



## Settling North West Frontier Province (NWFP) under British Rule

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**Abstract:** In this paper, it would be tried to analyse that what was the significance of North West Frontier Province (NWFP) for British colonial rule either that was a political asset or economic? How British became able to establish an order in this antagonistic and inflammatory territory? What were the strategic and tactical measures adapted by British to rule the “unruly” people of NWFP? Moreover, what were the actions taken by the British in response to Central Powers activity and propaganda in the area in order to preserve peace and stability?

British came in India for the sake of trade and commerce not for the purpose of ruling them. But when they seek that due to internal conflicts and political instabilities India is so weaker and unable to get benefited with its own resources. Then, they exploited the internal situation for their own interests. (To carry out enormous raw material from this resource rich region, through which natives were unable to get benefited properly). They assume that “we” are educated, rational, rich, strong and superior white people.

**Keywords:** Colonial rule; White man ‘s burden theory, North West Frontier Province, Pashtuns’ history, writing culture, biased ethnography, exploitation, imperialism.

### 1. Introduction:

“They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented”. (Karl Marx, The Eighteen Brumaire of Louis Bonaparie) (Said, 1978)

Pashtuns are the people living in the southern part of Afghanistan and northern parts of Pakistan divided by British imposed Durand line of 1893. whereas in Afghanistan they make an ethnic majority, in Pakistan they are about 14 per cent of the total population. According to Pashtun history, tribalism has been the foundation of Pashtun society. Except for the rich Peshawar valley, the most of Pashtun territory consists of dry mountainous terrain near the Hindukush. As a result, the population's needs have not been met by the available agricultural land, making the population's survival dependent on conflict and misadventures. According to Pashtun society, Their sudden population growth and their use as mercenaries in the Persian and Mughal armies were factors in their ascent to political power. Although attackers from the north were drawn to the NWFP because of its strategic importance as a doorway to India, they would only remain successful in establishing their control and remain cut off from the rest of the world because of the inhospitability of the land. .so, under the influence of consistent invasion, these people become habitual to fight for their security and survival. Furthermore, they are not customary to remain under anyone’s rule. Strong ethnic nationalism is a prominent characteristic of Pashtun society, which emerges out of the ages. Likewise, under British rule in the subcontinent region of NWFP remained most sensitive area for government with regard to political stability and defence. Up till the withdrawal of the colonials they did not accept their raj and this area remain under regular clash and violence against the rule. Thus, according to English ethnographers, they can only rule in the way that left them to their own and keep neutralize them with bribe. This is the only way to keep them peaceful against the government to some extents. (Titus, 1998)

### 2. Problem Statement

In this paper, it would be tried to analyse that what was the significance of North West Frontier Province (NWFP) for British colonial rule either that was a political asset or economic? How British became able to establish an order in this antagonistic and inflammatory territory? What were the strategic and tactical measures adopted

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by the British to rule the “unruly” people of NWFP? Moreover, actions were taken by the British in response to Central Powers’ activity and propaganda in the area to preserve peace and stability?

### **3. Historical Background**

British came in India for the sake of trade and commerce, not to rule them. But, when they seek that due to internal conflicts and political instabilities, India is weaker and unable to benefit from its own resources. Then, they exploited the internal situation for their interests. (To carry out enormous raw material from this resource-rich region, through which natives were unable to get benefited properly). They assume that “we” are educated, rational, rich, strong, and superior white people. We have to rule these unruly, disordered people who are illiterate, emotional, exotic, and weak people. (p.6)(Said, 1978)

According to them, the subcontinent was a static region not having potentialities to transform progress and modernize. They are disordered, traditional backward people, we have to develop them (Orientalist Approach). British anthropologist constructs biased ethnographic writings to present a moralistic view of facts before the audience which could not be questioned. They adopted misleading developmental approach to legitimize their rule in the subcontinent. According to this they just rule the Indian people to introduce peace, stability, development, and modernity in this region. (Wolf, 1982)

However, the British took over Indian territories under their control one after the other by using diplomatic tactics where possible and using force where necessitated, then those territories were subjected to military and then civil administration. Resultantly, the British initiated far-reaching changes in Indian social and economic structure in the 19th century to introduce a colonial capitalist mode of production. Thus, at the end of the 19th-century Indian capitalist economy became essential for the metropolitan industry in Europe. India proved a jewel in the British crown. New forms of production were brought upon in agriculture, commerce, and industry after dissolving the past socio-economic setup. Indian economic system was fully manipulated and incorporated by the British to introduce capitalist mode of production. (p.1) (Alavi)

### **4. Colonial Policies to Integrate Subcontinent**

British adopted diverse forms of policies to integrate the Indian social framework to serve their interests. They employed the developmental approach to legitimize their rule. So, they can illustrate that they came to the subcontinent to modernize and enfranchise this region. Their manipulative policies in whole India were inconsistent and contrary. They were only consistent in the way to introduce capitalist colonial economic system using different strategies and policies which could best serve their interests in the region. According to Leo Amery about British objectives; “when they claimed that improving the lives of colonial subjects was as important as providing the industrialist world with access to raw materials and providing markets for British manufacture goods. While in reality, colonial development was a necessity of them instead of luxury. (p.4) (Haines, 2013)

### **5. Strategic Importance of North-West Frontier Province for British Rule**

In settling their rule land and village were the basic factors of administration in the hands of Britain. The purpose of this administration was to raise revenues and establish its political base. The areas which were settled under British government were greatly transformed in institutional and social structure. In the area of Punjab and Sindh the main purpose was to get economic gains, while in other regions i.e. present-day Pakistan’s NWFP and Baluchistan, the British had mainly political or strategic interests rather than economic. These were the areas where colonial expansion faced significant armed resistance, and due to geographical realities, these areas were not economically advantageous. Cost of developing these regions for the sake of getting revenue was greater than the output. Therefore, the interests of the colonial state were limited to strategic objectives such as securing lines of military logistics to imperial borders, ensuring reliable lines of communication, and keeping out other foreign powers. British governance structures in these regions were designed by military officers. The key strategy in case of present-day Baluchistan and NWFP areas was “Forward policy”. According to this, these areas only bring under the British government through coercion or cooptation. “(p. 5-6) (Gazdar, March)

The North-West Frontier area, which is populated by Pashtun ethnic groups, and the issue of India's imperial defense were intimately related. Geographically speaking, the region was a key zone of defense with major geopolitical and geostrategic significance for the British Empire's dominance in India. The British Raj in India faced a challenging and varied defense issue with the tribal territories of NWFP. For India's security, this region needed to be in a state of calm, stability, and effective management.



## 6. Settling Frontier Region under British Government

The territory was separated between settled and tribal parts by the British for administrative considerations. The British created a distinct and bizarre system of government for the tribal territories that were unlike anything else in colonial India to maintain total control over both internal and foreign affairs by the central government. The tribal belt in NWFP, notably, remained a strategic and tactical worry for the administration the whole time it was under British authority. (Bangash)

The actions and propaganda of the Central Powers, particularly the Germans and Turks, as well as complex and numerous issues and obstacles in the tribal belt confronted the British Government in India during the First World War. Some of the serious and unsettling factors that may put the British in a disastrous scenario were the influence of the Afghan Amir and the emergence of Pan-Islamism in the area. (Bangash)

Owing to its strategic location (communication route) between Afghanistan and India, central Asia, the area of frontier has great strategic importance for British. It remains hub of traffic and trade among regions. Moreover, this region also remains under consistent invasions in past by Persians, Greeks, Bactrian, Scythians, Kushanas, white Huns and Mughals.

## 7. Various Policies by British Government to Settled North-West Frontier Province

North West frontier province was first settled by British as a separate province in 1901. prior to that time it was part of Punjab since coming under the Sikh rule in 1823. The Sikhs, coming from the south, has captured the southern part of Afghanistan, and made it part of the Punjabi empire, but their rule was cut short by the British. As British was increasingly anxious about Russia's ongoing expansion in Central Asia and the possible threat it posed to India, thus they worried, how to control and defend the frontier in an appropriate way. Some officials advocated a close border policy, which accepted the existence of the Sikh kingdom and regarded it as a kind of buffer. Others, however, feared that this left a largely ungoverned zone between Peshawar and Kabul which was populated by Pashtun tribes with no declared loyalties who might be vulnerable to Russian invasion. Proponents on this view proposed a "forward Policy" which would advance direct British control and influence beyond the Indus and all the way to Kabul. Actually, policy vacillated between the two positions. The first Anglo-afghan war in 1837 arose out of the heavy-handed promotion by the British of their favored candidates within the Kabul court, but ended in their sound defeat. Afterwards, they reverted to the 'close border' option signing a tripartite treaty in 1838, with both Sikh and Kabul kingdoms. The treaty was soon annulled, however, and the British reverted to forward policy. Fighting two wars with Sikhs in 1846 and 1848 and annexing whole of Punjab and Pashtun lands as far as Peshawar into their own empire in 1849. the second Anglo-afghan war broke out in 1878 when the kingdom of Kabul again resisted British efforts to control its court, and again the British were defeated amid the brutal mountains. In each Anglo-afghan war the Pashtuns in the Frontier fought in support of their fellow tribesmen across the Hindukush. (p.23) (Banerjee, 2000)

In 1893 the so-called Durand-line was negotiated with the Amir of Afghanistan and drawn up as a formal boundary separating his territory from that of British. It was drawn to coincide with the Khyber, with the British hoping they could thereby control strategic access to the narrow pass. Gradually the old routes were joined by railways, tunnels and zigzag roads drive through the rock to facilitate the rapid movement of troops to defend the border. The railway line rising right through the Khyber Pass itself was finally completed in 1925. In this way, the British did great efforts and expense to seal off the area and to construct a road and "iron curtain" on the fringe of the raj. (p.24) (Banerjee, 2000)

Despite their best efforts, the British were unable to impose direct rule in the area and instead chose to manage it from Delhi via the local khans, pirs, and mullahs. For the same two reasons that were previously indicated, special care was given. First, there was no commercial or economic interest in the region, which limited its significance to British strategy. Second, the Pashtun tribes were fiercely opposed to British colonial control, and almost all of them slaughtered British soldiers and civilians in retaliation, which the latter met with by setting villages and farms on fire. The area was initially preserved as a part of Punjab province since the British had inherited the area from the Sikhs, who, during their 20-year reign, had included it into their Punjabi empire. But in 1901, it was given the distinction of being a separate NWFP province. Although it made up about two-thirds of the province's land, the tribal region between the NWFP and Afghanistan was excluded from the six settled regions of Peshawar, Mardan, Kohat, Bannu, Hazara, and Dera Ismael Khan and given the distinct administrative status of political organizations in Malakand, Kurram, Khyber, and North and South Waziristan. (Khan).

NWFP evolved into a province with two distinct borders: one separating British India from Afghanistan and the other separating populated regions from the tribal belt, which was technically part of British India but was actually no-man's land. To deal with the persistent opposition, special regulations like the Frontier Crime Regulation (FCR), which allows for the summarily incarceration of a person for life, were developed. The colonial rulers were so afraid of Pashtuns that when they implemented reforms in India in 1909 and 1920, the NWFP was completely shut out, and those who demanded changes were punished using legislation intended for civil offenses. (Khan)

British settled frontier plain areas in two rounds. First in 1850s and second in 1860s. British did not concentrate much on settling frontier till the 1960s. Prior to that British moral legitimacy had been based on representing social and religious conventions that limited personal and economic autonomy. Colonial's authorities just codified established norms to resolve unfamiliar family and social conflicts. This approach avoided full-scale imposition of British legal concepts and structures and helped to validate a colonial social role as impartial arbitrator. (p.162) (Nichols, 2001)

The literal groundwork for the formal regular settlement proceeded in the mid-1860s. At that time British collected record of village areas of Peshawar valley. They get interfere in religious, constitutional and education institutions of the Pashtuns to control them and get revenue from settled areas. The institutional policies of the revenue administration had potential social consequences in Peshawar as in the greater Punjab. The simple choice of the village as the unit of administration might begin fragmenting the familial and clan ties and obligations that linked diverse neighboring settlements including lineage offshoots. (p.164) (Nichols, 2001)

The British rationalize applying the principle of collective responsibility for village revenue to Punjab districts and the Peshawar area as being consistent with maintaining the lineage bound of bhaichara village organizations. A Pashtun sense of being one among proprietary shareholders unified by a common history of village settlement was contradicted by awareness of being considered among now jointly responsible 'owner' of personal piece of land; ownership no longer secured by clan practice but regularized by settlement office records and court based legal decisions. (p.167)j (Nichols, 2001)

The Second Afghan War (1878-81) strengthened the British advance into mountain territory, so in 1893 a boundary the "Durand Line" between British India and Afghanistan was negotiated by Sir Mortimer Durand, the Foreign Secretary of the Government of India. The Durand Line put the previously independent borderlands and tribes into British protected territory. Political Agents were appointed to maintain informal contacts and to pay allowances to tribal leaders (Khans, Arbabs and Maliks) to keep order in their areas, military forces were mobilized when this policy almost invariably failed. Curzon believed that the only way to deal with the frontier tribesman was "to pay him and humour him when he behaves, but to lay him out flat when he does not". The new North-West Frontier Province was set up under a Chief Commissioner and Agent to the Governor-General. It was made up of five districts (Hazara, Peshawar, Kohat and parts of Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan) together with the tribal administered frontier agencies, Khyber, Kurram, North and South Waziristan. It was formally and visually inaugurated in April 1902 with a durbar in Peshawar attended by Curzon. At the same time the army was withdrawn and replaced by smaller mobile units and tribal charges (khassadars).

Curzon's policy was intended to keep the British in much closer touch with the frontier without interfering too much in local affairs. The tribal insurgency, however, continued and after the First World War, followed by a short third Afghan War in 1919 and large numbers of Indian Army casualties in Waziristan, policy discussions turned towards plans for military pacification accompanied by the reform of tribal society, backed up by economic and social development projects.

Though, the British continued their large public works projects in the region, and extended the Great Indian Peninsula Railway into the region, which connected the modern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region to the plains of India to the east. Other projects, such as the Attock Bridge, Islamia College University, Khyber Railway, and establishment of cantonments in Peshawar, Kohat, Mardan, and Nowshera to cemented British rule in the region and in 1932 the North-West Frontier Province became a Governor's province with its own legislative council. But economic and social reforms proved to be too expensive and too difficult to implement widely. Thus, Insurgency continued, with random terrorist attacks, occasional assassinations and sometimes major revolts lasted till the end of British rule. (Terrorism, 1999)



## 8. Conclusion

In short, though British adopted various policies to manipulate the region for their own interest but they remain unable to get required results. Because, they tried to implement scientific engineering kind of experimental policies to transform the region, which were totally inconsistent with the context and ground realities of the region. There was a great role of the ethnographic data in employing flawed policies. In the 19th century, British sent a number of political and administrative agents in the Pashtun region, who interpret this society in their own way, on the basis of their personal experiences. Everyone got a separate image of Pashtun society. (Lindholm, 1980) Thus, British ethnographic record was unreliable and fictitious, mostly based upon the views of Khans. In this way there were a lot of discrepancies were existed between basic framework of society and collected data. Therefore, how resultant policies could be suitable so, British remained unsuccessful.

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