indian Empire. These geo-political and geo-strategic developments enhanced the importance of Afghanistan in the British perception as a first line of defense against the advancing Russians and the threat of presumed invasion of British India. Moreover, a mix of these developments also had an impact on the British strategic perception that now viewed the defense of the North-West Frontier as a vital interest for the security of British India. The strategic imperative was to deter the Czarist Empire from having any direct contact with the conquered subjects, especially the North Indian Muslims. An operational expression of this policy gradually unfolded when the Princely State of Dir was loosely incorporated, but quite not settled, into the formal framework of the imperial structure of British India. The elements of this bilateral arrangement included the supply of arms and ammunition, subsidies and formal agreements regarding governance of the state. These agreements created enough time and space for the British to pursue colonial interests in

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the Great Game, in rivalry with the rapidly-expanding Czarist Empire. British strategic pursuits in the north-west of British India finally emerged as a strategy that historians refer to as the three-fold Frontier Policy. The greater context of the interaction between British India and the Princely State of Dir was the Frontier Policy. Despite the academic awareness of it, there is a lack of comprehensive and coherent research on the subject. This paper is an attempt to bring to the fore an important aspect of the agreements reached and executed between the British Indian government and the Nawab of the Princely State of Dir with regard to the rich forest resources located within the geographic limits of the state. It argues that the British government initially intended to have greater control over the forests under the pretext of preventing deforestation. However, in reality the British turned a blind eye to the threat and practice of widespread deforestation in order to secure a stable frontier for its strategic and commercial interests. No research-based inductive work exists on the theme, and a systematic study analyzing the agreement and its impact is not available. This study is an effort to fill the gap in this area of research. The paper has an additional academic value since the deforestation in the Princely State of Dir has been explored from the point of view of the British imperial strategy in the north-west of British India, which is very much relevant even today. It is all about establishing linkages and connections.

Keywords: Czarist Russian Empire, British Indian Empire, North-West Frontier, Princely State of Dir, Deforestation in Dir, Great Game, Frontier Policy

Introduction

Frontiers are indeed the razor's edge on which hang suspended the modern issues of war or peace, of life or death to nations.

Lord Curzon, Romanes Lecture, 1907.

The nineteenth century Anglo-Russian competition was a race and rivalry over colonial possessions, natural resources, neutral territories, peripheries, buffer states, frontiers and an economic, political and strategic influence in the geo-strategic spaces fought for by the British and Russians, especially in the north-west of British India. In this context, the British thought and sense got translated over time into a meaningful reality on ground through strategic decision making. The implementation of decisions by the British was crafty. The same was true for the locals. The passage of time unfolded the new north-western reality that persisted until the recent past, when the erstwhile tribal areas were incorporated into mainland Pakistan. A secure north-west was critical for British India, keeping in view the simultaneous expansion of the British and Russian Empires. The collision between the two expanding imperial powers had to be avoided at any cost. Indeed, it was avoided by the British through a mixture of

statecraft involving the use of power and force, plus art of persuasion through subsidies. The idea was to create a stable frontier. The search for a stable frontier took the British deep into the Hindu Kush Mountains. The fundamental assumption was that the British Indian Empire needed a “Frontier of Separation” as opposed to a “Frontier of Contact”.¹ However, the strategic problem was the exercise of power in the geographic space of “Frontier of Separation”. The solution was the *Three-fold Frontier*.² It was a unique geographic innovation by the British cartographers that worked for more than two centuries with far-reaching regional and extra-regional consequences. The region and beyond continues to live with the effects of the nineteenth-century British Frontier policy. The New Great Game makes it meaningful, too.

The three-fold legal and geographic architecture created by the British in the north-west of India was the center of gravity for British strategic activity for more than a century. It remained so even after the departure of the British from the sub-continent. The first-fold of the frontier comprised the directly-administered settled districts of the British India where legal courts functioned and British laws prevailed, the second-fold included the indirectly-administered tribal areas where agreements were concluded with the tribes to block the advancing Czarist Empire from making inroads into the British Indian Empire in combination with the forward edge of the tribal areas as a demarcated boundary between British India and Afghanistan called the Durand Line. Additionally, Afghanistan was perceived as a buffer client state secured through agreements with British India. The implementation of the Frontier Policy not only involved physical territorial control, but also control or influence over territory the British considered crucial to imperial defense. Subsequently, the British perceived the Princely State of Dir located on the North-West Frontier as a geographic space to be loosely integrated through agreements into the British Indian Empire in order to exercise power and influence in the region and beyond. A new geographic and strategic reality was created in the north-west from north to south by the British as an extension of British India and its foreign and strategic policies in the Hindu Kush Mountains and further afield. The Princely State of Dir was part of this arrangement in the north-west part of British India.

During British rule in the Indian subcontinent, the areas ruled by Her Majesty the Queen either through the Governor-General of India or any governor or agent subordinate to the Governor-General were jointly referred

¹ Ainslie T. Embree, ‘Pakistan’s Imperial Legacy’, in Masuma Hasan (ed), *Pakistan in a Changing World* (Karachi: Pakistan Institute of International Affairs, 1978), 3.

² Lord Curzon was the first one to use the expression the *Three-Fold Frontier*.

to as British India.³ However, there were various regions and territories not directly ruled by the British Indian government. This had important policy implications for the locals in more ways than one, not to mention the impact on British imperial strategy in the north-western regions. These territories and regions had native rulers or chiefs who exercised power under the suzerainty of the Queen through the Governor-General or any other agent accountable to him. Accordingly, these states were referred to as Princely or Native States.⁴ These states were independent in their internal affairs; though, their defense and foreign policies were supervised, if not totally controlled, by the British Indian government. Significantly, the Princely States in the north-west of India were an extension of British imperial foreign policy towards Afghanistan, Central Asia, and the Czarist Empire. The British imperial foreign policy legacy remains to this day in the extended South Asian region. *The Imperial Gazetteer of India* listed 693 Princely States in India along with the Shan States of Burma and Nepal.⁵ On the other hand, the Indian States Committee's report limited the number to 562 states in 1929.⁶ The Memoranda on the Indian States counted the Princely States to be 578.⁷

The Princely State of Dir was one such state where the British executed a policy of deforestation while exercising indirect control. It was a classic case of management of vital and critical interests. The Princely State of Dir had an area of three thousand square miles, and a population of

³ *The Interpretation Act, 1889, (52&53 Vict.c.63) (a)*, Imperial Parliament of the British Empire March 30, 1889, 12. Accessed on August 10, 2020. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk,1889>.

⁴ William Lee Warner defined a native state as: "A political community occupying a territory in India of defined boundaries and subject to a common and responsible ruler who has actually enjoyed and exercised, as belonging to him in his own right duly exercised the supreme authority of the British government, any of the functions and attributes of internal sovereignty" William Lee Warner, *The Native States of India* (London: Macmillan and Co. Limited, 1910), 31. The term native (meaning Indian) states was used during the 19th century and as the Princely States during the twentieth century. See Barbara N. Ramusack, *The New Cambridge History of India III.6, The Indian Princes and Their States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 12-13. This shift in British usage represented a conscious or unconscious effort to subordinate British Indian allies as they were drawn into an evolving subsidiary alliance system. See Caroline Keen, *Princely India and the British Political Development and the Operation of the Empire* (New Delhi: Viva Books Private Limited, 2013), 218.

⁵ *The Imperial Gazetteer of India, The Indian Empire, Administrative*, vol.4, 1907 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1909), 92-103.

⁶ *East India (Indian States) Report of the Indian States Committee, 1928-1929* (London: H.M Stationary Office, 1929), 10-11.

⁷ *Memoranda on the Indian States 1935 (Corrected up to the 1st January 1935)* (Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1936).

350,000.⁸ The State was bounded on the west by Afghanistan, and on the north and east by the Princely States of Chitral and Swat respectively. The main tribes of the State of Dir were Malezai, Tarkanri, Isazai, and Salimzai. They were predominantly Muslims and belonged to the Pashtun ethnic group. These tribes were administered and represented by their hereditary chiefs (Khans), whereas external affairs were run by a British political agent under orders from the British government. This research paper attempts to assess, analyze, and answer the following three questions: First, why and how did the British decide to enter into a relationship with the Nawab of Dir; second, what factors and benefits motivated the Nawab of Dir to collaborate with the British Indian government? And third, what were the consequences of the agreement executed between the British Indian government and the Nawab of Dir? To explore these questions the paper follows a historical approach mainly based on archival sources. An inductive interpretation of these archival sources involves, methodologically, an empiric-analytic reasoning that adds to research on the subject.

Factors leading to the establishment of relations between the British Indian Government and the Princely State of Dir

Anglo-Russian rivalry in Central Asia started with the Franco-Russian Treaty of Tilsit in 1807 and continued until the Convention between the two in 1907. It lingered on in Persia, the Caucasus, and specifically in Transcaucasia, until 1921. This conflict in Central Asia between the two great imperial powers is known as “The Great Game”.⁹ Russia did not have a warm-water port because parts of the Baltic Sea and Odessa Port in the Black Sea were covered with snow for five and three months respectively. This not only blocked the growth of Russian naval power, but also its merchant navy. For this reason, Constantinople, with its control over the Bosphorus Strait, held great attraction for Russia.¹⁰ The way towards the Bosphorus was paved by the invasion of Crimea between 1771 and 1783 and the step-by-step annexation of Kartli-Kakheti (East Georgia) in 1783 and Imereti (West Georgia) in 1810.¹¹ It enabled Russia to establish bases, one on the sea in the Crimean Peninsula and the other on land in Georgia, from

⁸ Ibid, 150.

⁹ “The Great Game” was used in this context for the first time by the officer and historian John William Kay (1814-76). On the other hand, Russian foreign minister Count Nesselrode (in office from 1816-56) compared this Cold War to “A Tournament of Shadows”. See Christoph Baumer, *The History of Central Asia: The Age of Decline and Revival*, vol. iv (London: I.B. Taurus, 2018).

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Donald Rayfield, *Edge of Empires: A History of Georgia* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), 250-59.

where it could operate against Constantinople. The Treaty of Gulistan on 24 October 1813 signaled the end of the Russo-Persian war fought since 1804, and also confirmed Russia's possession of the Khanates of present-day Azerbaijan.¹² Russian power shone in the north of the Ottoman Empire and in Persia. Moreover, there was another subtle reason for the Russian involvement in the Caucasus and Persia: it was interested in luring part of the European trade with India, then dealt through the sea route, into the land route controlled by the Russian Empire.¹³

Besides, Russia's (supposed) interest in the Mediterranean Sea had alarmed Britain which in 1818 had reestablished its supremacy over the Mediterranean by controlling the island of Cyprus. From Cyprus, Britain could keep an eye on the Dardanelles and the Suez Canal and its navy could block the Strait of Hurmuz, too. Britain had a long reach and a firm grasp. Therefore, an attractive option for Russia was to have land access to the Indian Ocean. The Russian desire to reach warm waters remained a strong one. Russia to that end focused on the Afghan city of Herat and usurped the Oasis of Panjdeh from Afghanistan in March 1885, with the further intention to seize Herat.¹⁴ To counter Russia, Britain mobilized its navy forcing Russia to retreat. Simultaneously, the arena of "The Great Game" shifted towards the east to the Pamirs. In the summer of 1887 the British urged Amir Abdur Rehman of Afghanistan (1880-1901) to seize the area north of the Oxus River up to the Chinese border in the Pamirs. In retaliation, Russia advanced and in 1888, Captain Grombchevsky (1885-1920) traipsed into the Pamirs and entered Hunza.¹⁵ The British were alarmed because the area was perceived by them to be part of their strategic sphere of influence. Matters got worse in 1889 when the Russian Colonel Mikhail Loner crossed the Pamir and Wakhan rivers, and advanced further into the three passes of Khora Bhort (4615m), Baroghsl (3882m) and Darkot (4704m) from where Chitral was accessible.¹⁶

The Princely State of Chitral was one of the largest and the most important state located at the north-western end of India. It was backed up in the north by the Hindu Kush Mountains which separated it from Wakhan, it was bounded in the south by the Indus Valley, Panjkora, and Swat rivers, by Kanjut, Gilgit, Punjal, and Dir in the east, and the mountains of Afghanistan

¹² Martin Ewans, *Securing the Indian Frontier in Central Asia Confrontation and Negotiations 1865-1895 (Central Asian Studies)* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 7.

¹³ Baumer, *The History of Central Asia: The Age of Decline and Revival*, vol: iv.

¹⁴ Ibid. See also for details Charles Thomas Marvin, *The Russians at the Gates of Herat* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1885), 17-45.

¹⁵ William Brown, *Gilgit Rebellion: The Major Who Mutinied Over Partition of India* (South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Books Limited, 2014), 7.

¹⁶ Garry John Alder, *British India's Northern Frontier 1865-95: A Study in Imperial Policy* (London: Longman, 1963), 374.

were to the west.¹⁷ Some of the lowest and easiest passes across the Hindu Kush were commanded by Chitral. The British government wanted better control over the Hindu Kush passes for fear of Russian military intervention. Wakhan posed an immediate threat to nearly all the northern passes. Moreover, Chitral was also vulnerable from the west. The Amir of Afghanistan had initiated a new route from Badakhshan to Kunar River, and it was generally assumed that it would be used as the route into British India by Russia without having any need of entering into Afghan territory.¹⁸ Besides sharing the border in Asmar Valley with Afghanistan, Chitral was bordered with Dir in the south and east. Of necessity the Nawab of Dir had friendly long-standing relations with the Amir of Afghanistan.¹⁹ For the British government, Chitral could serve as a good watchtower from which the region south of the Hindu Kush range might be controlled.²⁰

With the growing threat of a Russian military advance from the northern border in mind, the British Indian Government established relations with the Mehtar of Chitral through the offices of the Maharajah of Kashmir who had accepted British suzerainty in 1846. Lord Lytton, the British Viceroy of India, warned Maharajah Ranbir Singh of Kashmir about his borders' safety in a meeting arranged between the two at Madhpor in 1876, and persuaded him to enter into friendly relations with the Mehtar of Chitral. The Viceroy argued that neighbourly states, such as Chitral and Yasin, should be controlled by an ally of the British Raj, like Kashmir State, rather than by those hostile to Kashmir, like Russia. He also stressed the importance of northern passes as being more practicable for the possible passage of troops.²¹ Convinced, the Maharajah of Kashmir entered into a friendly

¹⁷ H.C. Thompson, *The Chitral Campaign: A Narrative of Events in Chitral Swat and Bajour* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1999), 295.

¹⁸ Extract from the letter of the Foreign Secretary to the Government of India to the late Mehtar Amanul Mulk Sahib ruler Chitral (Translation of the abstract from the original Persian text dated 11 August, 1884). *The Agreement Brought into between the late Mehtar of Chitral, the representatives of the Government of India and the Maharajas of Kashmir and Jammu State, No. 2*. Directorate of Archives, Government of N.W.F.P., (Renamed Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on April 15, 2010).

¹⁹ Captain A.H. McMahon, Political Agent Dir, Swat and Chitral to the Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department No 100-C, dated Malakand, 15th December, 1902, "Proposals for the formation of Chitral scouts" File No 92, Nos 685-710 B, December 1902, Political Branch, Chief Commissioner's Office, N.W.F.P., Agencies, Bundle No 428, Serial No 15, Directorate of Archives, Government of N.W.F.P.

²⁰ H.C. Wylly, *Tribes of Central Asia: From the Black Mountain to Waziristan* (Delhi: Adarsh Books, 1998), 186. First published in 1912.

²¹ Ahmad Hasan Dani, *History of Northern Areas of Pakistan (Up to 2000 AD)* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2001), 258.

arrangement with the Mehtar of Chitral in 1878.²² The State of Chitral accepted the Durbars' Suzerainty by accepting the subsidy of 12,000 rupees in exchange for a *Nazrana* (bestowment) of three horses, five hawks, and five hounds.²³

During Lord Lytton's viceroyalty the aim of the British Indian government was to place an effective check on Chitral's external affairs in order to have better control over its northern passes, and to be apprised of what was going on beyond those passes.²⁴ Chitral was (and continues to be) a strategic point of concern. For that reason Major Biddulph was sent to Gilgit in 1878 by the British government. He succeeded in entering into a friendly relationship with the Mehtar of Chitral.²⁵ Later on, in 1885-86, Major Lockhart paved the way for political negotiations between the British government and the State of Chitral by leading the mission to survey the northern passes over the Hindu Kush. To strengthen the bond, the Major gifted the Mehtar with rifles and money.²⁶ Colonel A. Durand also visited Chitral in 1888 and 1889. The British Government agreed to pay an annual subsidy of Rs. 6000 to the Mehtar which was later increased to Rs. 12000 in 1891.²⁷ In 1892, the Mehtar of Chitral, Amanul Mulk, passed away causing a succession dispute among his sixteen sons.²⁸ The elder son, Nizam ul Mulk, was proclaimed as Mehtar in December 1892 by the British government. He received a British mission under Dr. Robertson during the winter of 1892-1893.²⁹ All went well in the British-Chitral relationship until 1st June 1895 when Nizam Ul Mulk was shot dead at the instigation of his younger brother Amir ul Mulk.³⁰ The British Agent Major Robertson was

²² Extract from the letter of Maharaja Partab Singh of Kashmir and Jammu to Mehtar Sahib Amanul Mulk, ruler of Chitral, (translation from Persian text). *The Agreement between Mehtar of Chitral, the representatives of the Government of India and the Maharajas of Kashmir and Jammu State No. 6, 1878*. Directorate of Archives, Government of N.W.F.P.

²³ A.D. Dundas to Chief Secretary the Government of N.W.F.P. "Annual Nazranas from His Highness the Mehtar of Chitral to His Highness the Maharaja of Kashmir" External Affairs Department, dated New Delhi, 9th December, 1938, confidential D.O No-74, file no. 138, Directorate of Archives, Government of N.W.F.P.

²⁴ J. Biddulph, *Tribes of The Hindoo Koosh* (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, 1880), Preface.

²⁵ George S. Robertson, *Chitral: The Story of a Minor Siege* (New Delhi: Bhavaha Books, 2001), 25-26. The book was originally published in London; Methuen, 1898.

²⁶ *Military Report and Gazetteer on Chitral Part-I*, Catalogue No O.C 110, Case No 21538/M03/Book 2nd edition (Calcutta: Government of India Press, 1928).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ *Memoranda on the Indian States 1935 (Corrected up to the 1st January 1935)*, 152.

²⁹ H.L. Nevill, *Campaigns on the North-West Frontier* (London: John Murray, 1912), 165.

³⁰ *Military Report and Gazetteer on Chitral Part-I*, Catalogue No O.C 110 Case No 2/538/M03/Book, 2nd edition, 2.

under siege in the fortress of Chitral by claimants to the throne.³¹ The siege of Chitral Fort went on from 3 March 1895 until 19 April 1895 when one relief force from Gilgit and another from Malakand arrived under Colonel Kelly and Sir Robert Low respectively.³² There were two options available to the British after the siege ended. The first was to keep the British garrison in Chitral intact and the second was to withdraw control over the external affairs of the State.³³

The Government of India favoured the second option and proposed in May 1895 to construct a road from Peshawar to Chitral via Swat to ensure the safety of the garrison in Chitral.³⁴ The Liberal Party government in Britain was concerned with the huge expense and the risky two-fold nature of constructing such a road serving both as defender and invader.³⁵ However, the decision was overturned as Tories came into power two months later. Lord Curzon, the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, was in favor of keeping Chitral at any cost. He cautioned about the looming threat of Russia, and even if Russia did not strike south, a British retreat from Chitral would be viewed by the tribes as a token of weakening strength in the wake of a Russian victory in the Pamirs. Lord Curzon prevailed and the strategic decision was made to keep Chitral.³⁶ Chitral would be partly sovereign as the Mehtar would be independent in administering its internal affairs, while external matters would be taken care of by the British Government. The Garrison was to be maintained in Chitral permanently in

³¹ Muhammad Afzal Khan, *Chitral & Kafiristan: A Personal Study* (Lahore: Ferozsons, 1975), 13.

³² There were two routes for relieving Chitral: one from Gilgit over the Shandor Pass, most of it roadless, through mountainous country, at that time of year considered impossible. The other led from Naoshera, on the Kabul River, by the Malakand Pass, into the Swat Valley; thence across the Panjkora River through Jandol by Dir and the Lowari Pass, into the valley of the river which flowed past Chitral. The latter route was much easier physically, but a force following it would have to fight the whole way against warlike tribes. For a detailed account of the siege of Chitral 1895 see Captain G.J. Younghusband & Francis Younghusband, *The Relief of Chitral* (London: MacMillan and Co. Limited, 1910), and Sir George S. Robertson, *Chitral The Story of a Minor Siege* (London: Methuen and Co., 1898).

³³ C. Collin Davies, *The Problem of North-West Frontier 1890-1908 with the Survey of Policy Since 1849* (London: Curzon Press, 1974), 185. The book was originally published by Cambridge University Press in 1932.

³⁴ Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game on Secret Service in High Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 531.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, see also Akihiro Kanamori, "The Siege of Chitral as an Imperial Factor," *Journal of Indian History* 46 (1968) 398.

³⁶ Hopkirk, *The Great Game on Secret Service in High Asia*, 531.

order to ensure the safety of the border and the Mehtar himself.³⁷ Chitral was separated from Gilgit Agency in 1896 and placed under the political agent for Dir, Swat and Chitral Agency.³⁸ The result was that Chitral became one of the centers of gravity of the British government's military policy in the region. They gave the same importance to the defense of Chitral as to that of Gilgit. They considered any threats posed to both states, along with their denizens, one and the same. The origin of the perceived threats emanated from the same source, that is, the Russian Empire.³⁹

Additionally, it was impossible to defend Chitral through troops garrisoned in Gilgit at a time of danger. Chitral was rather more exposed to any threat than Gilgit. It could simultaneously be threatened from both the north and the south. Other than the Afghan border in the west, it shared a long borderline with Dir in the south and east. Considering the number of the directions from which Chitral was threatened, along with the number of passes via which any foe could infiltrate, and the length and width of the region to be shielded, made it necessary for the British Indian government to have a strong military base in Chitral.⁴⁰ The importance of the British Garrison at Chitral was immense; for it also provided the troops with the ability to mount a forceful attack as well as to allow it a strong base of defense. An adversary had an advantage of entering into numerous northern passes via Wakhan, but the same advantage could not turn into victory for the British had the upside of being able to harass invading troops returning through any of the passes at Wakhan. Offensives of that kind were of special importance for British troops if an enemy used the Vernu route along the west point of Chitral Valley.⁴¹ In addition, British troops garrisoned at Chitral also enabled the British to exert formidable influence on southern neighbours like Dir, Swat, and Kohistan.⁴² Before attempting to displease the British, they had to think twice, since their upper regions were prone to attacks from the British troops stationed at Chitral. The British actually killed two birds with one stone, retaining peace from within and barring aggression from without.

³⁷ Davies, *The Problem of North-West Frontier 1890-1908 with the Survey of Policy Since 1849*, 88.

³⁸ C.U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries*, vol. XI (Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1933), 416.

³⁹ Captain A.H. McMahon, Political Agent Dir, Swat and Chitral to the Secretary of the Government of India, December, 1900, Chief Commissioner Office, N.W.F.P December 1902, Nos 685-710 B, File No 92/1 Agencies, Chitral, Serial No-15, Bundle No 428, Directorate of Archives, Government of N.W.F.P.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

The majority tribes of Chitral were notably of the Maulai shia Muslim sect.⁴³ They represented the rationalist side, as opposed to an intuitive one. The tribes of Chitral were greatly influenced by their *pirs* (a religious instructor, especially of the mystical sects and traditions) in all matters of life, mainly decision-making. The *pirs* in turn were accountable to and acknowledged the unquestionable authority of their spiritual leader, the Agha Khan.⁴⁴ This gave the Agha Khan great power and authority that his successors still exercise. The *pirs* played the role of being the link between the British Indian government and the local tribes. They were urged by the Agha Khan to acknowledge British authority. This spiritual influence helped maintain not only the locals' loyalty towards the British, but also helped sustain British control over Hindu Kush territories and beyond in case of foreign transgression. The same is true even today as the Sino-American competition heats-up in the region and beyond. The case of Chitral as part of the history of north-west India can serve as a good analogy for Pakistan. It can draw lessons from this history for the management of emerging geo-political and geo-strategic regional realities, especially in the Wakhan Corridor and beyond.

Chitral also served as a black market for the illegal trade of *charas* (hashish) from Badakhshan and Yarkand into British India. The merchants involved in this trade wanted to evade taxes on the product. The trade in *charas* via Chitral after it left the state was dealt with by the merchants of Charas, who having reached Dir sold their product to Hindu merchants of Dir, Uch, Thana, Bajaur, Mian Killi, and Nawagai. Those merchants in turn sold it to people coming from British India.⁴⁵ There were also additional means of transporting *charas* into British Indian territory, especially by labourers and the others who could easily move through the passes from the British region to Dir. Chitral was not a big market for the consumption of *charas*, and the smugglers favoured the more meandering Yarkand-Chitral route over the Yarkand-Leh route to escape the toll paid to the British. The duty on *charas* in the Punjab exceeded 100 percent over the price of *charas* at Yarkand.⁴⁶ Therefore, the traders made a substantial profit even if they

⁴³ Brown, *Gilgit Rebellion: The Major Who Mutinied Over Partition of India*, 7.

⁴⁴ Horace Arthur Rose, *A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province*, vol. III (Delhi: Nirmal Publishers and Distributors, 1997).

⁴⁵ Major S.H. Godfrey, C.S.I. Political Agent Dir, Swat and Chitral to the Hon'ble the Chief Commissioner and Agent to the Governor General North West Frontier Province. "Import of Charas into British Territory via Chitral and the imposition of a prohibitive Tax by the Mehtar of Chitral" No 1118 dated Malakand 16th December 1902, No 924-928-B, Political Branch, Tribal Research Cell, Home and Tribal Affairs, Government of N.W.F.P.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

went for the more tedious and costly route. The Dir-Swat route for the import of *charas* was unlawful. Since there was no toll along the way, the illegal trade was on the high route although officials and contractors in Peshawar were putting into effect all kinds of measures to halt that illicit trade.⁴⁷ It was not deemed wise by the government of the British India to ban the import into Chitral from where it was distributed, because that would dry up the trade completely. On the contrary, what appealed to Major Parsons, Political Agent Dir Swat & Chitral Agency, was the authorization of the Malakand route. The legalization of Afghan opium also augmented the idea.⁴⁸

The British were also alarmed by the Russian construction of the strategically important trans-Caspian railway begun in 1879 at a frantic speed. Its eastward expansion was a cause of concern for the British with regard to the safety of the North-West Frontier of British India. The British obsession with railways was obvious from the significantly high number of railway tracks built by the government. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, India boasted the most advanced, and the largest, railway network among all the colonial powers. The system grew from twenty miles in 1853 to an impressive 23,627 miles in 1900.⁴⁹ Railway construction in India depended on the local forests for the provision of wooden sleepers and firewood. Cedar (deodar) from the local forests was considered to be the most resistant in terms of insect infestations and weather hazards and, therefore, preferred for railway use.⁵⁰ Timber was already in demand in 1869 with the construction of the Punjab Northern Railway connecting Lahore with Peshawar covering a distance of 280 miles. The forests of Ravi, Jhelum, Chenab, and Kabul rivers had provided timber from 1869 to 1879, but that could only count for approximately 200,000 sleepers which were only adequate for the railway line between Lahore and Jhelum covering 109 miles.⁵¹ From 1879 onwards, the British Indian government was eager to acquire timber for railways. The cedar trees in forests in Dir were seen as an alternate source to address the problem of the scarcity of timber. In addition, the forests were owned and controlled by the Khans of Dir.

⁴⁷ The Assistant Political Agent Chitral to the Political Agent Dir, Swat and Chitral “*Import of Charas into British Territory via Chitral and the imposition of a Prohibitive Tax by the Mehtar of Chitral*” No-739, dated Malakand 9th December 1902, File No 924-925 B, Political Branch, March 1903, Tribal Research Cell, Home and Tribal Affairs, Government of N.W.F.P.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Pallavia Das, “Colonialism and the Environment in India: Railways and Deforestation in 19th Century Punjab”, *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 46, no.1 (2011), 40.

⁵⁰ Are Knudsen, “Logging the Frontier Narratives of Deforestation in Northern Borderlands of British India C.1850-1940”, *Forum for Development Studies*, vol.38, no.3 (2011), 303.

⁵¹ Das, “Colonialism and the Environment in India: Railways and Deforestation in 19th Century Punjab”, 40.

British Indian Government Relations with the Princely State of Dir

The British Indian Government had maintained a policy of non-interference in the tribal areas of the North-West Frontier, except when the government's own interests dictated otherwise. The strategic environment, however, tested the British strategic genius. The Dir, Swat, and Chitral Agency posed a different challenge, for, in order to safeguard the road to Chitral and beyond, the government could not make sufficient arrangements singlehandedly, except at an immense expenditure. Hence, a strategy was espoused to procure the help of the respective rulers of the region and their subjects to protect the road.⁵² The road stretched from Chakdarra to Lawari Pass through the Malezai branch of Yousafzai tribe, and the British Indian government made significant changes to the tribal system by appointing Muhammad Sharif Khan as their ruler. He was later made a Nawab as a personal distinction in 1897.⁵³ The British Indian government's step to appoint a single ruler for that region was interference of considerable importance in the tribal region as with the exception of Umra Khan of Jandol,⁵⁴ who made himself the sole ruler of the whole region, there was not one but several Khans in the region.

Nonetheless, upon entering the region in 1895, the British treated the matter differently. After ousting Umra Khan of Jandol, they made Sharif Khan of Dir the sole ruler of the region extending from Chakdarra to Malezai. Thus, a longstanding policy of non-interference was revised to protect the road running through the region. The Nawab, without the assistance of the British, could never have claimed himself to be a "King". This was precisely the reason he was considered a mere puppet of the British Government.⁵⁵ The British had actually made the Nawab's cause their own, and a couple or more times, he was assisted with active military support. He

⁵² N.I. Keen, Political Agent Dir, Swat and Chitral "A note on the Future policy in Dir" dated 15th March, 1918, Annual File No 2 S-St(1), Political Department, Chief Commissioner Office, N.W.F. Province, 1918-24, 5/Dir, Tribal Research Cell, Government of N.W.F.P.

⁵³ Sultan-i-Rome, *Forestry in the Princely State of Swat and Kalam (North-West Pakistan: A Historical Perspective on Norms and Practices)* IP6 Working Paper No 6 (NCCR) North-South, 2005, 23.

⁵⁴ For details see Allah Bakhsh Yousafi, *Silsila e-Tareekh Azad Pathan 3 Yousafzai Yanni Tarekhi Allaqa Zilla Mardan, Malakand, Swat, Bunir, Dir, Bajaur Waghaira* in Urdu (Karachi: Muhammad Ali Educational Society, 1960), 397- 416. See also Noor Hassan, *Dir Swat Relations*, Unpublished M.A Thesis, Pakistan Study Center, University of Peshawar, Session 1983-84, 31-42.

⁵⁵ Keen, "A note on the Future policy in Dir".

was also assured profits and subsidies to maintain his position.⁵⁶ When he ultimately passed away in 1904, scuffles broke out among the hopefuls for the throne. In 1905, the British had to make use of a mobile army column to aid his successor, Badshah Khan, because as on many other occasions, the ruler's position, without British assistance, was a flimsy one.⁵⁷ Badshah Khan, in return for British support, showed his unwavering loyalty by personally leading his *lashkars* (tribal forces) against the tribes of Bajaur who routinely raided the levy personnel. He had prohibited the clerics from preaching against the British, and anyone who approached him with a suggestion to ally against the British was either rebuked or personally attacked.⁵⁸ Owing to his tenacious control over the region and the levy posts, British troops could, without any hindrance, rush up and down the road to Chitral.

The levy personnel escorted convoys of weaponry, ammunition, valuables, and stores through the tribal areas without any fears. The British were optimistic that as long as Badshah Khan remained in power, he would assist the British against the Amir of Afghanistan. The perception was that without the Nawab's support, it would be difficult to maintain a line of communication with Chitral and withstand the alliance of tribes in Malakand and Chakdarra. Indeed, the Nawab was not challenged by the ordinary scuffles that normally the Khans of those regions were used to, but his problems were of a deeper nature exacerbated by his loyalty towards the British.⁵⁹ In 1937, the Nawab of Dir started to build a road from the Balambat Bridge (Height 2402) over the Panj Kora River to Barwa (Height 3213) in Jandol through Lal Qala (Height 3380) in the Valley of Maidan, which at a distance of approximately 20 miles crossed the Salara Kandara (Height 5130) into Jandol.⁶⁰ The construction of the road triggered a story that the road was being built by the British, and would be stretched as far as the Afghan border with the intention of extending the Nawab's control over the Bajaur tribes, who were essentially democratic in nature. This tale was

⁵⁶ Yousafi, *Silsila e-Tareekh Azad Pathan 3 Yousafzai*, 61.

⁵⁷ Keen, "A note on the Future policy in Dir".

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ A.D.F. Dundas, Political Agent Dir, Swat and Chitral to the Secretary to the Hon'ble, the Chief Commissioner, N.W.F.P "Proposed Grant of 50,000 to the Nawab of Dir in addition to his usual annual allowance", No 20. S-St (1), dated Malakand, 15th April 1932, Political Branch, Chief Commissioner Office, N.W.F.P 25/Dir, Tribal Research Cell, Government of N.W.F.P.

⁶⁰ "A note on the Nawab of Dir and Bajour Affairs" by Major E.H. Cobb, Political Agent Dir, Swat and Chitral, dated Malakand the 11th April 1937, File No-20. S-St (1) Political Branch, Chief Commissioner Office, N.W.F.P, 25/Dir, Tribal Research Cell, Government of N.W.F.P.

spread by many influential anti-British figures in Bajaur, particularly by Alamzeb Khan⁶¹, the Afghan allowance holders, and the Faqir of Alingar.⁶²

The conflict was escalated by the proximity of Barwa to the Afghan border by 10 miles only. Among all those anti-British agents, the Faqir of Alingar was the most formidable. He tried to intimidate the Nawab with a declaration of *jihad* (Holy War) against him unless he complied with the demand to halt construction of the road. In response, the Nawab avoided open confrontation but rather achieved his objective through endless negotiations with the tribes. The British had multiple interests in the construction of the road although it was built specifically for motor traffic. On one hand, it would protect the road to Chitral along Panjkora River, while on the other it would serve to protect the traffic from Balambat along the Jandol river in case of an advance from Malakand to Khar and Nawagai. In addition, it would cement the Nawab's control of Jandol.⁶³ During 1930-31, the Faqir's menacing exhortation against the Nawab spurred many tribes to raid the British. To stop the raids, the Nawab blocked passage to the Bajaur tribes going through his territory. Nevertheless, the Faqir's propaganda played a major role in strengthening the Nawab's foes and weakening his followers. Ultimately, the Nawab was able to defeat two lashkars and to reopen the road to British convoys.

The Nawab of Dir was also assigned an additional task of exercising control over the tribes in neighbouring Bajaur by the Government of British India. He undertook the responsibility primarily to defend his own region with a view to further protect Chitral road, and to contain the tribes and maintain the balance of power in order to keep the settled districts of British India safe from tribal raids⁶⁴. Without the Nawab of Dir's substantial help, it

⁶¹ He was the younger son of Mohammad Aurngzeb Khan, Nawab of Dir (1905-25). After the death of his father in 1925 he was supported by a strong faction in Dir State in the struggle for succession. However, his elder brother, Shahjehan Khan, was recognized as the Nawab by the British government. There were continued intrigues between the two brothers and in 1928 he was expelled from Jandul by Shahjehan. He was a close associate of the Faqir of Alingar in the attacks on Jandul during 1932. *Who's who in the Dir Swat and Chitral Agency Corrected up to 1st September, 1933* (New Delhi: The Manager Government of India Press 1933), 5-6.

⁶² His original name was Faqir Shah and he belonged to a Mians family in Upper Swat. He had set up his headquarters at Alingar and aimed to stir up the tribes against the British government and the Nawab of Dir. *Ibid*, 7.

⁶³ Cobb, "A note on the Nawab of Dir and Bajour Affairs".

⁶⁴ The Chief Secretary to the Governor North-West Frontier Province to the Secretary to the Government of India in the External Affairs Department "Grant of a loan of Rs Two Lakhs to the Nawab of Dir in connection with the destruction of his property by an outbreak of fire" No 687-CTB/141-St (1) dated Nathiagali, 3 June, 1940, File No-41,

was not possible for the British Indian Government to exercise its influence over the tribes of Bajaur for any length of time; conversely, if the Nawab of Dir's position became fortified in Bajaur, the British automatically became powerful, too. According to Major G.L. Mallan, Political Agent Dir, Swat and Chitral, the interests of the two allies were so intertwined that the British Indian Government could not risk weakening the State of Dir without causing some serious harm to their interests in that part of the country.⁶⁵ According to Sir George Roos Keppel, there were two courses open to the British Indian Government with regard to its policy in Dir: to support and strengthen the Nawab of Dir or to keep aloof from Dir politics.⁶⁶ This involved a set of strategic decision-making on the part of the British to protect a mixture of vital and critical British Indian interests.

After much deliberation, Sir George Roos Keppel supported the first option. According to him, the British policy of non-interference could not succeed in Dir, because any disorder, whether large or small, could easily spread from Dir to Bajaur and upper Swat, and perhaps to lower Swat and Buner, or even to the Uthman Khel and Mohmands; it would certainly affect all the people in Dir. The major setback would be collapse of the communication with Chitral, and the only way left would be the costlier and harder route via Gilgit. He opined that this policy of aloofness would not even free British India from keeping a garrison in the Malakand Agency since the troops were stationed at Chakdara, which was situated in Adinzai, and there were fears that any British withdrawal from Dir would encourage the Swatis to invade Chakdarra, and that would necessitate sending a column to Chakdara and Malakand. He recommended that the British Indian government should take a clear stance towards the Nawab of Dir, and should support him openly, as he had displayed unwavering loyalty during the Second Anglo-Afghan War. Further, it was owing to the influence of the Nawab that the Chitral road was open in times good and bad, and the garrison at Chitral was protected from within and without.⁶⁷

S-St, Political Branch, Civil Secretariat, N.W.F.P, 103/DIR, Tribal Research Cell, Government of N.W.F.P.

⁶⁵ Major G.L. Mallan, Political Agent Dir, Swat and Chitral to the Chief Secretary to the Government of N.W.F.P “*Dir Finance*” No 1010/C dated Malakand, 12th March, 1940 File No 41. S-St (1), Political Branch, Civil Secretariat, N.W.F.P 103/Dir, Tribal Research Cell, Government of N.W.F.P.

⁶⁶ The Hon’ble Sir George Roos Keppel, Chief Commissioner, N.W.F.P to the Hon’ble Sir Hamilton Grant, Foreign Secretary to the Government of Indian Foreign and Political Department, No 794-R, dated Peshawar, the 20th March, 1918, Annual File No-2 S-St (1), Political Department, Chief Commissioner Office, N.W.F.P 1918-24, 5/DIR, Tribal Research Cell, Government of N.W.F.P.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

Deforestation in the Princely State of Dir and British Raj Schemes

The British were attracted to Dir because of its location along with the possibility of wealth generated through the management of forest products by contractors. One such contractor was Khan Bahadur Mian Rahim Shah who had been involved in the timber business with the Nawab since 1896-97.⁶⁸ Around 1899, Sir Henry McMahon, Political Agent Malakand Agency, discovered irregularities in Rahim Shah's business practices and asked the Nawab to nullify his deal. He did so and also banished him from the territory.⁶⁹ Instead, the contract was given to Harji Mall, a banker and a trader at Peshawar. A contract was signed under Sir Henry McMahon's authority for cutting down 10,000 trees at 51 rupees for each tree, thus garnering a sum of 50,000 rupees. The deal was signed on March 1st 1900.⁷⁰ Around 1903, the British Indian Government asked the Nawab of Dir, Mohammad Sharif Khan, to manage his timber trade more closely. In response, the Nawab assured that he would settle with Harji Mall to transport the balance of timber before certain dates. Harji Mall agreed to the terms of the contract which specified that in case of failure to fulfill the conditions of the agreement, he would forfeit his right to the property.⁷¹ Having failed to meet the conditions of the contract, the Nawab gifted some timber that had not been removed from his territory, to the hospital.⁷² Enraged, Harji Mall filed a civil suit in the District Court against the Nawab. The District Judge, however, ruled in favor of the Nawab on the grounds that he was an independent ruler, and he had full rights to adjudicate disputes in his territory, Harji Mall's case was dismissed.⁷³

Harji Mall then appealed in the court of Judicial Commission but he had no luck there as it confirmed the ruling of the lower court. In the aftermath, the Nawab of Dir finally signed an agreement with the British

⁶⁸ Harji Mall, "*History of Timber Business in Dir Territory*" dated 13 March 1912, File No 107/Dir, "Dir Timber Trade Note" (1911-12) Tribal Research Cell, Government of N.W.F.P.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ S.M. Robinson, Legal Remembrance, Punjab, "*Opinion as to the validity of L. Harji Mall's title to the property in the logs marks Chakdara Hospital*". Annual File No-23 "Dir Timber Trade" Political Department, Chief Commissioner Office N.W.F.P, 1906, 41/Dir, Tribal Research Cell, Government of N.W.F.P.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, N.W.F.P to Lala Harji Mall, Letter No 201-P dated Peshawar, 15 March 1912, File No 107/Dir, "*Dir Timber Note (1911-12)*" Chief Commissioner Office N.W.F.P, Tribal Research Cell, Government of N.W.F.P.

Indian Government in 1905.⁷⁴ In exchange for a grant of fifteen thousand rupees, the Nawab of Dir agreed to comply with the clause I, sub clause (i) to maintain the road from Chakdarra (the capital of Dir State) to Chitral.⁷⁵ Moreover, according to clause I, sub clauses (ii), (iii) and (iv) of the agreement, it was mandatory for the Nawab of Dir to provide adequate measures for the safety of levy posts and telegraph lines along with the supervision of posts and encampments. The Nawab was required to keep the road safe by the stationing of levy personnel. Even though the British government under clause III of the agreement pledged not to interfere in the internal affairs of the State of Dir, it did interfere on many occasions in its internal affairs when its own interests were at stake. The government also attempted to control trade in the territory in order to keep an effective check on trade. In doing so it deprived the Nawab of levy in exchange for ten thousand rupees (Clause IV).⁷⁶ Clause V of the agreement also deprived the Nawab of his grazing rights and other prerogatives between Dir and Chitral. Clause VII required the Nawab to allow the government to station troops, albeit temporarily, on either Laram Hill or on Dosha Khel Range. Clause VIII of the agreement restricted the Nawab from having any interest in the boundary between Dir and Chitral or Dir and Afghanistan as demarked by the British, or to have any connection with the tribes residing on or beyond those borders.

The government had the final say through the political agent in managing affairs between the Nawab and the tribes. This clause also allowed British officials to inspect the forests.⁷⁷ The agreement bound the Nawab to hire labour directly, as opposed to subcontracting it through a contractor, before the required wood was cut and taken to British India. The deal required the purchasing contractors to collect their timber together and pay any amount of duty required. The purchasers could not own the timber before it reached British-controlled territory.⁷⁸ In addition, the Nawab had to allow a competent forest officer to brand each log with the sign of the Nawab of Dir and the purchaser.⁷⁹ The British Indian Government informed the Nawab that: (i) the British Indian Government was entitled to control the timber import because of the damage and loss caused in India by the floods, (ii) the Nawab was using up the capital of a steady source of income, (iii) the

⁷⁴ For the text of the agreement see Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries*, vol XI, 435-37.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Robinson, "Opinion as to the validity of L. Harji Mall's title to the property in the logs marks Chakdara Hospital".

⁷⁹ Chief Commissioner N.W.F.P to the Secretary of the Government of India Foreign Department, No. 148-P, dated Peshawar 31st January 1911, Chief Commissioner Office, N.W.F.P.

government intention was to have the forests inspected by a forest officer who would report whether the forests were worth conserving or not, if they were, that would necessitate the drawing up of a plan suited to local conditions and necessary staff would be sent for that purpose, (iv) that an occasional inspection by a senior forest officer was vital to ensure that certified contracts were being worked in accord with the authorized instructions, (v) the main interest of the British in Dir forests was imposing a heavy duty against the damage caused by continuous and heavy clear fellings.⁸⁰

According to Sir George Roos Keppel, the British government had two alternatives with regard to Dir forests: first, if the Government of British India considered the forests its property or right of control, then those interests dictated it necessary to remove every impediment facing the Nawab; second, if the government was concerned with the preservation of the forests, then its objective should be fulfilled with minimum interference in matters concerning the tribes.⁸¹ In his opinion, exclusive control over the forests could lead to an uprising by the tribes. He further elaborated that the Nawab counted very considerably on his forest assets, for given his weak position he had to provide for a large number of his *lashkars* along with a need to either bribe or win over opposing factions to his side. His forests were the only means of providing him with easy money with which to do so. British awareness of this along with its strategic management of the issue was as meaningful as it was insightful.

Likewise, Sir George Roos Keppel was concerned that a strict system of checks and balance would result in a financial loss for the Nawab.⁸² He was certain that any forest officer inspecting the forests of Dir would inevitably be manipulated to a lesser or greater degree by the Nawab because he would have to look after his bodyguards, his provisions, and his route. There was also the concern that if the Nawab suspected the officer of writing any unfavorable report he might curtail his movement in the forests of Dir by showing him only a limited area, and giving such reasons for his action as political instability, the presence of enemies, or a dearth of provisions. Sir George Roos Keppel deemed it necessary to have a check on

⁸⁰ Major J.W. Thomson Glover, Political Agent Dir, Swat and Chitral to the Secretary to the Hon'ble the Chief Commissioner N.W.F.P., "*Appointment of Naib Tahsildar for Dir Forest*" No 2360, dated Malakand, the 8th August 1929, File No 52," Dir Timber Trade, Tribal Research Cell, Government of N.W.F.P.

⁸¹ The Hon'ble Lieutenant Col Sir George Roos Keppel, Agent to the Governor General and Chief Commissioner N.W.F.P to the Secretary to the Government of India Foreign Department No 176-P, Confidential, dated Peshawar the 2nd of March 1911, File No 107/Dir Timber Trade Note (1911-12). Tribal Research Cell, Government of N.W.F.P.

⁸² Ibid.

Dir's timber trade as sales were skyrocketing. He asked the Nawab to submit all contracts for approval to the local government which had the additional power to either lower the price or prevent the sale in case of exorbitant prices.⁸³ British India was a bureaucratic state with a strong center guarding British vital interests. The bureaucratic management of the Princely States in the north-west of British India is full of lessons for Pakistan and the region at large.

W.P. Barton, Political Agent Dir, Swat, and Chitral, considered any effort undertaken by the British Indian Government at conservation of Dir forests to be useless.⁸⁴ He argued that conservation could not be achieved by exercising a degree of control; any such action would lead to bitter unrest in the region and beyond. He warned Sir George Roos Keppel that an open access, without any controls imposed, would give far more authority to contractors, and there would be no fears of any impact on the government's sway in Dir. He believed it was likely that a contractor would offer to buy the whole of the forest output at ten percent of the original price, which the political agent thought was a sufficient amount of money for the Nawab to be unable to resist.⁸⁵ In his opinion that money might be used in hostilities against the government and there was also the possibility that the Nawab might use the money to buy weapons and ammunition and employ people to feed unrest in Jandol and Bajour, threatening the peace of the entire region. He further suspected that if the government did not comply with his wishes, he could have communications with the Amir of Afghanistan and the religious community. This would ultimately force the government to intervene militarily in the state.

He stated that all these were just speculations, but they were, nevertheless, essential matters to be considered. He suggested, "As far as the government has control over Chitral, it is in its best interest to have a dedicated ruler in Dir, who would safeguard the interests of the government by keeping the road to Chitral open, and that purpose can only be achieved if the treasury at Dir is full, which in turn required the highest price of timber compatible with the outside world, but this will inevitably harm the government and the private buyer".⁸⁶ Keeping in mind all the above-mentioned reservations, W.P. Barton proposed to Sir George Roos Keppel that the Nawab of Dir's main source of income depended on the forests of Dir, so no policy should be devised that would displease him; this would

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ W.P. Barton, Political Agent Dir, Swat and Chitral to F.W Johnston, Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, N.W.F Province "*Dir Timber Trade*" dated Malakand, 7th January 1911, File No. 24., Political Branch, Chief Commissioner Office, N.W.F.P.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

make him more amenable, if conditions made it necessary to enforce an agreement with him.⁸⁷

F.W. Johnson, Assistant Secretary to the Chief Commissioner N.W.F.P, had serious doubts about the Nawab's compliance with the agreement of cutting the trees and putting the logs into the river, and even if that was overlooked, his intention to deal honestly with any contractor was not guaranteed. In his view, this was because the Nawab was in dire need of money all the time and forests were an endless source of income for him. Any limit imposed on the sale of timber would be regarded as unnecessary intervention. Mr. Johnson opined, "The idea of preserving the forest by any means short of an actual occupation of Dir, I am forced to regard as Utopian".⁸⁸ He further added that illegal practices would persist, and in future as was the practice in the past, all paperwork would be avoided; trees would be cut down and sold, giving way to disruption and division. Similarly, Lieutenant Colonel W. Stewart, Political Agent Dir, Swat and Chitral, pointed out that the orders of the British Indian Government regarding the protection of the forests for coming generations never had and never would be obeyed unless the forests were closed for further trade and the Nawab was persuaded to allow trained inspectors free license in the forests.⁸⁹

Political officers who had dealt with the question of the preservation of Dir forests had different opinions. Major Kennion in 1912 stated, "A fact that has before been recognized, namely that the Nawab will put his name to anything for ready money even to the extent of selling rights that have previously been disposed of, and also, the agreements he signed amount to little more than permits, revocable at will, to join in the scramble for trees".⁹⁰ Similarly, Major Lyall had come to the conclusion that it would be entirely useless to give a free hand to the Nawab to sign a contract with dealers regarding the felling and floating of logs because there was an utter dearth of honest traders in the business; moreover, the Nawab himself was not in the least interested in carrying out the orders of the British Indian Government. Colonel Stewart, Political Agent Dir, Swat, and Chitral, however, after visiting the forests of Dir and Kohistan, hoped the British Indian Government, "...will not leave the Nawab alone and it was essential

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Lieutenant Colonel H. Stewart, Political Agent Dir, Swat and Chitral to the Secretary to the Hon'ble the Chief Commissioner, North West Frontier Province, "*Timber Felling in Dir Kohistan*" No 40 dated Malakand the 8th January 1923, File No 2-States Vol-II January 1923, Political Office, N.W.F.P, Tribal Research Cell, Government of N.W.F.P.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

to help him so that he could maintain safety and order on the Chitral Road". He further added, "No one could say with certainty what the coming generations would be like for whose benefit the British Indian Government might seek to conserve those trees".⁹¹

However, Sir George Maffan, Chief Commissioner N.W.F.P, did not agree with the suggestions of his political agents. He was of the opinion that any instructions to the Nawab would yield multiple claims, and then it would be difficult for the government to make decisions.⁹² Refusal to sanction fresh contracts would be taken advantage of by removing unwanted people from the territory, but it could never stop illegal or excessive felling of trees, or removal of undersized trees. In addition, he stated that the government had no means of ascertaining that the Nawab would comply with the government's wish for honest dealings. Although the British initially intended to exercise control over the forests under the pretense of preventing deforestation, in practice clauses relevant to the prevention of deforestation were never implemented as it could harm the relatively peaceful relationship with the Nawab. This was deemed essential for the security of the road to Chitral. The agreed ban on logging was neither carried out nor were the forests inspected by British forest officials.

In 1913, K.S. Imam-ud-Din, a British forest officer, was literally stopped from entering Dir and Kohistan. Colonel Stewart's visit to the forests was interrupted, too. After that, no other inspection was allowed by the Nawab. Thus, he never acted in accordance with one of the terms of the deal.⁹³ Furthermore, the Political Agent Dir, Swat and Chitral had the authority to either accept or annul any contract along with the ability to fix prices. Contractors had to pay duty to the British upon entry into the British-administered territory. The agreement required the Nawab to brand each log with a registered mark for himself and for the purchaser, which put wood out of the hands of local traders, as the timber trade was monopolized by the traders of British choice belonging to the settled districts. As a result, locals suffered from the loss of a livelihood in their native region. This agreement indirectly points out how the British turned a blind eye to the threat of widespread deforestation and to the miseries of the people in order to secure a stable frontier for strategic and commercial reasons.

Conclusion

The Princely State of Chitral was of significance to the British because it was located on the border with Afghanistan which the British wanted to hold in a way that would strengthen its hegemonic power in the region. Geographically, the State of Dir provided the shortest and safest line of

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

communication to Chitral and beyond. The British alone did not have sufficient resources to ensure the safety of this route. As a result, they adopted the policy of expanding its indirect influence through the Nawab. That allowed him a certain degree of independence as long as he did not cross limits defined by the government. This form of indirect rule had multiple benefits for the British. There was no need to set up an administrative structure so the government's budget was saved from a significant burden. In addition, it was more acceptable to the local people. It also helped in deterring rebellion among them as they were more prone to rebel against foreign rulers than their own leaders. This kind of indirect rule also provided the government with a chance to exercise its moral right to intervene and mediate. In Dir, a symbiotic relationship developed between the Nawab and the British through which he received regular subsidies, allowances, and military assistance in order to crush religious and tribal opponents.

The Nawab governed his State through listening but not always obeying the counsel of the British political agent, kept a military body for the security of the Chitral Road, made the road secure for the levy posts and telegraph lines, and gave up his hereditary claims to grazing and commercial rights. He also allowed the stationing of troops on strategic mountain ranges, promised to abide by the boundary limits set up between Dir and Chitral and Dir and Afghanistan, and, in theory, regulated his timber trade according to the advice of the political agent. The Nawab continued to exert his influence on the neighbouring tribes of Bajaur in order to refrain them from attacking the settled districts. All this severely hampered the Nawab's independence as he was required to support the British in every major crisis. The agreements signed between the British and the Nawab of Dir signaled the start of the testing of the Nawab's loyalty in return for British allowances and subsidies. The Machiavellian insight and wisdom of the British was evident for all to see. For his part, the Nawab was no less conniving and he was equally unscrupulous. The larger portion of the Nawab's income was from the revenue extracted from the timber trade centered on the forests of Dir. This timber trade was very attractive to the British but they knew that any attempt at controlling it would result in the breakdown of law and order in Dir, Bajaur, and an interruption to peaceful travel on the road to Chitral. The Nawab made huge profits from the timber trade by manipulating and exploiting his subjects' hard work. And with geo-politics yet again causing tensions, how true are such things in the region and beyond? More importantly, what needs to be understood is that tactical brilliance is no substitute for strategic genius in the conduct of statecraft.

The moral standards of the British Indian government were tested by the fact that it did nothing to stop the ruthless cutting of the forests of Dir;

instead it actively assisted the Nawab in exploiting and destroying natural resources and manipulating neighbouring tribes to further its selfish ends. The principal factors that paved the way for British rule in the North-West Frontier region included regional rivalries and petty jealousies between tribal leaders. The British thoroughly exploited these differences to reach their objectives. They turned it into an art form. The newly-found status of the Nawab of Dir as a subordinate of the British government had an additional adverse effect. The Nawab mainly acted on orders coming from British officials. He failed to understand that following orders is two-third of the equation; one-third is the unsaid part of it. And that is where creativity and initiative resides. The Nawab proved himself to be yet another *gentleman* in the service of the British Indian Empire.⁹⁴ Traditional or not, he was supposed to protect his subjects' interests but his legitimacy was seriously questioned when he acted more as a petty officer of the colonizers than as the protector of his own people. Interestingly and ironically, the relationship between the British Indian government and the Nawab of Dir strengthened the position of *mullahs* as protectors of tribes against the machinations of the British and their collaborators.

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