

STILL 'TAMING THE TURBULENT FRONTIER'?
THE STATE IN THE FEDERALLY ADMINISTERED
TRIBAL AREAS OF PAKISTAN¹

MAIRA HAYAT

Introduction

This article explores how the state, from British colonial times to the present day, has engaged with the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (hereafter FATA) of Pakistan.² The growing literature on the state in political anthropology, where it is conceptualized in terms of everyday processes of state formation producing state effects, will be referred to. This serves as a supplement and corrective to traditional political science concepts, such as the Weberian ideal-type state structure, which often obscures more than it explains, especially in the context of postcolonial politics. In this article, this theoretical analysis is contextualized vis-à-vis the FATA, and an answer is sought to the question: how has the state manifested itself in the FATA?

A view of the state as being in a continuous process of formation makes resistance to it a crucial component of the discussion; the section on colonial history (Section II) revisits the colonial encounter in the FATA by critiquing colonial representations of 'fractious Pathan tribals' and taking from such representations what they reveal about

1 Accounts of British colonial rule, such as the *Imperial Gazetteer of India* (1979), frequently referred to the 'pacification' of 'turbulent tracts' and 'fanatical colonies' of 'ferocious, blood-thirsty' Pathans along what is now the Pakistan–Afghanistan border. Such representations of the tribal areas proved self-fulfilling, *inviting* and *legitimizing* taming. In *The Problem of the North-West Frontier 1890-1908*, C.C. Davies, a British officer who served on the frontier during the Third Afghan War in 1919 and in operations in Waziristan from 1921 to 1922, makes generous use of labels such as 'turbulent tribesmen' and 'the wild caterans of Yaghistan' (1932: 18, 187). In an interview with a senior government official who served in the districts of Peshawar, Kohat and Hangu in the 1980s and 1990s, I was asked about my paper's title. My answer, 'Taming the Turbulent Frontier', drew the following response: 'It's like what you do to a cup of tea. There is bound to be turbulence if you stir with a spoon. And here, you don't have just one spoon...there are so many...the American, Afghan, Russian, Indian and Pakistani are all at work' (interview conducted on July 1, 2008).

2 The FATA comprise seven agencies: Bajaur, Khyber, Kurram, Mohmand, Orakzai, North Waziristan and South Waziristan. The main ethnic group are the Pathans or Pukhtuns.

the repertoire of 'weapons of the weak' employed by the Pathan tribals in resisting the colonial onslaught. Both colonial accounts and more recent literature typically see every act of resistance emanating from the tribal areas as a form of fanatical religious expression. The present analysis places Pathan resistance to the colonial onslaught in a trope that differs from the excessively simplistic one of 'fighting the infidel', thus permitting a more holistic analysis of resistance as the emphasis shifts from the (perceived) exclusively religious nature of resistance to other aspects. The forms of resistance documented in the memoirs of colonial officers who served on the frontier and in Imperial Gazetteers reveal acts of resistance such as banditry, raiding, theft, the spreading of rumours and lying that qualify as classic 'weapons of the weak' (Scott 1985). It will be shown how portraying diverse forms of resistance as 'outbursts of fanatical frenzy' de-politicized them and, in the colonial period, constituted a refusal to recognise resistance as such.



SOURCE: Official website of the FATA Development Authority, Peshawar. <http://fatada.gov.pk/map.php>.

Especially in the current situation, where 'Talibanization' is believed to be rapidly spreading, such stereotyped portrayals of the FATA and its local inhabitants imbue the course of events with a sense of historical inevitability: given that this region has a history of 'Mad Mullahs' and 'Fakirs of Ippi', suddenly the Taliban seem natural creatures of this

terrain. The active, artificial creation of the Taliban during the anti-Soviet 'jihad' is thus camouflaged by a false narrative of inevitability.

What is most disturbing in contemporary accounts of the religious element in the region is the tenacity with which the same narratives that characterized colonial scholarship—of an antiquated, static region mired in tradition, its people possessing an inherent proclivity to being swayed by religious fanatics, its timelessness—reappear today. I argue, at variance with such widely accepted wisdom, that the region is not invariably resistant to state penetration and integration, and that the rhetoric of the 'traditional' founding of legislation such as the Frontier Crimes Regulation 1901 is dubious at best.

This article argues for a change in focus in scholarship on the tribal areas of Pakistan by shifting the emphasis from 'Pathan tribal society' and its notorious as well as valorised resistance to the state to 'the state' itself. Whereas most scholarship repeats ad nauseam how the 'ferocious Pathans' of FATA have never been conquered, the present analysis considers the subject from a hitherto underexplored perspective—the phenomenon of the state in the region and its failure in several crucial respects.

Centrally, this article makes an argument against the 'theoretical apartheid' that so-called tribal societies have been subjected to. The exclusivism of the so-called tribals and the unique political trajectories of tribal systems distort reality, in addition to being a convenient cover for the state's neglect. Analyses that pit tribal systems as inherently opposed to and resisting the state absolve the latter of any responsibility owed to such segments of society. They also cast the local population of the FATA in the static roles of the inhabitants of a closed, essentialized, almost pristine world that is impervious to change. The article shows how such views of the FATA as a closed system resistant to change or the involvement of the state are not tenable.

I. (Mis)Representations

[Some] factors inherent in the character of the Pathan and his way of life: the Pathan [is] a hard man reared in a hard school, his life [is] dominated by the law of badal or retaliation.... (Elliott 1968: 69)

[There are many] difficulties associated with the assimilation of *tribal peoples* into the national state...*such* people do not easily make the transition from tribesmen to citizen...they seem more content with the old ways; indeed, they often actively resist national assimilation. The particularistic loyalties characteristic of indigenous political structures evidence a surprising vitality, with the result that relations between the government and tribal people become strained, even confrontational. (Swidler: 1977)

How do you rule an area the nature of which is reflected in its vernacular name: Yaghistan (the Land of the Unruled)...what makes this land and its people so intractable.... [The Pathan tribesmen are] a numerous and virile people still possessed of tribal affiliations. (Spain 1963: 2, 3)

Even more forbidding than rocks and snow are the locals, a bewildering array of tribes and clans known collectively as the Pashtun. The Pashtun may be the most ungovernable people on Earth. They are divided into dozens of tribes and hundreds of clans, which are usually at war with each other. The presence of an invader (even a pair of journalists from the National Geographic) unites the tribesmen just long enough to drive out the interlopers. Then they go back to shooting at each other.... Through an arched window I see a hard-eyed, turbaned man, possibly Taliban, lurking in the shadows of a mulberry tree watching me as I watch him. (McGirk 2004)³

Extreme tribal views are not new and predate the international counterterrorism operation in the region [FATA] by decades. (Gannon 2007)⁴

The people of Waziristan feel that they are the toughest, the noblest, the bravest of the very brave. They are not intimidated by anyone. Throughout history, Waziristan has been invaded by empire after empire, and was never subjugated. With that history in mind, the Wazir and Mahsud tribes are very confident. They are simple people. (Ahmed 2008)⁵

Such portrayals of tribal life in the FATA represent the mainstream, majority view. To hold that the tribal areas were not affected by the consolidation of colonial rule in the Indian subcontinent simply does not square with the profound impact that colonial policies of indirect rule, such as the *maliki* system, colonial legislation and the demarcation of the Durand Line, had on the FATA. Thus, statements such as Nina Swidler's are untenable: the colonial impact, as this article and recent scholarship such as Mukulika Banerjee's *The Pathan Unarmed* (2000) demonstrate, was profound.

3 McGirk, 'On Bin Laden's Trail', *National Geographic Magazine*. <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/print/features/world/asia/pakistan/pashtun-text> (accessed: July 16, 2008). In 1958, Olaf Caroe likened the 'Mahsud to a wolf (and) the Wazir to a panther...both are splendid creatures; the panther is slier...the wolf-pack is more united...and more dangerous' (1958: 393).

4 In Jayshree Bajoria and Carin Zisis, 'Pakistan's Tribal Areas'. Council on Foreign Relations. October 26, 2007. http://www.cfr.org/publication/11973/pakistans_tribal_areas.html#8 (accessed: 15 June, 2008).

5 Akber Ahmed, 'U.S. Covert Action in Waziristan', *The Globalist*. (January 23, 2008). <http://www.theglobalist.com/StoryId.aspx?StoryId=6737> (accessed: June 5, 2008).

A study of popular images of the Pathan reveals the varied colonial interests they served. Charles Lindholm (1996) argues that images of the Pathan changed as the British shifted from a 'forward' policy to a 'closed border' one. As forward policy advocates were pitted against the Pathans in battle, the images of the Pathan became negative ('blood-thirsty and fanatical'); conversely, closed-border policy administrators had more favourable views of the Pathans (1996: 9). Nonetheless most colonial accounts and recent scholarship see the Pathans as particularly susceptible to Islamic symbols, hence their desire to wage 'holy war'. Robert Nichols (2001) is one of the very few scholars to have explored how what might just as well be interpreted as routine secular resistance to a colonial presence has historically been seen singularly through a religious lens, with the effect of depoliticizing the resistance.

Postcolonial scholarship continues to view the tribals of the FATA as the members of a static society that lacks any internal dynamic of change and is impervious to external influence. But consider a development seemingly as mundane as the construction of a road in the tribal areas. Akbar Ahmed, a social anthropologist and former political agent in the FATA, wrote of 'the social implications of the road as a factor of change and its impact on tribal structure and lineage organization involving the emergence of new groups' in the Mohmand Agency (1980: 341). The construction of the road meant enhanced economic mobility and advancement for many groups in the local population, and over time a distinct class of bus owners emerged. Consider also the following statements by officials of the Rural Works Programme in the Mohmand Agency: 'then (some years earlier) we begged them (tribesmen) to take schemes. Now [in the 1970s] they chase us for schemes. Now there is less enmity. People want to be better off' (Ahmed 1980: 344). The role of the road as a harbinger of changes in attitude and in economic and social practice is evident from such statements. Moreover, from the 1980s onwards, the FATA were impacted by change much less benign and more drastic than mere road construction. Thus, any argument denying the force and fact of change in the FATA is indefensible.

This assertion is bolstered if one examines statistics on out-migration from the FATA. A large number of locals migrate (both temporarily and permanently) from the FATA to the Gulf States and other parts of Pakistan, including the settled districts of the North-West Frontier Province in search of employment, primarily as labourers (Ahmed 1980: 345; see Tables 1A and 1B).

The FATA's treatment as a static, unchanging society can be explained by the latter's classification as a 'tribal society'—tribes, typically, have been viewed as timeless, primordial social forms. Writing about the widespread 'study of tribes using an ahistorical anthropology', Mahmood Mamdani explains how 'the history of struggles of colonised

peoples to control their own destinies—in other words, the history of their democratic struggles—was easily interpreted as some kind of a pathological “tribal” response. Thus, the overloaded nature of the term “tribalism” in the literature of anthropology and political science, as some kind of a coming to surface of the real nature of the “native”, stripped of the veneer of civilisation...’ (1992: 92).

Akbar Ahmed writes that ‘the idea of the social contract...central to the understanding of Western, market, industrial and democratic societies’, when applied to a ‘pre-industrial, tribal and Asian society’ can be very misleading (1976: 9).⁶ These reservations are important, for one cannot deny that, while ‘the state’ is organic to most parts of Europe, it was an imposition on much of the non-European world in the wake of colonial rule. However, as Thomas Blom Hansen and Finn Stepputat point out, the characteristics associated with European states have come to constitute universally accepted benchmarks for ‘proper’ state behaviour (2001: 6). It also cannot be denied that ‘the Western imagination of the state...remains the globally most powerful idea of political order in the twentieth century’ (ibid.: 7). Hansen and Stepputat present a way forward in suggesting that one ‘abandon totalizing and culturalist notions of certain enduring “Eastern” or “Western” forms of state and instead disaggregate and trace how various languages of stateness, not necessarily all purely Western in origin, have been spread, combined, and vernacularized in various parts of the world’ (ibid.).

Such ‘anthropologicist museumizing’⁷ also obscures the simple fact that, with the emergence of the ‘modern state as the focal point for political mobilization...ever more social groups [find] themselves compelled to strive to capture, or influence, the core institutions of the state in order to advance their own objectives’ (Axtmann 2004: 260-4). In Michael Mann’s conceptualization, as the ‘state *pulls* society into its political space, at the same time as it tries to shape society according to its own objectives, state–society relations are tightened and social relations are *caged* within the national terrain...’ (Mann, cited in Axtmann 2004: 261).

The concept of *theoretical apartheid* detailed in Section IV is used to argue that, not only does denying change and exaggerating the religious factor make of the FATA a virtual ‘tribal museum’ (Cheema and Nuri 2005: 142), it also has the effect of justifying abject neglect on the part of the larger, dominant state system. This article argues that the post-colonial state, albeit imposed on the area, has failed in fulfilling its obligations. Whether we call it a social contract or not is, for our purposes, redundant.

6 Barkey and Parikh explain that colonial states possessed interests ‘separate from those of the society they ruled, as their autonomy and legitimacy were not contingent on their relations with the colonized society’ (1991: 531, 544).

7 Spivak 1992: 46 in Nikita Dhawan, ‘Can the Subaltern Speak German?’ <http://translate.eipcp.net/strands/03/dhawan-strands01en> (accessed: July 19, 2008).

II. The colonial encounter in the northwest: a reappraisal

The colonial encounter with the tribal areas dates back to 1849, when the Punjab was formally annexed by the colonial administration. For almost a decade after that, India remained the territory of a trading company, which meant giving the priority to profit maximization over efforts at improving administration (Elliott 1968: 86). As already noted, colonial policy vis-à-vis the tribal areas vacillated between a 'forward' or expansionist policy and a 'closed border' policy that favoured restrictions on expansionist tendencies. While such epithets were used to describe official policy, they reflected nothing more than a desire to give a semblance of consistency to an extremely ad hoc way of governing the tribal areas.⁸

The peculiarity of colonial policy in these areas—namely that there *was* no consistent policy—is attributable in large part to the buffer-zone status conferred on the region. As Ainslee T. Embree explains with reference to the north-western tribal belt, '[buffers served as] built-in mechanisms for dealing with the impact of intrusive political and social forces. [The colonial state] wanted the cheapest and most efficient political structure that would permit ultimate control but would not require direct administration of the kind that existed in British India' (1977: xvi, xvii).

In contrast to the many scholars who underscore the inability of the colonial state to do much more than follow a loose policy of indirect rule, James Spain contends that the colonial state had cogent reasons for a policy under which questions of assimilation and administration never arose (cf. Embree 1977: xviii). Given the lack of productivity of land in the tribal territories and the resultant lack of revenue potential, there was little reason for the central power to be concerned with the daily lives of the people in these areas (1977: 5). He holds that the colonial state had only two interests in the borderland: it provided warriors for the royal army and was essential for reasons of passage.

Colonial policy was patently inconsistent, but the ultimate motive for all colonial adventurism lay in keeping the Russian menace at bay. The Russian threat (albeit imagined) necessitated a buffer zone, and frontier regions, broad and zonal by definition, admirably fulfilled the need for such imperial limits.

Until 1876 the non-interventionist school was dominant in the colonial administration, and a policy of masterly inactivity was followed. In 1878, the system of political agencies that is still in place today was adopted. In the 1890s, a forward policy, characterized by the *maliki* system, began to take shape (Davies 1932: ix, 3). Richard I. Bruce, the Commissioner of the Derajat, implemented a variation of the Sandeman system in Balochistan as the *maliki* system in the tribal areas (Bruce 1900: 2). Under this system, certain *maliks* (tribal chiefs) were selected by Bruce and given the responsibility

8 See Davies 1932: 182.

for producing a certain number of their tribesmen for service as levies. In return for allowances, and aided by the levies, the *maliks* were expected to control their respective tribes (Bruce 1900: 2; Davies 1932: 125).

Proponents of the system extolled its implications for 'turning the wild tribesmen from enemies into friends...and bringing them by degrees within the pale of civilisation' (Bruce 1900: 4). It was also claimed that the *maliks* co-opted by the British represented 'traditional' authority. In reality, the system functioned in an almost chaotic manner; the following is an account written by F.W. Johnston, who served on the frontier in the 1890s:

Jambil was made a Malik, doubtless on the principle, which led to so much trouble later, of 'reconciling the malcontents'. Another, Jaggar Abdur Rahman Khel, began to make raids in Zhob, and did a considerable amount of damage. He was promised a Maliki if he would desist, which he did. Three others raided a Bhattani village in British territory and killed 4 men. When they were called upon to answer for their misdeeds, they said they wanted to be Maliks. Accordingly they were made Maliks. When Jambil and Jaggar were made Maliks all the Abdur Rahman Khels began to raid. Accordingly every house-holder was made a Malik. The fact is that the Maliks were chosen in the most slip shod fashion. (Johnston 1903: 46-50)⁹

Just as the *maliki* system was justified on the basis of upholding tradition, so too were the FCR or Frontier Crimes Regulations, an extremely oppressive piece of legislation enacted in 1872 and still in force today. Davies justifies the notion of joint tribal responsibility enshrined in the FCR by stressing that the 'the intensely democratic constitution of the majority of Pathan tribes rendered any distinction between the guilty and the innocent extremely difficult' (1932).

Writing about the colonial invention of indigenous traditions, John Clammer remarks: 'In their attempt to codify [custom] they [the colonizers] imposed a uniformity on what was previously a wide variety of usage. It is apparent that no one traditional system of political, social, or proprietary organisation existed. These ideas were *reified* and made uniform by the British and became enshrined in the native regulations' (1973: 491). Martin Chanock (1985) similarly explains the general phenomenon whereby colonial administrations sought to convert the flexibility of custom into the rigidity of rules.¹⁰ Thus, for instance, while under Pathan custom a *jirga* would be called when the tribesmen deemed it necessary, under the FCR, *jirgas* were convened by political agents and deputy commissioners. Furthermore, the *jirgas* thus convened would consist of handpicked *maliks* sympathetic to British interests. In an incisive analysis, David

9 Johnston's *Notes on Wana*, recorded in Nichols 2005.

10 See also Geschiere 2001:169.

Killingray remarks that customary law was designed to underpin the colonial presence, the priority being not the rule of law but supporting the colonial structure (1986: 413). In her description of colonial ways of dealing with itinerant tribes such as the Koravas in the Indian subcontinent, Meena Radhakrishna (2001) explains that the real reason for legislation such as the FCR was to circumvent the judiciary in the colonial administration's crude dealings with the tribesmen.

The FCR was tailor-made to *tame* the tribesmen: it did away with the need for measures such as *habeas corpus*, allowed arrests on mere suspicion, authorized collective punishment and mass arrests, and restricted the movements and activities of the tribes. Writing about the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871, Radhakrishna explains how the act originated in the courts' refusal to accord legality to some of the practices of the police administration in dealing with the tribes. Not to be deterred by judicial niceties, the administration soon got around this hindrance by making a law to authorize the same practices: 'The Act originated from the fact that the Courts declined to accord legality to some of the practices of the police administration. This led to authorizing by law of the very same practices' (Radhakrishna 2001: 26-8).

Certain underlying features of colonial rule characterized both the closed border policy and the forward policy. Hansen and Stepputat suggest that colonial states, by virtue of their 'excessive centralization, habits of summary governance at a distance, lack of independent judiciaries, and the heavy-handed techniques deployed to control the majority of [their] populations', were not *normal* states (2001: 11). Imperial powers, for instance, used excessive force: Lieutenant Lumsden used to ride around villages that were refusing to pay revenue, armed with artillery to make them think that the colonial administrators 'were going to blow them out of the world', and orders to 'burn villages and destroy crops' were regular features of colonial policy in the tribal areas (Nichols 2001: 121, 174). In another instance in 1866, every building in the villages of Sangao, Mian Khan, and Barmoul were levelled, elephants being used to flatten walls (*ibid.*: 181).

The defining feature of colonial policy in the tribal areas was thus its coercive aspect. Ahmed gives the example of an extremely brutal blockade imposed on the Michni Mohmands in 1916. The tribe was excommunicated from British India, and to keep the Mohmands from entering the 'Settled Areas', nearby villages were destroyed and two wires were strung up, one of which was charged with electricity. The wire extended over a distance of seventeen miles, and within one year four hundred Mohmands had been electrocuted (Ahmed 1980: 40-67).

During blockades, the tribesmen subjected to them were allowed no contact with those inside British territory. This meant the cessation of all trade and, as the tribal areas had never been isolated, self-sufficient closed-systems, it was supposed that they

would soon surrender. Punitive expeditions were also frequent: there were eleven military operations from 1857 to 1877 and twelve from 1877 to 1881 (Caroe 1958: 348). They generated much debate in British Parliament, and while some in the colonial administration criticized such 'indiscriminate slaughter' whereby whole tribes were punished for a malcontent's offence, others relied on sanctimonious rhetoric. Davies justified such brutality thus: 'when the tribesmen continued to murder *our* subjects and to harass *our* borders, then the ultimate sanction was force. It was our bounden duty to protect our own; and for this reason, and this alone, can punitive expeditions be considered justifiable' (1932: 127, my emphasis).

The Durand Line

The Durand Agreement was signed in 1893 by Amir Abdur Rehman Khan, Amir of Afghanistan, and Henry Mortimer Durand, Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, with the aim of demarcating the respective spheres of influence of the Afghan Amir and the British across which neither party was to interfere in any way (Davies 1932: 161). The boundary line was not based upon accurate topographical data; during the process of demarcation, it was discovered that certain places marked on the Durand map did not actually exist (*ibid.*). Many 'ethnic absurdities' were perpetuated, such as handing over to the Amir the Birmal tract of Waziristan, which divided the Darwesh Khel Waziris between the British and Afghan spheres of influence (*ibid.*: 162). Another ethnic violation was the manner in which the boundary cut the Mohmand tribal area into two separate parts. Clearly, the colonial administrators were not concerned with ethnological requirements or sensibilities—there is no evidence that the Durand agreement was a tripartite agreement or that the tribesmen were consulted in the demarcation of the boundary (*ibid.*: 175). Davies frankly concedes the impossibility of satisfying ethnic sensibilities and serving British military aims at the same time; the ultimate purpose of the boundary line was to have a line of resistance against Russian expansion.¹¹

The people of the area were nonetheless often able to circumvent the boundary line. Maddox remarks that, as imperial boundaries were drawn, they came to overlay, not replace, existing linkages; rather than remain locked into arbitrary 'tribal' boxes, people crossed frontiers (Maddox 1998: 437). Thus, while maps created one level of reality, the process of transformation occurred at others, as people continued to follow their 'own

11 While the boundary may have served immediate imperial needs in avoiding confrontation between British and Russian imperial interests, 'the price paid for such Victorian peace is now apparent' (Kirk 1962: 164). The Pakhtunistan issue remained a bone of contention between Afghanistan and Pakistan for many years after 1947. While Pakistani government officials deem the issue a non-negotiable one, Afghanistan continues to challenge the legitimacy of the boundary, over which, to this day, both governments exercise only nominal control. For a detailed account of successive Afghan governments' refusal to recognise the line, see Embree 1977. A detailed discussion of the Pakhtunistan issue is beyond the province of this article.

maps'. Neither the Amir nor the British were able to bring peace to the frontier region. Pathan resistance rendered the border virtually redundant and artificial (Caroe 1958: 350; Davies 1932). Consequently, another treaty had to be signed between the British and the Amir on August 8, 1919. This was also continually resisted as the Mahsud tribes of Waziristan fought on. Eventually, large permanent garrisons had to be stationed in Razmak and Wana, as the 1930s continued to be an extremely turbulent period, with uprisings breaking out all around Peshawar (Davies 1932: 162-4). The border continues to be important to this day as a bone of contention between the Afghan and Pakistan governments. More recently in the 'war on terror', it has proved to be ineffective in 'containing' the terrorists on either side, leading many to blame the border's porosity for the lack of success in the war against terror.

It is not hard to see that the colonial state was not interested in 'governing' the tribal areas. Although it relied on the tribesmen to aid it in safeguarding the subcontinent by securing the safety of its north-western frontiers from the threat of Russian invasion, it was otherwise content to rely on contractual agreements with *maliks* to maintain 'law and order' by whatever means. This will serve as a crucial benchmark when analysing the Pakistani state's policies in Sections III and IV (below), for it brings out the incongruity of that state in continuing previous colonial policies.

Rationalising resistance

The reappraisal of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that follows is intended as a corrective to imperial observations that all too readily dismissed manifestations of a decades-long movement as spontaneous, emotional and transitory expressions of a depoliticized 'fanaticism' (Nichols 2001: 94). Assumptions of Islamic or Pakhtun solidarity, whether fanatical or millenarian, in the face of imperial invasion are overly simplistic (ibid.: 103). 'Much is made of the leader who appeared, generated an emotional wave, and then failed when confronted with a steady and sustained imperial presence...but attention has not been given to the role of considered, local political and economic self-interest' (ibid.: 100). These varied interests included Hindustani ideologues, Pakhtun shareholders and their dependants defending their crops, and local elites (*maliks*) gauging where their best interests lay (ibid.).

Stressing the irrationality and supernatural nature of the resistance was one way in which the colonial administration tried to rationalize the resistance they faced. Consider the bafflement they were experiencing:

The people seem to have lost their heads and all view their own interests in a blind belief that we should be turned out of the country. Ignorant, bigoted, and priest-ridden, the vast majority of the inhabitants believe...that the Mad Mullah has the

heavenly hosts on his side, and that, when the British advance to the attack, the mouths of their rifles and guns would be stopped.... Thousands of tribesmen whose ferocity (has been) heightened by religious enthusiasm flocked to join him. Drunk with bhang, maddened by fanaticism, they fell upon our positions in Malakand. (Davies 1932: 109, writing about the 1897 anti-imperial uprisings)

In reality, the 1897 uprisings along the frontier drew in diverse segments of the local population, not all of whom supported the 'Mad Mullah' for religious reasons. The Orakzais, for instance, joined the uprising because they opposed the establishment of posts on the Samana ridge. Similarly, support from Bajaur and the Mohmands was the result of resentment at the penetration of tribal territory by the Chitral Reliefs (Elliott 1968).

Colonial reports were devoid of the realization that acts of violence and property damage in the frontier region resembled other types of British-Indian 'dacoities' that 'often occupied the ill-defined borderland between individual, localized crime and collective defiance of state authority'. Much later, Akbar Ahmed also described 'the Pathan millenarian movements' as 'basically an Islamic tribal response to an expanding and non-Islamic imperial power' (1976: 17; see also Rittenberg 1977). Clearly, as already noted, both colonial and contemporary accounts seem interested only in recognizing the religious character of the resistance. Such views are misleading, for not only do they tend to dismiss resistance as merely fanaticism—irrational, fantastic and not to be taken seriously—they also have the effect of denigrating efforts at resistance. As Hollander and Einwohner caution, 'restricting the analysis of resistance to purely religious expression narrows the conceptual parameters of resistance' (2004: 535). Conversely, recognizing that religion may have been just one of several other motivating factors contributing to a complex social movement of anti-imperial resistance conduces to a more holistic analysis (Nichols 2001: 92).

The inventory of outrages perpetrated by the tribesmen reveal a classic use of 'weapons of the weak', with no necessary or dominant religious underpinning. These acts of resistance included robberies, carrying off of flocks and herds, house-breaking, trespassing and pilfering shops in markets in the Settled Districts—in Davies' words, 'too numerous, and, in many cases, too insignificant¹² to warrant description' (1932: 121). Interestingly, when feuding bands looted each other's crops and the colonial officer arrived in the village to investigate, he was met with a refusal by the villagers to disclose the offenders' names. Consider how Davies understood these simple acts of resistance and non-cooperation: 'villagers had been known to go to prison rather than disclose

12 The desire to force acts of resistance into ideological slots can also explain the current tendency to view resistance emanating from the FATA as religious fanaticism and not as reflecting a combination of reasons (discontent with the state for its pro-US stance, economic and political dissatisfaction etc.).

the names of offenders; and, what was worse, had been *forced* to assist the Mahsud in his depredations' (Davies 1932: 120, my emphasis). The portrayal of residents of the settled areas as hapless individuals in need of British protection is unmistakable.

In addition, there was at times a refusal to recognise resistance at all. Davies' (1932) accounts for 'trouble' on the frontier thus: 'it is my considered opinion that political propaganda, especially from 1890 onwards, has been the most potent cause of unrest. It has been Afghan intrigues...which have incited the tribes to rebel against the British Raj. Were it not for Afghan and other political intrigues the local problem of tribal control would have been solved long ago' (1932: 180, 187).

There is evidence that Afghan amirs did regularly incite tribal *maliks* to create trouble for the British, but attributing the restiveness of the entire tribal belt to external intrigues demeans the efforts of the tribesmen to resist. Similarly, successful attempts at resistance were acknowledged only grudgingly. Elliott writes about the success of Pathan resistance in the following words: 'although there were occasions—and not too many of them—when the Pathan secured some spectacular local victory over the army, he succeeded because he was a brilliant opportunist who snatched a fleeting opportunity when conditions were all in his favour. It does not imply that he was a better fighting man than the British or Indian soldier. If anything the boot was on the other foot' (1968: 287).

Whither the subaltern?

This section examines the role and position of tribal *maliks*. Originally coined by Gramsci, 'subaltern' is a broad term inclusive of all 'subordinated groups'—peasants, agricultural labourers, factory workers, tribals and women (Hanlon 1988: 191). At the most fundamental level, the fact of being colonised would itself be enough to turn the colonised into subalterns. Thus, all Pathans (in fact, all Indians of the subcontinent) were subalterns, tribesmen and *maliks* alike. However, this dichotomy is overly simplistic, as it does not take into account the disparate interests of, and strategies and roles adopted by, the colonised in coming to terms with colonial rule.

Accounts of inter-tribal conflict and of how some tribes sought advantages by siding with the British vis-à-vis other tribes are seen by scholars such as James Scott and Gilbert Joseph as proof of the hegemonic ability of the powerful. But the Cambridge school historians such as Christopher Bayly offer an alternative analysis. According to this perspective, the fact that segments of the colonized sided with the colonizer against other segments of the colonized symbolizes agency on the part of the latter. This, in turn—problematically for the subaltern studies literature—renders the colonizer–colonized dichotomy unclear. Were the *maliks* who aided the British in 'taming their own tribes' also colonizers, or were they representatives of the colonized interacting with the colonizer on terms that suited them and furthering their own interests? This raises several

thematic issues such as whether we can speak of a monolithic subaltern at all? As Bayly notes critically, 'down almost to the very bottom of society every subaltern was an elite to someone lower than him' (2000: 126).¹³ Can we then demarcate rigid lines between imperial power and disempowered culture (Nichols 2001: 229)?

In fact, to view tribal *maliks* as representatives of their tribes is a misrepresentation of reality, for tribal chiefs had to 'keep people in their place' and used their authority to exploit those whom they ruled—thus the local tribals were subjected to a sub-colonialism of the tribal elite (Killingray 1965: 417). Could not the tribal *maliks*, who were paid allowances by the British in return for controlling their tribes, be seen more accurately as part of the colonial administration instead of the colonized? Nichols describes this predicament thus: 'the middlemen (are) those given short shrift by the subaltern school, because they occupied an uneasy marginal role between the elite and the subaltern... they provided a meeting ground for the accommodation of elite and [subaltern] politics' (2001: 123). This suggests that notions such as *collaborating classes* are more useful than simplistic binary categories between the powerful and the subalterns.

But while the subaltern school may be faulted for not giving sufficient attention to the unique position of the collaborating classes, the Cambridge school of history mentioned above can also be criticized. While the latter school, pioneered by Christopher Bayly, vests agency in segments of the colonized population, it ends up treating colonial regimes as continuations of prior indigenous regimes. Similarly, for David Scott, colonialism, far from constituting a complete break with the past, can be shown to have an organic, internal connection with it (1995: 195). This has the effect, as Partha Chatterjee argues, of 'making the colonized the authors of their own domination' (in Scott 1995: 195). Consequently, 'colonialism as a distinctive formation, all but disappears...(it) spirit(s) away the violent intrusion of colonialism and make(s) all of its features the innate property of an indigenous history' (ibid.).

If there is any continuity, it is between the colonial and post-colonial periods, as the next section will show.

III. Between use and neglect: post-colonial engagement with the FATA

At the time of partition in August 1947,¹⁴ Pakistan inherited fifteen military battalions, six of which were stationed in Waziristan. A much celebrated agreement between Jinnah and the tribes, purportedly based on considerations of good faith and heralded as a confidence-building measure, led to troop withdrawals from posts such as Waziristan and

13 Originally 1988, cited in Joseph 1990.

14 The decision that the tribal areas would be made a formal part of Pakistan was finalized at a joint tribal session held in Peshawar in April 1947. The Khyber, Kurram, North and South Waziristan agencies existed in 1947, Mohmand Agency was granted agency status in 1951, and Orakzai and Bajaur agencies were demarcated in 1973.

Razmak. It is now generally realized that the withdrawal of troops was necessitated by a shortage of soldiers in Kashmir, where fighting broke out with India soon after Pakistan's creation. The manifestation of the state in terms of the presence of troops is a contentious issue, and one of contemporary urgency, given the fact that in 2001, 80,000 Pakistani troops were deployed in the FATA for the first time since Pakistan's creation in 1947.¹⁵

Writing about the heavy police presence in Muslim communities in Mumbai, Thomas Hansen suggests that a dominant presence of police stations and police posts is an indication that an area is being treated as merely a 'security problem'. Viewing such manifestations of the state negatively, he refers to 'the (presence of the) police force [as] an ever present and dreaded representation of a *hostile* state' (Hansen and Steppatut 2001: 244). Hansen's caution is valid, especially given the criticism that recent military action in the FATA has been attracting. However, we should qualify Hansen's arguments in respect of such manifestations of the state in the FATA. Consider, for instance, the discrepancy between the infrastructural presence of the state (in the form of government schools, hospitals and roads) in the FATA and other parts of Pakistan. There are only thirty-three hospitals in the FATA, and the road density there is 0.17 km per square km of area against a national average of 0.26. In terms of such indices, the FATA compare highly unfavourably with all other parts of Pakistan. This scenario, coupled with the negligible troop presence in the region, amounts to its virtual abandonment by the state. If the inhabitants of the FATA are unable to *see* such forms of the state, the latter cannot be made real for them in any form, hostile or benevolent (cf. Hansen and Steppatut 2001: 5). Thus, while the police presence may on the one hand signify an oppressive state, it may also, and crucially, be taken to symbolize the state's engagement with the region and its recognition of the need to protect it.

By and large, as already noted, Pakistan has continued former colonial practices in governing the FATA. Even when modern political practices have been introduced, change has been cosmetic, with traditional authority figures being privileged.¹⁶ From 1947 to 1954, the FATA were represented in Pakistan's first constituent assembly by only one member. In 1973, for a total of 37,000 *maliks*, eight seats were reserved in the National Assembly. Adult suffrage was introduced in the region in 1996, but the Political Parties Act of 1954 does not apply to the area. In 2002, reforms under the Legal Framework Order increased the number of reserved seats from eight to twelve. Under the Local Government Ordinance of 2001, a modified local government model was introduced

15 S. C. Moore. 'US Aims to Turn Hostile Pakistani Tribes Friendly'. <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSISL306697> (accessed: July 27, 2008).

16 The official *maliks* have grown immensely in wealth owing to the favours they receive from the government, and 'a cleavage within society is becoming perceptible' (Ahmed 1980: 143). Only *maliks* are allowed to vote for candidates to the National Assembly or receive building contracts, and they obtain quotas for food rations at special prices (sugar, tea, flour).

in the FATA. Although local agency council elections were held in December 2005, an interview with one political agent revealed their calculated meaninglessness: 'we decided to stage these elections...really, they were a sham...everything was decided and known from before...elections and all don't work for that region.'

Although human rights constitute a 'hallmark of the modern nation-state' in contemporary state practice (Hansen and Stepputat 2001: 284), the FCR is an instance of anachronistic legislation—colonial and inherently oppressive—the continuation of which embodies human rights violations on many levels. The entire constitution, including the Fundamental Rights clauses (Articles 8 to 28 of the 1973 Constitution), has been rendered inapplicable by virtue of a single non-obstante clause, Article 247 (5). The FCR gives political agents virtually unlimited judicial prerogative to fine, blockade, detain and seize hostile groups and confiscate or demolish property in the tribal areas (Sections 21-34). Section 21 of the FCR, for instance, gives the political agent the power to arrest the members of a culprit's tribe, confiscate his property, and prevent communication between his tribesmen and those in the settled districts (IPRI 2005).

To illustrate post-1947 state policy vis-à-vis the FATA, the following periodization will be used: from 1947 to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan; from the Soviet invasion to General Zia-ul-Haq's death and the end of Cold War rivalry between the Soviet Union and the USA; neglect of the FATA till the events of September 11; and September 11 onwards, with the FATA being a focal point in the 'war on terror'.

The practice of using tribal *lashkars* to fight the Indian army in Kashmir was begun soon after the creation of Pakistan (Ahmed 1980; Jalal 2008). Pakistan inherited a severely truncated army, necessitating its dependence on the frontier tribes to provide manpower for the war against India. It is now commonly accepted that the tribals were armed by the state to fight its wars. This deliberate weaponisation of society in the FATA reached its peak in the 1980s following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, when the mujahideen were showered with technologically advanced weapons (see Lindholm 1996: 96; Rubin 1995).

Apart from the use of tribal *lashkars* to do the fighting in Kashmir, between 1947 and 1972 the tribal areas were 'left to their own devices' (Major-General Nasir Ullah Babar, cited in Ahmed 1976: foreword). The Bhutto era witnessed increased, albeit random state involvement in the FATA: road-building programmes were initiated, abandoned cantonments were occupied, old forts such as Datta Khel Ladha and Tiarza and the Razmak camp were reactivated, the Nahakki Pass was crossed for the first time since 1935, and extensive power and electrification schemes were begun (Caroe 1958: 529; Ahmed 1980). It is a reflection on the nature of military governments—and Pakistan has

had several—that the sole serious development effort in the FATA prior to September 11 was initiated by a civilian government (1971-1977).

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan marked the beginning of a new phase in Pakistan's engagement with the FATA, an engagement that is in large part responsible for the current imbroglio. To attribute the disruption of society in the FATA to events as recent as those of September 11 does not provide an accurate picture of reality. Historicizing the situation enables one to contend, more usefully, that this is a society that saw its 'natural' course of change and development rudely interrupted when thousands of locals were recruited by the US and Pakistani authorities during the Cold War (and thousands of foreign *mujahideen* were brought into the FATA) and *manufactured* into what we know today as the Taliban. The story of how the world abandoned the Taliban and Afghanistan following the end of the Cold War is well known. The FATA once again slipped into a state of obscurity, and annual development funds fell to very low levels.

The FATA remained in this state of neglect until suddenly, after 9/11, the spotlight once again shifted to the region. Instead of the Pakistani state finally assuming responsibility for the task of state-building in its tribal north, it buckled to US pressure and embarked on military action in the FATA. The compulsions of the war on terror overpowered policy-making in Pakistan, relegating issues of state-building and integration to secondary importance. Thus, 'the only relationship today with the tribal peoples is through the missile and the bomb' (Ahmed 2008).

In the context of bloody military action in the FATA and the panic and desperation this is causing, commentators and scholars alike are advocating a return to the colonial system of indirect rule. Nostalgic for the system in place before military action was initiated in the FATA, Akbar Ahmed states:

the administration was like a triangle and the political agent was at the top. This was an old colonial structure from the British days and had many critics, but it was, by and large, better than anything else that Pakistan or the region could offer. What has happened after 9/11 is that, thanks to the U.S. strategy of choosing a strictly military approach, the political agent has been sidelined and the Pakistan army now runs all affairs. Musharraf abolished the administrative structure that had prevailed until recent times. A vacuum has therefore formed at the district or agency level of administration throughout Pakistan. [The solution is to] restore those pillars...to restore the old practices. It is a colonial administration and Americans are not a very colonial people. The Americans are used to a mayor who is elected for a fixed period (Ahmed 2008).¹⁷

17 Akbar Ahmed, 'Dealing with Pakistan's Wild West', *The Globalist*. (January 24, 2008). <http://www.theglobalist.com/StoryId.aspx?StoryId=6738> (accessed: June 5, 2008).

This statement is shocking and disturbing in its advocacy of a return to the same dysfunctional, oppressive governance structures—unfortunate colonial legacies—the dangers of which are commonly recognised. Misuse of FATA's special constitutional status has converted the region into a 'veritable junkyard', said one senior government official when interviewed. 'The region has been allowed to become a haven for fugitives and criminals, smugglers of weapons and contraband, and kidnapping for ransom.' That the pre-9/11 state was consistently failing the FATA is clear from the existence of parallel governments in several agencies of the FATA. Another official said the following: 'The Bara Tehsil and Tirah Valley of Khyber agency are notorious dens for kidnappers. People are kidnapped from Mardan district and brought to Malakand agency. The state was not taking action, so the citizens took matters into their hands and the locals of Mardan formed an *Amn jirga* [peace council] that raised a *Danda Bardar* (stick-wielding) force to fight the kidnappers.' In short, the pre-September 11 system was a dysfunctional one.

Return to a system that was colonial in nature and calculated to be oppressive would subject the post-colonial state to allegations of grave malpractice. The human rights violations embodied in the FCR, the corruption the political agents are notorious for, the exploitative *maliki* system and a general lack of concern for the locals of the FATA were the conditions obtaining before September 11. That the FATA became such a ready safe haven for militants (local as well as foreign) highlights the culpability of the state's historical dealings with the FATA—vacillating between use and abandonment—in contributing to the current crisis.

IV. An argument against apartheid

What fascinates most scholars studying tribal societies such as the FATA is their independence from and resistance to integration in the state. In the absence of representative surveys conducted in the FATA documenting the local population's opinions on the desirability and need for change (such as greater integration into the Pakistan state system), it would be presumptuous to advocate change assuming that this is what the local population desires.¹⁸ Nonetheless the possibility that they do desire change should be taken into account. Consequently, this section will identify some factors of change that, in and of themselves, contradict the notion of a tribal isolate that is invariably averse to increased state involvement.

Akbar Ahmed, in *Pukhtun Economy and Society: Traditional Structure and Economic Development in a Tribal Society* (1980), provides a detailed account of multiple aspects of tribal life in the Mohmand Agency. He argues that the tribal areas provide 'ideal

¹⁸ Research for this work revealed only two surveys: one was conducted by Community Appraisal and Motivation Programme (CAMP) in 2006 and the other by the Department for International Development (DFID) in 2003. The CAMP survey excludes the Bajaur and North and South Waziristan Agencies, while the DFID survey is restricted to the Kurram, Khyber and South Waziristan Agencies.

laboratory conditions' for testing the hypothesis that tribal society has remained intact in the tribal areas of Mohmand. He uses case studies from the tribal areas and settled areas of Mohmand Agency respectively to understand what an 'original', 'home-made' Mohmand model would look like, and where and how far deviances have occurred from it (1980: 32). Ahmed's ideal-type model is a timeless one, and the Pukhtuns in it 'are as they are, now and forever'. Let us take his problematic thesis that 'a pure and ideal-type structure exists in the tribal belt' as the pivot for the following discussion (1980: 59).

It is interesting that, while Ahmed recognizes the same factors of change that underlie the argument in this article that tribal society in the FATA has experienced sufficient change to make an emphasis on its isolation and uniqueness meaningless, he nonetheless concludes that the ideal-type tribal society persists (1980). The factors causing and representing change include the emergence and growth of first the colonial and then the postcolonial state, social change producing material values, a desire for social mobility and a concomitant rejection of castes and hierarchies, and the politics of the vote (Ahmed 1976: 132). My article extends the analysis to exogenous¹⁹ factors such as the emergence of a distinct economic class benefitting from drugs and weapons trafficking, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the emergence of the Taliban, in a bid to understand better the process of change in the FATA.

Ahmed rejects the possibility that clashes between different systems [the state and tribal systems] may have produced a synthesis; instead he contends that 'the encounters [were] mechanical and their ferocity merely helped to confirm existing social reality and cultural boundaries' (1980: 59). While Ahmed contends that tribal societies are 'incorrectly seen in the process of sedentarization and detribalization and hence on the evolutionary path to becoming agricultural-peasant societies', I argue that without introducing value-judgments or invoking an evolutionist framework,²⁰ an objective appraisal of changes in the FATA is sufficient to convince one of the need to view the tribal areas not as analytical and real-life isolates, but as part of a society that is impacted just as much by events as other parts of the country.

To begin with, in the colonial period, by encouraging the growth of the chiefly *malik* class in the tribal areas, 'the foundation of conflict, contradiction and dysfunction in... society...was created' (Ahmed 1980: 70). While Ahmed admits that 'the very core of tribal democracy was touched', he concludes, paradoxically, that it 'remained a closed system' (*ibid.*). He stresses the autonomy and hence the agency of the tribesmen by describing 'how each party, on its own operative level and with its own specific goals in

19 The use of the word 'exogenous' is meant to highlight the fact that, while some factors of change are routine and common to most societies, others are not natural or normal, such as, for instance, the creation of the Taliban. These factors require deliberate planning and active, artificial creation.

20 The discussion is not on the desirability, or otherwise, of the change but on the fact of change itself.

view, attempt[ed] to divert and subvert the larger situation for its own purposes' (ibid.: 81), but the underlying fact remains that the tribesmen were *compelled* to engage with the state.

Bernt Glatzer, who has conducted years of fieldwork in Afghanistan and Pakistan and their border areas, notes how the tribals have gradually been forced to come to terms with the practical realities of a Westphalian world order (2001: 381). Whereas many years ago most Afghan refugees would talk of *mantaqeh*, which implies a fuzzy and flexible notion of area, they now make regular use of words such as *sarhad* and *hadood* ('boundary'), both of which imply fixed boundaries. In their use, one discerns a process of coming to terms with the state.

One argument against FATA's greater incorporation into the Pakistani state asserts that FATA locals are averse to such integration and the 'development' associated with it. But an interview with one political agent revealed a different dynamic: 'If a road is built in an area, the political agent's jurisdiction and the ambit of the FCR expand along the length of the road. Thus, the tribals are wary of the oppressive concomitants of development, not development itself'.²¹ Another plausible reason for the tribals' aversion to integration is the association of the post-colonial state and its policies with its oppressive, exploitative and frequently brutal colonial predecessor (Ahmed 1980: 57). This should be seen as the failure of the post-colonial state to break free from its colonial past and build legitimacy anew, rather than as reflecting an inherent tribal aversion to involvement with states.

Claims about the hold of 'tradition' over tribal society in the FATA are also questionable. Even today, those who defend the FCR argue that it is in agreement with tribal 'tradition' and 'values', despite what scholars such as Chanock and Radhakrishna have revealed about the real colonial goals served by draconian legislation such as the FCR (discussed in Section II). Chanock, examining the ways in which 'traditions were maintained and manufactured', writes that 'the law was the cutting edge of colonialism, an instrument of the power of an alien state and part of the process of coercion. The customary law, far from being a survival, was created by...changes and conflicts' (1985: 3, 4). In reality, 'a body of law was created which was neither customary nor British: customary law was neither "there" nor traditional' (ibid.: 57-61).

As with traditional legislation, so also with the very notion of tribes. Post-colonial scholars such as Chanock, Mamdani, Asad and Berry (1995) take the analysis to an altogether higher level by stressing the constructedness of tribes. Expressing scepticism about the notion of 'tribal' societies, Talal Asad and Roger Owen comment: 'A famous traditional feature of most Middle Eastern countries has been something called the tribe, a socio-political entity which is usually thought of as being only loosely integrated

21 Interview with a political agent of Orakzai Agency, conducted in July 2008.

within the central state, because it has its own leaders, its own customs, etc.' (Asad and Owen 1983: 72). 'The tribe, conceived as a discrete group with an established system of customary law, was a convenient concept for the system of indirect rule' (Chanock 1985: 9). However, literature on the FATA and its inhabitants continues to adhere to essentialized, classical notions like tribe and kinship. For instance, Charles Lindholm holds that the 'the primary factor which must be kept at the forefront of any analysis of Pukhtun politics is that society was and is organized on the basis of kinship' (1996: 74). This leads him into simplistic assertions, for example, that 'the fundamental concept of the society is that all those related through a common male ancestor should stand united against outsiders. In theory, the fifteen million Pukhtun of Pakistan and Afghanistan should be capable of coming together to fight invaders' (ibid.).

Robert Nichols is rare amongst scholars for sharing the emphasis of the present article on the multiple changes that the FATA have undergone (2001). Nichols explores the processes of *contact*, *integration* and *confrontation* that have occurred across multiple arenas as successive imperial systems of order and political hierarchy encountered Pakhtun 'tribal' practices (2001: xiv). Contemporary analyses, then, ought to gauge the extent to which the 'multidimensional process of contact, recruitment, and exploitation led to regional integration and/or subordination vis-à-vis wider imperial and global processes' (ibid.: xv).

Some basic statistics such as those on the high rates of out-migration from the FATA lend support to the assertion that the FATA are not a static, sequestered region unaffected by change (Tables 1A, 1B).

TABLE 1A: PERCENTAGE (%) OF PAKISTANI WORKERS LEAVING* FROM THE NWFP

District/Region	1981–2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Peshawar	3.7	4.43	4.43	3.26	3.82	4.12	4.04
Tribal Areas	5.85	5.03	5.03	4.87	4.76	4.42	4.08

Table modified from that compiled by Gallup (Pakistan) based on Bureau of Emigration data and published by the Gulf Research Centre.²²

*Leaving for the Gulf States, European countries, the United States and 'Other' countries. The figures contain no further specifications. However, they serve the useful purpose of supporting the contention (to counter Ahmed 1980) that the assertion of a closed, pure ideal-type model of the tribal areas is untenable.

- The 1998 Census Report for Orakzai Agency refers to out-migration from the agency as a possible explanation for the fall from 233 persons per square kilometre (1988) to 147 persons per square kilometre in 1998 (p. 15).

22 http://www.worldsecuritynetwork.com/showArticle3.cfm?article_id=15962 (accessed: July 29, 2008).

- The 1998 Census Report of Kurram Agency testifies to the profound impact of out-migration of labourers: 'The quality and construction of the houses have improved with the prosperity brought in (by) the people working mostly in the Middle Eastern Countries' (p. 5).
- Since military action in the FATA started in 2004, several thousand FATA residents have been forced to flee to other parts of Pakistan 'as refugees rather than accept Taliban rule. The Pakistani Taliban have killed hundreds of tribal *maliks* and members of civil society such as journalists, doctors and businessmen' (Rashid 2008).²³

TABLE 1B: MIGRANT POPULATION BY PLACE OF BIRTH

Place of Enumeration	Migrant Population	Same prov. but different district	Place of Birth									
			NWFP	FATA	Punjab	Sindh	Balochistan	Islamabad	Azad Kashmir	Northern Area	Other Country	Not reported
Pakistan	10,829,264	5,705,447	943,944	126,577	1,136,386	280,668	131,529	27,379	236,371	16,793	2,219,225	4,945
Rural	3,920,429	2,463,090	137,487	66,564	119,162	96,739	41,445	4,604	62,917	1,997	922,447	3,977
Urban	6,908,835	3,242,357	806,457	60,013	1,017,224	183,929	90,084	22,775	173,454	14,796	1,296,778	968
NWFP	647,725	444,006	-	82,785	75,341	14,512	3,330	3,405	3,758	1,489	19,099	-
Rural	265,635	185,806	-	56,198	12,795	3,416	612	472	1,561	206	4,569	-
Urban	382,090	258,200	-	26,587	62,546	11,096	2,718	2,933	2,197	1,283	14,530	-
Punjab	6,701,256	4,341,896	346,607	15,783	-	213,235	36,092	20,352	156,907	5,363	1,560,790	4,231
Rural	3,202,624	2,045,309	91,318	8,863	-	86,521	16,817	3,958	49,929	1,399	894,591	3,919
Urban	3,498,632	2,296,587	255,289	6,920	-	126,714	19,275	16,394	106,978	3,964	666,199	312
Sindh	2,832,937	805,382	487,441	24,693	759,887	-	89,138	3,412	45,093	8,124	609,608	159
Rural	280,837	181,110	13,150	633	41,207	-	23,761	174	1,573	91	19,112	26
Urban	2,552,100	624,272	474,291	24,060	718,680	-	65,377	3,238	43,520	8,033	590,496	133
Balochistan	249,615	114,163	33,282	782	59,181	26,778	-	210	6,175	133	8,356	555
Rural	86,242	50,865	13,136	132	13,793	4,967	-	-	235	10	3,072	32
Urban	163,373	63,298	20,146	650	45,388	21,811	-	210	5,940	123	5,284	523
Islamabad	397,731	-	76,614	2,534	241,977	26,143	2,969	-	24,438	1,684	21,372	-
Rural	85,091	-	19,883	738	51,367	1,835	255	-	9,619	291	1,103	-
Urban	312,640	-	56,731	1,796	190,610	24,308	2,714	-	14,819	1,393	20,269	-

SOURCE: adapted from http://www.statpak.gov.pk/depts/pco/statistics/other_tables/migrant.pdf.

Ahmed also describes a trend whereby FATA locals drift to towns or migrate abroad looking for work. For instance, he tells us that there were over a million Pukhtuns in Karachi in 1977 (1980: 99, 100). 'There is a tendency for Pukhtun society to move uni-directionally from *nang* [tribal] to *qalang* [settled] in acts of migration' (1980: 99; also 100, 122).

Even after recognizing such indices of change, Ahmed (1980) construes the processes of change that turn *nang* areas into *qalang* areas as deviance from a so-called pure *nang* tribal model. The present article suggests an alternative interpretation: first, that processes

23 Ahmed Rashid, 'How to succeed and fail in FATA'. *Daily Times*, May 2, 2008.

of change over the years have so profoundly impacted on the *nang* areas that one may not meaningfully speak of an untainted *nang* model at all; and secondly, that the *qalang* areas represent changes to the 'original' model, as well as the new, changed model itself, and not mere deviance from a supposed 'original'.²⁴

In the 1980s, change came massively to the FATA. Afghanistan became the site for the last Soviet–U.S. proxy war. The blueprint for the Afghan 'jihad' was prepared by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in collaboration with the Inter Services Intelligence Agency (ISI) of Pakistan (Mamdani 2004: 130). Also supporting the 'jihad' were Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Britain, China, the Philippines and Israel (ibid.). The strategy was to flood Afghanistan and Pakistan's tribal areas with all kinds of weapons and the most radical Islamist recruits (ibid.: 126-9). As recruits arrived from Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Indonesia, the U.S. and Britain, the tribal areas became a truly 'global village'. Some 35,000 Muslim men from 43 Islamic countries fought as *mujahideen* (fighters in a holy war) between 1982 and 1992 (ibid.). Of these 'hyphenated identities' (Mamdani's phrase)—Afghan-Arabs, Afghan-Algerians, Afghan-Indonesians and so on—some were mercenaries or adventurers, while others fought for 'the cause' (ibid.: 131-4). In April 1993, there were 2800 Arabs registered as residents of the NWFP; there were three hundred Arab militants in Peshawar in the early 1990s (Bukhari and Rana 2007: 11); among foreigners, there were 5000 Saudis, 3000 Yemenis, 2000 Egyptians, and 2800 Algerians (ibid.; Rubin 1995; Mamdani 2004).

In ISI-run training camps in Pakistan, recruits were 'taught' the necessity of 'holy war' against the 'godless communists' and trained in war tactics. CIA training incorporated local Afghan skills of disembowelling and slitting throats (Mamdani 2004: 126, 138). From 1986 to 1994, children's textbooks for use in the *madrassahs* were designed by the University of Nebraska under a USAID grant. A fourth-grade mathematics textbook read: 'The speed of a Kalashnikov bullet is 800 metres per second. If a Russian is at a distance of 3200 metres from a mujahid, and that mujahid aims at the Russian's head, calculate how many seconds it will take for the bullet to strike the Russian in the forehead' (Mamdani 2004: 137). When Pakistani *madrassah* students were taught the Urdu alphabet, the Urdu letter *kaaf* stood for Kalashnikov, *khay* for *khoon* (blood) and *jeem* for *jihad* (ibid.: 138).

Victor Turner's notion of liminality, originally used in the context of rites of passage, is amenable to application in diverse contexts. Let us apply it to the process of 'manufacturing' the *mujahideen* (who went on to become the Taliban) just outlined. While Turner sees liminality as having positive properties—a storehouse of possibilities and a source of creativity—liminality is also the site and time of stripping bare, of violence: '[Liminal

24 See also Asad and Owen (1983: 73).

entities] must obey their instructors implicitly...it is as though *they are being reduced or ground down to a uniform condition to be fashioned anew*' (1974: 95, my emphasis).

This stripping bare of pre-liminal attributes occurs in seclusion (as in Pakistan's peripheral tribal areas): 'In liminality...the initiand...has been...*set aside* from the main arenas of social life in a seclusion lodge or camp' (2002 [1974]: 97). To be emphasized here is the sense of disruption and sharp disjunction, the intentionality and artificiality (in the sense of not being natural) inherent in the process of *making* someone liminal. In Turner's schemata, the liminars are *ritual liminars* in that 'they have cultural assurance of a final stable resolution of their ambiguity' (ibid.). Also, ritual liminars are moving, symbolically, to a higher status. Thus 'their being stripped of status temporarily is a "ritual", an as-if, or make-believe stripping...' (ibid.).²⁵

But if one takes out the element of make-believe and rituality, liminality becomes a rather dark, permanent (un)certainly, as in fact it did for the thousands of *mujahideen*, gathered in *madrassahs* in Afghanistan and Pakistan's north-west, 'trained' mentally in religious rhetoric and physically in military tactics, supplied with advanced weaponry, taught to kill, and then abandoned without a ritual of reaggregation into 'normal' life.²⁶

Perhaps the expectation was that, once the Soviet threat had ended, the *liminars* would somehow trickle back into routine life. Instead, some trickled into Pakistan's tribal north-west through the porous border, others returned to their home countries, and still others remained in Afghanistan and in 1994 formed the Taliban government.

Perhaps the expectation was also that they would shed their violent *habits*. But Bourdieu reminds us that the habitus is *embodied* history (1990: 56); its *dispositional* aspect renders it beyond conscious control as it determines tendencies of perception and practice (1977: 22; Rey 2004: 335). In *The Logic of Practice*, Bourdieu describes habitus thus:

The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable dispositions (1990: 53)...The *habitus*, a product of history, produces individual and collective practices—more history—in accordance with the schemes generated by history. It ensures the active presence of past experiences, which, deposited in each organism in the form of schemes of perception, thought and action, tend to guarantee...their constancy

25 Turner (1974a: 97) distinguishes liminars from 'marginals', who are, simultaneously, members of two or more groups, e.g. migrant foreigners and persons of mixed ethnic origin. Marginals, unlike ritual liminars, have no cultural assurance of a final stable resolution of their ambiguity. But liminality is the more useful concept here: it involves an *artificial* rupture and thus highlights the process by which mujahideen were *actively* recruited. Marginality does not highlight this *intentionality*, and it appears more as a descriptive label than a concept: people migrate, just as they are born of mixed-race unions. Thus I find liminality useful in analysing the mujahideen.

26 Turner recognizes that transition may become a permanent condition (1974a: 107), but his emphasis is on ritual liminality in which the initiand is always reintegrated (ibid.: 99).

over time. (ibid.: 54) [...] ...the *habitus*...is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product. (ibid.: 56)

Mahmood Mamdani, an anthropologist at Columbia, is one of the very few scholars to have pointed out the link between the violence the Taliban became notorious for and their history (2004: 161-2). Indeed, after the Afghan war, almost every major 'terrorist' attack was traced to the *ex-mujahideen* (ibid.: 139; Roy 1994: 114).

Military action in the aftermath of September 11 is worsening the disruption in a society already rent by such divisions and convulsed by external and internal pressure.²⁷ In the chaotic aftermath of military action in the FATA, more than a million residents have been displaced (ICG 2009). Several hundred tribal *maliks* have been killed by militants who opposed the *maliks*' attempts to negotiate with the state authorities for peace in the region. Ahmed Rashid (2008) speaks of the 'civil society which the army failed to protect in FATA when the Taliban and al' Qaeda came to settle there after 2002'.²⁸ This local civil society, which is all too often obscured from the public view, includes, inter alia, tribal leaders, religious leaders, journalists, businessmen, schoolteachers and shopkeepers. In the myriad accounts and commentaries on the FATA, Rashid is perhaps the only writer to direct attention to the silent victims of the multi-faceted tragedy facing the FATA. The fact that references to the tribal belt invoke images of a terrorist-infested region is a testament to the obscurity that the residents of the FATA have been forced into. Historically, the region has been seen as just that—a region (a whole). Attention needs to be redirected to the innocent victims of the battle being staged in the region. These civilians, in mortal danger from the militants and from state-sponsored Pakistani and American military action alike, are fleeing to refugee camps or setting up local *lashkars* for their defence. Yet despite their present predicament and history of neglect by the Pakistani state, they attract scant attention to this day.

It is a tragic irony that, while the notion of the subaltern, originally formulated to refine histories of colonial encounters, does not explain much in the colonial era (see Section II), it becomes appropriate in the post-colonial era. In the encounter of the postcolonial state with the FATA, the locals, as witness to the disruption of their society, were the subalterns.

V. Conclusion

This article has focused on a region that is only under the nominal control of the Pakistani state and is an anachronism in today's Westphalian global community of nation states.

27 See Rubin 1995: 30.

28 Ahmed Rashid interview, February 28, 2008. *Harper's Magazine*. <http://www.harpers.org/archive/2008/02/hbc-90002504> (accessed: July 20, 2008).

It has offered an evaluation of the role of the state in the FATA and argued that 'tribal societies' should be viewed just like other ordinary parts of society, being like them subject to constant and rapid change.

This process of mapping change took us back to the British colonial era. In dealing with the post-colonial era, an attempt was made to highlight the culpability of several actors in *manufacturing* 'the Taliban'. These arguments culminated in an argument (in Section IV) against treating the FATA as a timeless region inhabited by traditional tribals.

The situation in the FATA is a story of the disruptive effects of brutal external interference, exploitation and abandonment, rather than reflecting inherent Pathan traits or the force of tradition. This society—rent by divisions, serving as a laboratory for human experimentation and forced into a frame of ahistoricity—testifies to the culpability of numerous actors in creating the turmoil that characterizes it today.

Eight years ago, in 2001, when Pakistan officially pledged support for the US-led 'war on terror', many Pakistanis came out in protest, accusing the government of succumbing to US pressure and aiding in the invasion of a sovereign Muslim country, Afghanistan. Pakistanis repeatedly questioned whose war they were fighting—Osama bin Laden, after all, had declared war against 'the infidels', i.e. the West. However, President Bush then demanded a loyalty test, failing which would brand one a 'terrorist': 'Every nation has a choice to make. In this conflict, there is no neutral ground.'²⁹ Pakistan made that choice, led by a military dictator who subsequently benefitted immensely from the financial aid that alliance with the US brought. Thus began Pakistan's 'war on terror'. Sceptics of the military action in the FATA and adjoining regions deem the Pakistani state an aggressor, fighting the Americans' war against its own people. This is, at best, an over-simplified portrayal of a far more complex situation. For the US and its allies in the West, the problem is one of terrorism alone. For Pakistan, the issue of terrorism is inextricably intertwined with the additional, fundamental challenge of state-building and integration. Thus, if anything, it is Pakistan's war, with the difference that Pakistan, unlike the US, confronts a dual challenge.

The 'problem' in the FATA predates the events of September 11, 2001, the event that focused the world's attention on the region. Due to the pressure brought to bear on Pakistan by the US and its Western allies, Pakistan is being forced to address a situation which is the result of the *historical* neglect of complex issues of governance and state-building, now inextricably mingled with the fight against international terrorism.

29 CNN.com [online] (2001). Bush Announces Opening of Attacks. <http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/10/07/ret.attack.bush/> (accessed: 20 June 2009).

References

- Ahmed, A.S. 1976. *Millennium and charisma among Pathans: a critical essay in social anthropology*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- . 1980. *Pukhtun economy and society: traditional structure and economic development in a tribal society*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Asad, T., and R. Owen (eds.) 1983. *Sociology of developing societies: the Middle East*. London: Macmillan.
- Axtmann, R. 2004. The state of the state: the model of the modern state and its contemporary transformation. *International Political Science Review* 3 (25), 259–279.
- Banerjee, M. 2000. *The Pathan unarmed: opposition and memory in the North West Frontier*, Oxford: James Currey.
- Bayly, C.A. 1988. Rallying around the subaltern, *Journal of Peasant Studies* 16/1, 110–20. Also in *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the postcolonial*, V. Chaturvedi (ed.), 2000, pp. 94–127. London: Verso.
- Barkey, K., and S. Parikh 1991. Comparative perspectives on the state. *Annual Review of Sociology* 17, 523–49.
- Berry, S. 1995. Hegemony on a shoestring: indirect rule and access to agricultural land. *Journal of the International African Institute* 3 (62), 327–55.
- Bourdieu, P. 1977. *Outline of a theory of practice* (transl. R. Nice), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1990. *The logic of practice*, Cambridge: Polity Press
- Bruce, R.I. 1900. *The forward policy and its results*, Quetta: Gosha-e-Adab.
- Bukhari, M., and M. Rana 2007. *Arabs in Afghan jihad*, Lahore: Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies.
- Caroe, O. 1958. *The Pathans, 550 B.C.–A.D. 1957*, Karachi: Oxford University Press.
- Chanock, M. 1985. *Law, custom and social order*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chatterjee, A. 1998. *Representations of India, 1740–1840: the creation of India in the colonial imagination*, London: Macmillan.
- Cheema, P., and M. Nuri (eds.) 2005. *Tribal Areas of Pakistan: challenges and responses*. Islamabad: Asia Printers.
- Clammer, J. 1973. Colonialism and the perception of tradition in Fiji, in T. Asad (ed.), *Anthropology and the colonial encounter*, New York: Humanity Books.
- CNN.com [online] 2001. Bush announces opening of attacks. <http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/10/07/ret.attack.bush/>. (Accessed 20 June 2009).
- Davies, C.C. 1932. *The problem of the North-West Frontier 1890–1908*, London: Curzon Press.
- Department for International Development (DFID) 2003. *Between hope and despair: Pakistan Participatory Poverty Assessment FATA Report*, Department for International Development, United Kingdom.
- Elliott, J.G. 1968. *The Frontier 1839-1947*, London: Cassell.
- Embree, A.T. (ed.) 1977. *Pakistan's western borderlands: the transformation of political order*, New Delhi: Vikas.
- Geschiere, P. 2001. Shaka and the limits of colonial invention, *African Studies Review* 44, 167–76.
- Glatzer, B. 2001. War and boundaries in Afghanistan: significance and relativity of local and social boundaries, *Die welt des Islams* (n.s.) 41/3, 379–99.
- Hanlon, R.O. 1988. Recovering the subject Subaltern Studies and histories of resistance in colonial South Asia, *Modern Asian Studies* 221, 189–224.

- Hansen, T.B., and F. Stepputat (eds.) 2001. *States of imagination: ethnographic explorations of the postcolonial state*, Durham: Duke University Press.
- Hollander, J.A., and Einwohner 2004. Conceptualizing resistance, *Sociological Forum* 4 (19), 533–54.
- Imperial Gazetteer of India, Provincial Series: North-West Frontier Province* 1979, Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications.
- International Crisis Group (ICG) 2009. *Pakistan: countering militancy in FATA*, Asia Report 178, 21 October 2009.
- Jalal, A. 2008. *Partisans of Allah: jihad in South Asia*, Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications.
- Joseph, G.M. 1990. On the trail of Latin American bandits: a reexamination of peasant resistance, *Latin American Research Review* 3 (25), 7–53.
- Killingray, D. 1986. The maintenance of law and order in British colonial Africa, *African Affairs* 85, 411–37.
- Kirk, W. 1962. The Inner Asian Frontier of India, *Transactions and Papers* 31, 131–68.
- Lindholm, C. 1996. *Frontier perspectives: essays in comparative anthropology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Maddox, G.H. 1998. Networks and frontiers in colonial Tanzania, *Environmental History* 3 (4), 436–59.
- Mamdani, M. 1992. Africa: democratic theory and democratic struggles, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 27 (41), 2228–32.
- . 2004. *Good Muslim, bad Muslim*, Lahore: Vanguard Books.
- Nichols, R. 2001. *Settling the frontier: land, law, and society in the Peshawar Valley, 1500–1900*, Karachi: Oxford University Press.
- . 2005. *Colonial reports on Pakistan's Frontier Tribal Areas*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Radhakrishna, M. 2001. *Dishonoured by history: 'Criminal Tribes' and British colonial policy*, New Delhi: Orient Longman.
- Rey, T. 2004. Marketing the goods of salvation: Bourdieu on religion, *Religion* 34, 331–43.
- Rittenberg, S. 1977. Continuities in borderland politics, in A.T. Embree (ed.), *Pakistan's western borderlands: the transformation of political order*, New Delhi: Vikas, pp. 67–84.
- Roy, O. 1994. *The failure of political Islam*, London: I.B. Tauris.
- Rubin, B.R. 1995. *The search for peace in Afghanistan*, Karachi: Oxford University Press.
- Scott, D. 1995. Colonial Governmentality, *Social Text* 43, 191–220.
- Scott, J. 1985. *Weapons of the weak: everyday forms of peasant resistance*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Spain, J.W. 1963. *The Pathan borderland*, The Hague: Mouton.
- . 1977. Political problems of a borderland, in A.T. Embree (ed.), *Pakistan's western borderland: the transformation of a political order*, New Delhi: Vikas, pp. 1–23.
- Tipps, C.D. 1973. Modernization theory and the comparative study of societies: a critical perspective, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 15, 199–226.
- Turner, V.W. 1974. *The ritual process: structure and anti-structure*, Chicago: Aldine.
- . 2002 [1974]. Passages, margins, and poverty: religious symbols of communitas, in J. Vincent, (ed.), *The anthropology of politics: a reader in ethnography, theory and critique*, Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 96–101.