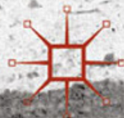
BRITAIN AND THE WORLD

RAMPARTS OF EMPIRE

British Imperialism and India's Afghan Frontier, 1918-1948

BRANDON MARSH



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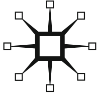

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For Anne

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Contents

List of Illustrations ix

Series Editors' Preface x

Acknowledgments xii

List of Acronyms xiv

Introduction 1

Part I The North-West Frontier and Post-War Imperialism

1 The North-West Frontier: Policies, Perceptions, and the Conservative Impulse in the British Raj 11

2 "A Continual and Gratuitous Provocation": The North-West Frontier and the Crisis of Empire, 1919–1923 36

3 A Cigarette in a Powder Magazine: The Frontier, Nationalism, and Reform, 1919–1930 59

Part II The North-West Frontier and the Nationalist Challenge

4 "A Considerable Degree of Supineness": Nationalism and the British Administration, 1928–1930 85

5 "These Infernal Khudai Khidmatgaran": Defining and Repressing Frontier Nationalism, 1930–1931 115

6 "The Forbidden Land": The British, Frontier Nationalism, and Congress, 1931–1934 139

Part III The North-West Frontier and the End of Empire

7 "If the Ramparts Fall, the City Must Fall Also": The Frontier and Indian Constitutional Reform, 1930–1939 169

8 "A Welcome Weapon of Criticism": Tribal Policy and Its Discontents, 1930–1939 194

9 "A Glorified Maginot Line"?: The Frontier and the Second World War, 1939–1946 226

Conclusion: The End of British Rule and the Frontier Legacy 253

Select Bibliography 275

Index 286

List of Illustrations

Images

1 The Khyber Pass, early 1930s 15

2 An Afridi tribesman 19

3 British military encampment at Landi Kotal, Khyber Agency, early 1930s 31

4 Combined Indian Statutory Commission and Indian Central Committee in Peshawar with witnesses, November, 1928. Sir H. Norman Bolton, Chief Commissioner, NWFP, sits in centre, second row, with topi on lap. He is flanked by Sir C. Sankaran Nair and Sir John Simon 77

5 The North-West Frontier Province Legislative Council, c. 1935. Sir George Cunningham, then member of the Executive Council, sits in front row, fifth from left. Nawab Sahibzada Sir Adbul Quaiyum, future first Chief Minister of the NWFP, sits fifth from left 162

6 Dr. Khan Sahib (far left) and other NWFP Congress Members of the Central Legislative Assembly, 1936 211

7 Abdul Ghaffar Khan (far left), Jawaharlal Nehru (second from left), and Dr. Khan Sahib (third from left) at the entrance to the Khyber Agency during Nehru's tour of the Frontier, 1938 216

8 Sir George Cunningham, Governor, NWFP, 1937–46 and 1947–48 220

9 Sir Olaf Caroe (right) greets Jawaharlal Nehru at Peshawar for the latter's tour of the Frontier, October 1946 262

Figure

1 Administrative structure, North-West Frontier Province 24

Maps

1 North-West Frontier Province, c. 1935 xv

2 Peshawar City, 23 April 1930 98

Series Editors' Preface

Ramparts of Empire: British Imperialism and India's Afghan Frontier, 1918–1948 is published as the fifteenth volume in The British Scholar Society's *Britain and the World* series from Palgrave Macmillan. From the sixteenth century onward, Britain's influence on the world became progressively more profound and far reaching, in time touching every continent and subject, from Europe to Australasia and archaeology to zoology. Although the histories of Britain and the world became increasingly intertwined, mainstream British history still neglects the world's influence upon domestic developments and Britain's overseas history remains largely confined to the study of the British Empire. This series takes a broader approach to British history, seeking to investigate the full extent of the world's influence on Britain and Britain's influence on the world.

Brandon Marsh's book examines British perceptions and policies on India's Afghan Frontier between 1918 and 1948 and their impact on the local Pashtun population, India as a whole, and the decline of British imperialism in South Asia. Marsh demonstrates that far from being a peripheral region of the British Raj, the North-West Frontier was in fact central to Britain's imperial mission in India throughout the first half of the twentieth century. A combination of fears of internal revolt among the local Pashtun population and external invasion from Afghanistan or the Soviet Union convinced many in the Raj that the region was the one place in India where the British could suffer a "knock-out blow." Marsh argues that this belief led civil and military authorities to treat the frontier as a "land apart" from the rest of India, an attitude that led to the rise of local nationalism, while simultaneously drawing the attention of All-India nationalists, who viewed the uniquely violent way in which the British dealt with frontier nationalism as an indictment of the entire imperial project. The frontier, therefore, became a major battlefield between Indian nationalism and British imperialism. Drawing together the military, cultural, and political strands of Frontier history, Marsh offers a fundamental reassessment of the nature of late British imperialism in India, including the influential resurgence of Victorian racial theories and strategic thinking among British administrators

in the interwar years, while simultaneously emphasizing the ways in which these views, influenced by wider Indian and imperial contexts, shifted in the final decade of the British Raj. Marsh takes a region that is in the news on a daily basis and is often portrayed as an alien "non-place" and reintegrates it into its Indian and imperial contexts.

Acknowledgments

I owe an immense thanks to the many people and institutions who helped make this book possible. I am privileged to have mentors, colleagues, and friends who have supported this project over the years. First and foremost, my former advisor at the University of Texas at Austin, Wm. Roger Louis, provided unstinting guidance from its earliest beginnings. Gail Minault, Tony Hopkins, Bruce Hunt, and John Brobst have bestowed knowledge, encouragement, and friendship throughout the course of this project. Pillarisetti Sudhir, Jason Parker, Dane Kennedy, Philippa Levine, and Mukulika Banerjee made important contributions to its early conceptualization. In addition, I was fortunate enough to pursue my doctoral studies with a number of other Imperial, Commonwealth, and South Asian focused graduate students, and many of them contributed greatly to this study with their intellectual stimulation and personal friendship. My colleagues, both past and present at Bridgewater College have provided commiseration, understanding, and friendship as I completed this project and this has been an immense help. I also owe a debt of thanks to David and Carolyn Savage who, while I was an undergraduate at Lewis & Clark College, first introduced me to the Indian subcontinent and the study of British imperialism. I am also indebted to my editors at Palgrave Macmillan, including Jen McCall and Holly Tyler, as well as the series editors of Britain and the World, all of whom saw this as a worthwhile project. I am grateful for their confidence.

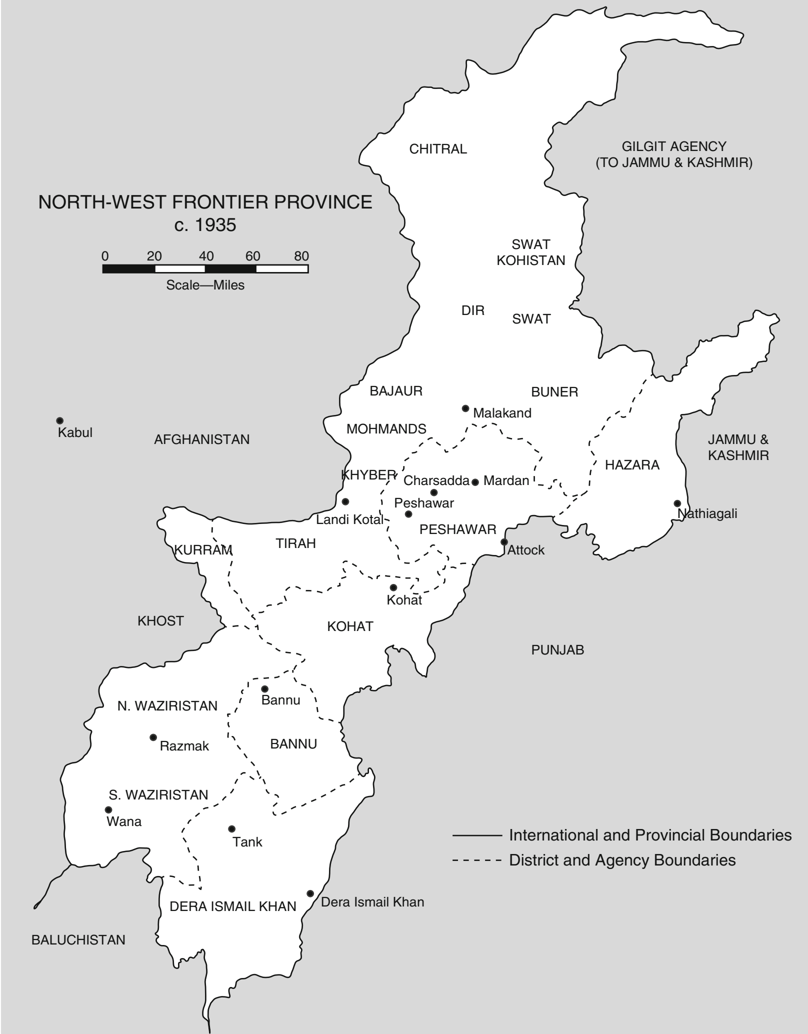
The research for this book, which was carried out in the United Kingdom, India, and the United States, was made possible with the generous financial support of a number of institutions. The initial stages of research benefitted greatly from support from the British Studies program at the University of Texas at Austin and a month-long seminar on decolonization at the Library of Congress under the auspices of the National History Center and supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. My long-term research in Britain and India was supported by an Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship for Dissertation Research in the Humanities from the Institute for Historical Research in London, and two generous fellowships from the History Department at the University of Texas at Austin. The final stages of research were made possible by several faculty research grants from Bridgewater College. I would like to thank the knowledgeable and helpful staffs of the British Library, the

National Archives of the United Kingdom, the Centre of South Asian Studies at Cambridge University, the National Archives of India, the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, the Library of Congress, and the National Archives of the United States. A singular research debt, however, is owed to Dr. Richard Bingle, formerly of the India Office Library and British Library. His hospitality, vast knowledge of British India, and willingness to patiently discuss my findings over the last eight years has been indispensable to this project.

I wish to give special thanks to my family. I am grateful to my parents, Tim and Christy Marsh, who have provided constant support and encouragement, as well as my in-laws, Nick and Mary Turnbull, who were instrumental in introducing me to the world of the academy. Closer to home, our border terrier, Mollie, was a constant companion throughout the writing process: every seemingly insurmountable paragraph was quickly conquered after a brisk ten-minute walk with Mollie in the lead. Lastly, I thank my wife Anne, to whom this work is dedicated. Her patience, humor, and love have been unfailing. Words cannot describe my debt to her.

List of Acronyms

AC	Assistant Commissioner
AICC	All-India Congress Committee
AIR	Air Ministry Records
APA	Assistant Political Agent
CAB	Cabinet Office Records
CIE	Commander of the Order of the Indian Empire
CSAS	Centre of South Asian Studies, Cambridge University
CSI	Commander of the Order of the Star of India
DC	Deputy Commissioner
FCR	Frontier Crimes Regulation
FO	Foreign Office Records
HMG	His Majesty's Government
ICS	Indian Civil Service
IDL	Indian Defence League
IES	Indian Empire Society
IOR	India Office Records (Asia, Pacific, and Africa Collections), British Library, London
KCIE	Knight Commander, Order of the Indian Empire
KCSI	Knight Commander, Order of the Star of India
KOYLI	King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry
NAI	National Archives of India, New Delhi
NMML	Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi
NWFP	North-West Frontier Province
PA	Political Agent
RAF	Royal Air Force
TNA	The National Archives of the United Kingdom (Public Records Office), London
WO	War Office Files



Map 1 North-West Frontier Province, c. 1935

Introduction

Testifying before the British Government's Committee of Imperial Defence in May 1927, the former Viceroy of India, Lord Reading, stated that India's mountainous Afghan Frontier constituted Britain's "dominating problem" in South Asia.[1] This assertion, made at a time when Indian nationalism was slowly but surely undermining the foundations of British rule in India, is striking. Yet, it is ultimately unsurprising that the man who had recently enjoyed autocratic power over India's 300 million souls would identify upheaval and intrigue on the North-West Frontier with Afghanistan as the greatest problem confronting the Raj. Ever since the British extended their rule to the Afghan borderlands in the mid-nineteenth century, they had fixated on the "problem" of the Frontier: Afghan wars, Russian expansion, and unrest and rebellion among the region's Pathan tribes.[2] Although the North-West Frontier

[1] Committee of Imperial Defence: Minutes of the Fifth Meeting of the Defence of India Sub-Committee, 10 May 1927, The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA) CAB 16/83.

[2] A note on terminology: The Pashto-speaking people of Afghanistan and what is now Western Pakistan are known variously as Pushtuns, Pakhtuns, Pukhtuns and, archaically, as Pathans. In order to avoid confusion, I use the older word "Pathan" because the primary sources for this period, both British and Indian, universally refer to the ethnic group by this name. My use of the term "tribe" follows Evans-Pritchard's structural functionalist approach to anthropology, in which "tribe" refers to "political groups defined by territory and by accepted mechanisms for the settlement of disputes" rather than by a central authority. The term "tribe" continues to be used by both anthropologists and the Pakistani government, and the unadministered belt of territory between Pakistan and Afghanistan has the official title "Federally Administered Tribal Areas." See Hugh Beattie, *Imperial Frontier: Tribe and State in Waziristan* (Richmond, 2002), p. 244.

lay on the geographical periphery of Britain's Indian Empire, it stood, paradoxically, at the center of what the British saw as their imperial project in the subcontinent. Generations of British officers and officials believed that this was the one place in India where the British could suffer a "knockout blow" from either external invasion or internal revolt.[3] If the Frontier fell, then India would fall. If India fell, then so too would the Empire. For the British, the North-West Frontier was an imperial obsession.

This book examines how this obsession both shaped and reflected the long-term devolution of British power in the Indian subcontinent between the end of the First World War in 1918 and independence in 1947. It contends that the strategic concerns about the region, coupled with British perceptions of the Pathans that emphasized tradition, immutability, and violence, produced a particularly conservative and inflexible form of British imperialism on the Frontier. It was this deeply conservative ideology of the Raj that held sway among the men who governed the Frontier – both civilians and soldiers – throughout the inter-war years and, in some cases, all the way up to independence and partition. Yet the British position in India, and the assumptions that had undergirded it, were significantly altered in the aftermath of the First World War. New constraints in the form of a mature Indian nationalism, British economic decline, and changes to the international system meant that the British Raj in India had to adjust to changing realities. The British, however, expected the Frontier to stand outside this pattern. They insisted that the region was a land apart. As a result, the North-West Frontier was viewed increasingly, by both the British administration and Indian nationalists, as not just a physical rampart of the Raj, but as an ideological and symbolic rampart of a form of full imperial control that was dwindling away in other areas of the subcontinent. Over the next three decades, the region became a major point of contention in the All-India struggle between Indian nationalism and British rule.

Over the last 150 years, a number of mainly popular studies have been published about the British experience on India's North-West Frontier with Afghanistan. These works have largely focused on the history of British military operations in the region or on some aspect of the so-called "Great Game" between Britain and Russia on the wider central

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[3] Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Bruce, "Memorandum" in *Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform [Session 1932–1933], Volume 2C: Minutes of Evidence* (London, 1934), p. 1689, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML).

Asian canvas. Most of these have been rooted firmly in the nineteenth century, ranging from the full-scale debacle of the First Anglo-Afghan War (1839–1842) to the skirmishes in which Winston Churchill participated during the Malakand uprising of 1897–1898.[4] These accounts, which have provided the fodder for stories, novels, and bestsellers for generations, continue to be consumed on a regular basis, even if Kipling has been replaced by Al Qaeda. The corpus of scholarly, as opposed to popular, work focusing on the Frontier is a far rarer beast. That which deals with the twentieth century is rarer still. Not surprisingly, a great many academic works deal with the military component of the British experience on the Frontier. Timothy Moreman, Alan Warren, Andrew Roe, and Christian Tripodi have all published excellent accounts on the operations and policies carried out by the Indian Army and the Indian Political Service between the British annexation of the region in 1849 and 1947. These studies have focused almost exclusively on the un-administered "tribal belt" running along the western fringe of the Frontier, or even more particularly on Waziristan, a unique area with distinctive problems and issues. Apart from Warren's account of the Faqir of Ipi's 1937 rebellion, little mention is made of the administered "settled districts" of the Frontier, where the majority of the population of the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) resided.[5]

Socio-cultural studies of an anthropological bent form another major category of historical scholarship about the North-West Frontier. Traditionally carried out within a structural functionalist framework, recent works on the region have ventured into new and innovative directions.[6] Sana Haroon's study on religion and society in the tribal

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[4] There are numerous works on the "Great Game." For popular accounts see, e.g., Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia* (New York, 1991); and Karl E. Meyer and Shareen Blair Brysac, *Tournament of Shadows: The Great Game and the Race for Empire in Central Asia* (Washington, 1999). The fictional literature on the "Great Game" is also vast and is almost a genre in itself. It includes treasures such as Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*.

[5] See Timothy R. Moreman, *The Army in India and the Development of Frontier Warfare, 1849–1947* (London, 1998); Alan Warren, *Waziristan, the Faqir of Ipi, and the Indian Army: The North West Frontier Revolt of 1936–1937* (Karachi, 2000); Andrew M. Roe, *Waging War in Waziristan: The Struggle in the Land of Bin Laden, 1849–1947* (Lawrence, Kansas, 2010); and Christian Tripodi, *Edge of Empire: The British Political Officer and the Tribal Administration on the North-West Frontier, 1877–1947* (Farnham, 2011).

[6] For structural functionalist studies see, e.g., Charles Lindholm, *Frontier Perspectives: Essays in Comparative Anthropology* (Karachi, 1996); and Frederik Barth, *Political Leadership among the Swat Pathans* (London, 1965).

areas emphasizes how the British Raj's construction of tribal autonomy fostered a particular religious leadership.[7] Haroon's research dovetails with the recent work, spread out over several volumes, of Benjamin Hopkins. Hopkins and his collaborator, Magnus Marsden, have made a number of important and pioneering contributions to our understanding of the wider region of the Frontier and Afghanistan.[8] In particular, his concept of "Frontier governmentality," which argues that the British "asserted the state's suzerainty through the administration of difference, deployed to keep [the Pathans of the North-West Frontier] outside the colonial sphere," provides a theoretical framework for many of the conclusions reached in this study.[9]

Although it is consistently ignored or under-examined in studies of the All-India struggle, the Frontier possessed a unique and vital nationalist movement throughout the inter-war years and, as a result, a number of academic studies have examined various aspects of this phenomenon.[10] Stephen Rittenberg, Amit Kumar Gupta, Erland Jansen, Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah, and Mukulika Banerjee have portrayed various facets of both Congress- and Muslim League-allied nationalism on the Frontier. Several of these studies, specifically Gupta in his work on the NWFP legislature, and Banerjee, in her anthropological study of Gandhian non-violence among the Frontier nationalists, have placed the movement within its All-India and imperial contexts. Moreover, Banerjee's volume emphasizes the Frontier administration's particularly violent response to nationalist politics. This is a theme, along with that of the wider Indian connections of the Frontier political struggle, which this study builds upon. In an inverse of the military and strategic studies that privilege the tribal territory, all of these studies focus on the

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[7] Sana Haroon, *Frontier of Faith: Islam in the Indo-Afghan Borderland* (New York, 2006).

[8] Benjamin D. Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan* (Basingstoke, 2008); Magnus Marsden and Benjamin D. Hopkins, *Fragments of the Afghan Frontier* (New York, 2011); and Benjamin D. Hopkins and Magnus Marsden (eds), *Beyond Swat: History, Society and Economy along the Afghanistan-Pakistan Frontier* (New York, 2013).

[9] Marsden and Hopkins, *Fragments of the Afghan Frontier*, p. 51.

[10] See, e.g., John Gallagher, Gordon Johnson, and Anil Seal (eds), *Locality, Province and Nation: Essays on Indian Politics 1870 to 1940* (Cambridge, 1973); Judith M. Brown, *Gandhi and Civil Disobedience: The Mahatma in Indian Politics, 1928–1934* (Cambridge, 1977); Donald Anthony Low (ed.), *Congress and the Raj: Facets of the Indian Struggle, 1917–1947*, 2nd Edition (New Delhi, 2004); and Donald Anthony Low, *Britain and Indian Nationalism: The Imprint of Ambiguity, 1929–1942* (Cambridge, 1997).

Peshawar District and, to a lesser extent, the other settled districts of the Frontier, with little discussion of the links between the administered and unadministered areas of the NWFP.[11]

The final major category of scholarship on the Afghan Frontier is the literature on the high politics and grand strategy leading up to Indian independence and partition. Works by Robin Moore, Keith Jeffery, Milan Hauner, John Brobst, and Parshotam Mehra have all assessed to varying degrees the role of the Frontier in British strategic thinking at different points between the First World War and 1947. Jeffery's work explores only the immediate post-1918 era, whereas Hauner's work focuses on the late 1930s and the Second World War. Mehra's excellent account of the ill-fated governorship of Sir Olaf Caroe covers 1946–1947 and Brobst's examination of Caroe's strategic thought concentrates on the last decade of the Raj. Moore's trilogy on the process of Britain's retreat from the subcontinent spans a large time frame, but like the other works in this vein, the archival base is restricted to the Viceroy's close circle and high offices in Whitehall. Further, with the exception of Mehra, the Frontier constitutes a part, rather than the focus, of all these studies.[12]

Pulling together the separate military, cultural, and political threads of Frontier history, this study provides a holistic approach to the region over the final three decades of British rule in the Indian subcontinent. It reintegrates the Frontier with India and India with the Frontier, and unites the history of the tribal areas with the settled districts west of the Indus. Beyond this, it examines how wider imperial concerns about Russia, Pan-Islam, and Afghanistan had a profound impact on

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[11] Stephen Alan Rittenberg's 1973 dissertation, which was published as *Ethnicity, Nationalism, and the Pakhtuns: The Independence Movement in India's North-West Frontier Province* (Durham, North Carolina, 1988), was the first major study of the Frontier nationalist movement. See Amit Kumar Gupta, *North-West Frontier Province Legislature and Freedom Struggle, 1932–1947* (New Delhi, 1976); Erland Jansen, *India, Pakistan or Pakhtunistan: The Nationalist Movements in the North-West Frontier Province, 1937–1947* (Uppsala, 1981); Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam, and Nationalism: Muslim Politics in the North-West Frontier Movement, 1937–1947* (Karachi, 1999); and Mukulika Banerjee, *The Pathan Unarmed* (Delhi, 2001).

[12] See Keith Jeffery, *The British Army and the Crisis of Empire, 1918–1922* (Manchester, 1984); Robin J. Moore, *The Crisis of Indian Unity, 1917–1940* (Oxford, 1974); Robin J. Moore, *Escape from Empire: The Attlee Government and the Indian Problem* (Oxford, 1983); Milan Hauner, *India in Axis Strategy: Germany, Japan, and Indian Nationalists in the Second World War* (Stuttgart, 1981); Peter John Brobst, *The Future of the Great Game: Sir Olaf Caroe, India's Independence, and the Defense of Asia* (Akron, Ohio, 2005); and Parshotam Mehra, *The North-West Frontier Drama, 1945–1947: A Reassessment* (New Delhi, 1998).

the residents on both sides of the Frontier's administrative border in this period. Conversely, drawing upon archival sources emanating from all levels of the administration as well as Indian nationalist archives, it demonstrates how the British experience of the Frontier influenced British imperialism in India as a whole.[13] This study is not, however, a comprehensive account of the Afghan Frontier. It serves, rather, as a case study of the final years of British imperialism in South Asia and an examination of the thoughts, perceptions, and actions of the British and, to a lesser degree, the westernized Indian elite that made up the nationalist leadership.

This book is organized into three distinct parts. In Part I, I argue that the cataclysm of the First World War and the rise of an aggressive nationalism under Gandhi engendered a deepening conservatism among many of the British in India, who re-emphasized both the immutable, unchanging nature of the "peoples" of India, which made them unfit for independence, and India's inability to defend itself without British control. These two beliefs converged in the North-West Frontier, where the supposedly inherently violent nature of the local Pathan population combined with longstanding strategic concerns about an invasion of the subcontinent through Afghanistan. The Frontier thus became a major bulwark of the imperial project in inter-war India.

In Part II, I demonstrate how these views led the British to seal off the region from the rest of India and respond to nationalist activity and tribal uprisings with a level of violence rarely witnessed in the rest of India. This state-sanctioned violence, and the fact that the British argued that the strategic vulnerability of the region made Indian independence impossible, led to the Frontier becoming a major focus of nationalist attention. Leaders such as Gandhi and Nehru argued that British policies on the Frontier, including aerial bombing, torture, shootings, and divide-and-conquer tactics, represented the true face of imperialism.

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[13] The historian of the North-West Frontier in this period is constrained by the nature of the archival sources available. Most notably, one is confronted by the problem of illiteracy within the tribal areas – leading to a dearth of archival material reflecting local views. Beyond the letters and proclamations circulated by literate religious leaders, there is little hard evidence for surmising the motivations of the tribesmen on the eve of a raid. Almost all studies of the NWFP in this era ultimately fall back on the British imperial archive. Two notable exceptions are Haroon's *Frontier of Faith* and Banerjee's *The Pathan Unarmed*, which employ oral history and vernacular writings to good effect. Both studies, however, are also firmly grounded in the British archive.

In Part III, I contend that despite the deep conservatism of the British administration, they failed to quarantine the North-West Frontier from the rest of India and were obliged to grant ever greater freedoms to the people of the region. Over the course of the late 1930s and the Second World War, this outmoded worldview about the unchanging nature of the Pathans and the constant danger posed to the North-West Frontier was challenged increasingly from within the ranks of the British administration. This change resulted not from some innate flexibility on the part of British officials, but as the product of a new, more liberal approach to the imperial project in India, influenced by wider changes sparked by the Second World War and growing awareness of the inevitability of some form of Indian independence.

Ultimately, this book does three things. Firstly, it takes a region commonly portrayed, in both the news and in the Western imagination, as an alien "land apart" and reintegrates it into its Indian and imperial contexts. Not only did the North-West Frontier have historical links with India but, as far as both the British and Indian nationalists were concerned, it was central to the conflict over the future of India between 1918 and 1947. Secondly, this study provides an in-depth exploration of the nature of conservative British imperialism in its final decades in India, examining the influential resurgence of Victorian racial theories and strategic thinking among British administrators in the inter-war years, while simultaneously emphasizing the ways in which these views, influenced by wider Indian and imperial contexts, shifted in the final decade of the British Raj. Lastly, it emphasizes how wider Indian and imperial concerns influenced British policies in the region over the first half of the twentieth century. This is significant. These policies and practices, many of which remain in place, continue to exercise a powerful legacy on the Frontier, the wider region, and by extension, the entire world.

Part I
The North-West Frontier and Post-War Imperialism

1
The North-West Frontier: Policies, Perceptions, and the Conservative Impulse in the British Raj

The East India Company's annexation of the Punjab in 1849 looms large as a pivotal moment in the creation of the Victorian British Raj. The seizure of Ranjit Singh's former kingdom brought with it the resources that would make the region India's great granary, a Muslim and Sikh population that would provide the backbone of the post-1857 Indian Army, and the administrative raw materials for the "Punjab School" of the Indian Civil Service, the epitome of British paternalism in South Asia. Beyond this, however, the accession of the Punjab to the Company meant that the British now inherited the Sikh state's loose and recent paramountcy over the ill-defined territory stretching from the east bank of the River Indus to the Khyber Pass. Eventually ranging from Chitral in the north to Waziristan and Dera Ismail Khan in the south, these Afghan borderlands with their large Pathan population would prove to be one of the abiding obsessions of the British in India. Although the issues that the British encountered on the North-West Frontier, such as indigenous unrest and raiding, Afghan intrigues, and the specter of Russian expansion, were, in the words of one author, an "imperial migraine," control of the region was also viewed as central to Britain's imperial power and prestige. The Frontier was the "anvil," in the words of the Viceroy Lord Curzon, on which the future of the British Empire was daily forged.[1]

This chapter provides an overview of the region and the creation of British perceptions and policies about the Afghan Frontier and its

[1] See Charles Miller, *Khyber: British India's North West Frontier, The Story of an Imperial Migraine* (New York, 1977); and Lord Curzon of Kedleston, *Frontiers: Delivered in the Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford, 2 November 1907, 2nd Edition* (Oxford, 1908), p. 56.

inhabitants over the course of the nineteenth century. After considering the ways in which the British came to the see the Frontier as a uniquely strategic region and the Pathans who lived there as singularly violent, religious, independent, and unchanging, the chapter provides background on the two key constituencies charged with administering, and much of the time, formulating policy on the North-West Frontier: the Indian Political Service and the leadership of the Indian Army. It contends that, as a group, these two bodies tended towards a deeply conservative and paternalistic view of the Pathans who lived in both the administered and "tribal" areas of the Frontier. Far from being mere martinets tasked with carrying out policies dictated from London, Delhi, or Simla, the administrative structures of the British Government of India meant that "the men on the spot," or those who had previously served on the Frontier, sometimes for decades, had a great deal of influence over the way in which the region and its people were perceived at the highest levels of government. Lastly, this chapter deals with the extraordinary durability of British ideologies about the Frontier that originated in the specific contexts of the nineteenth century and persisted into the inter-war period and beyond, a resiliency that was to have a profound impact on the events examined in this study.

Experience, perceptions, and policies, 1808–1919

Although the British began their administrative odyssey with the Pathans who lived between the Indus and the Khyber in 1849, the origins of their long and complicated relationship with the Afghan borderlands began 40 years earlier. The first Briton to encounter what would become the Indian Empire's North-West Frontier was the renowned "romantic" administrator, Mountstuart Elphinstone, in 1808. The entire region was then under the sway of Shah Shuja's Afghan kingdom based at Kabul and Peshawar, and Elphinstone was charged with opening relations with the soon-to-be-deposed Amir. A well-educated and erudite individual, Elphinstone thoroughly documented his time in Peshawar, a record revealed in both his private correspondence with the East India Company and in his book, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, published in 1815. Elphinstone's appraisals of the society he encountered, and the worldview they reflected, were incredibly influential and constituted the foundation of all subsequent British understandings of the area and its inhabitants.[2]

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[2] See Benjamin D. Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan* (Basingstoke, 2008), p. 14.

As the sole major work on the region in the first decades of the nineteenth century, Elphinstone's writings became the hegemonic text for Britain's colonial knowledge of the Frontier. Informed by the intellectual world of the late Scottish Enlightenment and its emphasis on the universality of the human experience, Elphinstone believed that the men he encountered in the rugged Afghan borderlands were analogous to the Highlanders of his native Scotland. Two aspects of this analogy were particularly important: Elphinstone's interpretation of Pathan social organization and his views on the Pathan "character." Drawing upon his Scottish context and, it should be noted, influenced by his indigenous informants, Elphinstone sought to categorize the society he witnessed along lines similar to the Highland clans, organizing the various groupings into tribes and subtribes. Elphinstone's view of the Pathan character was also in line with his Highland analogy. He wrote that "their vices are revenge, envy, avarice, rapacity and obstinacy; on the other hand, they are fond of liberty, faithful to their friends, kind to their dependents, hospitable, brave, hardy, frugal, laborious, and prudent."[3]

Pathan society, which the British initially sought to define and later hoped to control, varied greatly, and the forms it took were immensely different over geography and time. The Pathan culture in the Vale of Peshawar was different from that in the passes of the Hindu-Kush or the deserts of southern Afghanistan. Furthermore, as recent anthropological scholarship has emphasized, cultural norms and practices are anything but stagnant, waning and waxing over time.[4] Elphinstone's appraisal was deeply flawed, mistaking fluidity for permanence and reducing the people of the region to a single essential "character." Yet, it also reflected some level of the reality as he saw it. As anthropologist Charles Lindholm notes about the impulse to disregard all British era ethnography: "Not only would this position eliminate as ideologically corrupt some of our most important sources on the Pathans, it also has a more insidious significance. Such a viewpoint does not give any credit

[3] Mountstuart Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul and its Dependencies in Persia, Tartary, and India*, Vol. 1 (London, 1819), p. 400.

[4] See Magnus Marsden and Benjamin D. Hopkins, *Fragments of the Afghan Frontier*, (New York, 2011). For the creation of Britain's "colonial knowledge" regime, see Christopher Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780–1870* (Cambridge, 1996).

to Pathan culture as an autonomous structure, which is perfectly capable of impressing itself upon the observer."[5]

Based on Elphinstone's account, but reified and corroborated by subsequent travelers, soldiers, and administrators, the British came to understand the structure of Pathan society in the Frontier region as one that fell into the category of "segmentary lineage," divided into a hierarchy of tribes (*tarbar*), clans (*khels*), sections (*plarina*), and families. These groups defined themselves through their patrilineal descent from a mythical common male ancestor. Within these groupings, Pathan society in the Afghan borderlands was and is notable in that it is generally acephalous, with no distinct internal hierarchy or hereditary leadership.[6] Elphinstone was aware that unlike the Scottish clans with their loyalty to large landowning families, the Pathan tribes were governed by "Pashtunwali," a tribal code based on egalitarianism and independence.[7] Certain families possess more prestige than others, but in many ways it is an "untrammeled democracy," with each man considering himself equal, if not superior, to his neighbor.[8] In this essentially egalitarian society, the headmen or *maliks*, who fulfill the role of elder rather than chief of each tribe, often enjoy their position by dint of their heredity, but just as often a headman possesses his rank as a result of personal bravery, wisdom, or strength. Ultimately, the entire social structure is premised on "equality, individualism, and fierce competition." Lastly, since Islam, rather than a political structure, stands as a primary tie within Pathan tribal society, religious leadership often comes to the fore in times of stress or war.[9]

When Elphinstone wrote about the Pathan's "fondness for liberty" in the early nineteenth century, he identified this trait as a positive attribute. Sir Olaf Caroe, one of the premier Frontier officers of the twentieth century, noted that Elphinstone viewed the Pathans not through the

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[5] Charles Lindholm, "Images of the Pathan: The Usefulness of Colonial Ethnography," in Charles Lindholm, *Frontier Perspectives: Essays in Comparative Anthropology* (Karachi, 1996), pp. 3–16.
[6] This was not always the case. The chief example from the twentieth century is the Wali of Swat, a local leader who managed to bring the entire Swat valley in the northern region of the North-West Frontier under his rule in the 1920s.
[7] Hopkins, *The Making*, p. 30.
[8] James W. Spain, *The Way of the Pathans*, 2nd Edition (Karachi, 1972), p. 25.
[9] See Lindholm, "Images of the Pathan," pp. 12–13; and Barth, *Political Leadership*, Chapter 2. For an in-depth analysis of the role of religious leadership in the tribal areas and the ways in which British administrative practices helped create it, see Sana Haroon's recent *Frontier of Faith: Islam in the Indo-Afghan Borderland* (New York, 2006).

Image 1 The Khyber Pass, early 1930s

eyes of a would-be-conqueror but as someone looking for possible allies in the subcontinent. Caroe noted that Elphinstone's views were shaped by the fact that he met the Pathans "before they had become embittered by a long succession of expeditions and war, and he felt intuitively that there was a bond to be forged between 'them' and 'us.'"[10] Later, however, the British would view this "predilection for independence" in an increasingly negative context, joining it to the vices of "revenge, envy, avarice, rapacity and obstinacy" that Elphinstone had also identified.[11]

The "long succession of wars" west of the Indus began with the First Anglo-Afghan War of 1839–1842. This conflict constituted one of the greatest debacles and defeats in British imperial history. The war emanated from British fears of Russian expansion in Central Asia, or, as Kipling dubbed it, the "Great Game." Convinced that "if we do not stop Russia on the Danube, we shall have to stop her on the Indus," the British invaded Afghanistan with the goal of installing a pliant Amir on the throne in Kabul.[12] The incumbent ruler, Dost Mohammad, in fact preferred an alliance with Britain to one with Russia, but he also wanted to regain his winter capital of Peshawar, which the powerful

[10] Sir Olaf Caroe, *The Pathans, 550B.C.–A.D.1957* (London, 1958), p. 278.
[11] Edward Oliver, *Across the Border: Or Pathan and Biloch* (London, 1890), p. 224.
[12] Lord John Russell quoted in Miller, *Khyber*, p. 20.

ruler of the Punjab, Ranjit Singh, had seized in 1818. Aware of Dost Mohammad's claim and influenced by faulty intelligence, the East India Company, which had an alliance with Ranjit Singh, concluded that the Afghan ruler was an enemy who should be overthrown. The initial conflict was brief, and the British soon occupied the Afghan capital. The victory, however, was short-lived, and after surviving a long siege by Akbar Khan, the son of Dost Mohammad, the British were obliged to retire towards Jalalabad and thence to India. In the process of this retreat, carried out in the middle of the winter and led by incompetent officers, the British and their camp followers were massacred by the tribesmen who guarded the narrow mountain passes. Of a combined 16,000 soldiers and followers, only one Englishman, William Brydon, an assistant surgeon, made it to Jalalabad in a scene immortalized in Elizabeth Butler's painting.[13]

This utter disaster served to confirm the British view that the Pathans were, to put it mildly, fond of their liberty. It also sowed the belief that the Pathans, as a race, were bloodthirsty and duplicitous. The vanquished Army of the Indus, after all, was exterminated in spite of the Akbar Khan's promise of safe conduct. Ignoring the realities of Pathan power structures, the British chose to emphasize Pathan perfidy. From this point onward the British concluded that the people of the Afghan borderlands were "cruel" and "treacherous."[14]

With the annexation of the Punjab in 1849, the East India Company inherited the ill-defined Pathan territories seized by Ranjit Singh 30 years earlier. Some of these Pathans lived in areas that had been under clear Sikh rule and were therefore transferred to regular British administration. These would become the "settled districts" of Hazara, Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, and Dera Ismail Khan. Other areas, such as Buner, Dir, Swat, Malakand, Bajaur, Khyber, the Tirah, Kurram, and Waziristan, with their Pathan tribal populations of Mohmands, Afridis, Orakzai, Wazirs, and Mahsuds, constituted a maze of mountains and valleys over which Lahore had only exerted nominal control. For the first two decades the British attempted to manage the region through

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[13] See Miller, *Khyber*, Chapters 1 through 7. Also see Sir John Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan*, 3 vols. (London, 1858); James Norris, *The First Afghan War, 1838–1842* (Cambridge, 1967); and John W. Waller, *Beyond the Khyber Pass: The Road to Disaster in the First Afghan War* (Austin, Texas, 1990). For the retreat from Kabul see Patrick Macrory, *Signal Catastrophe: The Story of a Disastrous Retreat from Kabul, 1842* (London, 1966).

[14] Arnold Keppel, *Gun Running and the Indian North-West Frontier* (London, 1911), p. 5.

a mixture of indirect rule through local chieftains and – aware of the Pathan dislike for central control – left the hills untaxed and unadministered.[15] Despite this relatively light hand, the British were nevertheless confronted by Pathan tribesmen in the mountains who formed themselves into *lashkars* (war parties) and regularly "plundered and burnt our villages and [slew] our subjects … fired upon our own troops and even killed our officers in our territory." Moreover, they sheltered outlaws and kidnapped British subjects.[16] These issues were the nucleus of the local dimension of the "problem" of the North-West Frontier.

By the 1880s, the British had honed their tools of coercion on the Frontier. These included fines, blockades, and expeditions. The abiding philosophy was that "when dealing with the savage tribes the best plan is, to fight as rarely as possible; and when you do fight, to hit them as hard as you can."[17] This approach grew out of a British perception of the Pathan character that had reached full maturity by the close of the nineteenth century. In 1885, the Army's official history of the campaigns against the tribes summed it up best:

> For centuries he has been, on our frontier as least, subject to no man. He leads a wild, free, active life in the rugged fastness of his mountains; and there is an air of masculine independence about him which is refreshing in a country like India. He is a bigot of the most fanatical type, exceedingly proud, and extraordinarily superstitious.[18]

Yet, although the British believed the Pathans to be "treacherous, superstitious, and priest-ridden," there was a concurrent belief that when an Englishman or Scot met a Pathan he "met a man like himself," a sentiment echoed by Kipling in his "Ballad of East and West."[19] In a post-1857

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[15] For the early period of British tribal management in Waziristan see Hugh Beattie, *Imperial Frontier: Tribe and State in Waziristan* (Richmond, 2002).

[16] Report on Relations with the Frontier Tribes by Richard Temple, Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of the Punjab, 1855, quoted in William Paget and Alexander Mason, *Record of Expeditions Against the Tribes of the North-West Frontier* (Calcutta, 1885), pp. 10–11.

[17] Cuthbert Collin Davies, *The Problem of the North-West Frontier 1890–1908: With a Survey of Policy since 1849* (Cambridge, 1932), p. 26.

[18] Paget, *Record of Expeditions*, p. 8.

[19] General Staff Memorandum on North-West Frontier Policy, 1 November 1920, India Office Records (IOR) L PO 4/4; Rudyard Kipling, "The Ballad of East and West" in *Ballads and Barrack Room Ballads* (New York, 1899), pp. 3–11; and Lewis D. Wurgaft, *The Imperial Imagination: Magic and Myth in Kipling's India* (Middletown, Connecticut, 1983).

India in which the British insisted on dividing their subjects into immutable masculine and effeminate "races," the Pathan ranked among the manliest. Like the Highlanders and, in India, the Sikhs and the Gurkhas, the Pathan was a "martial race." This was, in a different guise, a continuation of Elphinstone's own Scottish Highlander analogy.[20] For, despite his "flaws," the Pathan was, according to the British, a man who fought for his independence and took orders from no one. Whereas the Indian plains were a place of "effeminate indolence," the Frontier offered a manly existence of adventure and danger for the British against a strong and unrelenting foe.[21]

This contradictory view of the Pathan character is a prime example of Thomas Metcalf's conflicting ideologies of "sameness" and "difference" in British imperial thought in India.[22] It also led the British to pursue a policy that dealt with the Pathans as both "savages" and "men." Unlike the "babus" and Hindu lawyers of the nascent Indian National Congress, the men of the Frontier were not the type who yearned to take a civil service examination or serve on a municipal water council. Instead, the Pathan was a man of action who lived and died by the sword. Violence was what the Pathan understood. The British responded to this perception by subjecting the Pathans to the draconian Frontier Crimes Regulation and using a massive amount of force, in the form of blockades, military columns, or later, aerial bombardment, when dealing with tribal unrest. The fact that British racial views on the Pathans remained essentially static beyond the First World War and even up and into the Second World War is borne out in a number of official documents, such as the Indian General Staff's Memorandum on North-West Frontier Policy from 1920, which uses the exact words to describe the Pathan mentality as Major-General William Paget's description in 1884.[23] Former Indian Civil Service (ICS) officer and author Philip Mason put it best in his 1954 magnum opus on the ICS,

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[20] See, for example, Oliver, *Across the Border*, p. 224; and Note by Colonel C. H. Hasell (Chief Engineer, Waziristan) to the Indian Statutory Commission, 4 April 1928, Simon Papers IOR F77/47.

[21] The best work on the Raj's penchant for gendering its Indian subjects into "effeminate" and "masculine" groupings is found in Mrinalini Sinha's *Colonial Masculinity: The "Manly Englishman" and The "Effeminate Bengali" in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester, 1995). For martial race theory, see e.g., Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857–1914* (Manchester, 2004).

[22] See Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge, 1994).

[23] See Paget, *Record of Expeditions*, p. 10.

Image 2 An Afridi tribesman

The Guardians: "Another constant was the Frontier. Here the tribes were still treated like tigers in a national park. They could kill what deer they liked in the park; they risked a bullet if they came outside and took the village cattle. That had been the position in 1900 and it was still a fair description in 1947."[24]

These perceptions of the Pathan character contributed to the debate over the wider policy on the Frontier. Beginning in the 1870s, the Government of India, Indian Army, and local Punjab administration were divided between two separate approaches: the "close border" school, and those who advocated a "forward policy." One prominent Frontier officer observed in the 1920s that "by temperament or by profession a man belongs to the Forward or Backward School just as the

[24] Philip Mason, *The Guardians* (London, 1954), p. 291.

man in the street may adopt a University on Boat Race Day."[25] There were local and international aspects to this debate. The international facet centered on whether British India should stop at the Indus (close border) or a "scientific" line from Kabul to Kandahar (forward).[26] The local debate focused on methods of controlling the trans-border tribes. In the late nineteenth century the eastern boundaries of Afghanistan remained un-demarcated and the Amir's writ failed to extend among the Pathan tribes residing in the mountains to the west of settled British territory. This left a large swathe of tribal territory without the law. The close borderites maintained that the independent nature of the Pathans precluded any annexation of this region. It should be left entirely alone – essentially sealed off from the plains below. The forward school, however, maintained that the Pathans of the tribal territory, while vigorously independent, understood strength, and could, with the right combination of carrots and sticks, be convinced of the virtue of British rule. Heavily influenced by Colonel Robert Sandeman's administrative work in neighboring Baluchistan, this group argued that the tribal areas beyond the administrative border should be taken slowly under British control and "civilized."[27]

In the 1890s, the Government of India, more by chance than by design, applied the forward policy in the tribal areas. Often a column, sent to burn down the villages of a raiding tribal section, would stay

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[25] Memorandum by Sir John Maffey: Unsolicited Views on an Unsolved Problem, 2 August 1922, Hailey Papers, IOR E220/3c.

[26] The most extreme example of the international "forward policy" was found in Lord Lytton's policy towards Afghanistan when he was Viceroy in the 1870s. Lytton, influenced by men such as Sir Frederick Roberts and egged on by Disraeli, was a staunch believer in the Russian menace and insisted on placing a diplomatic mission in Kabul to monitor the Afghans. When this mission was massacred in 1878, General Roberts was dispatched to Afghanistan and the second Anglo-Afghan War commenced. Britain eventually won, and Afghan foreign policy came under nominal British control. See Charles Metcalfe MacGregor, *The Second Afghan War, 1878–1880: Official Account* (London, 1908); and Brian Robson, *The Road to Kabul: The Second Afghan War, 1878–1881* (London, 1986).

[27] Sandeman (1835–1892), while serving as Resident in Baluchistan during the 1870s, introduced a policy of tribal "control" based on allowances, the use of tribal chiefs to enforce control and the use of force when necessary. See Henry Thornton, *Colonel Sir Robert Sandeman: His Life and Work on Our Indian Frontier, A Memoir, with Selections from His Correspondence and Official Writings* (London, 1895). Also see Christian Tripodi, "'Good for One but Not the Other': The 'Sandeman System' of Pacification as Applied to Baluchistan and the North-West Frontier, 1877–1947," in *The Journal of Military History*, 73, 3 (2009), pp. 767–802; and Marsden and Hopkins, *Fragments*, Chapter 2.

on for several months. This gradually turned into a full-scale policy of occupation and pacification up and down the Frontier.[28] It appears that this thrust into the tribal belt led to a growth in unrest. Convinced that this increase in violence was sponsored by the Afghan Amir, the Indian Foreign Secretary, Sir Henry Durand, traveled to Kabul to finalize, once and for all, the British and Afghan spheres of influence in 1893. The Amir agreed and the boundary, known as the Durand Line, was demarcated between 1894 and 1896. It was an absurd attempt to turn an open frontier into a border.[29] The Line followed watersheds and paid little attention to the fact that it was splitting tribes, such as the Mohmands, in two. Nor did the Durand Line possess any strategic value, as it created a number of salients that would prove costly in the event of another Afghan War. Over both the short- and the long-term, the Durand Line created more problems than it solved and did nothing to stem the level of tribal unrest in what was now British tribal territory. When the Frontier exploded in 1897, the British were faced with revolts from Chitral in the north to Waziristan in the south.[30] The revolts were eventually put down, but many now argued that the forward policy of the last decade had needlessly antagonized the tribes. The new Viceroy, Lord Curzon, characteristically decided that a radical approach should be taken to the problem of the Frontier.[31]

Curzon was a passionate "Great Gamer" and, as in most realms, he had strong ideas on what needed to be done to solve the problem. The Viceroy believed that the Frontier was so vital to India that it could no longer be administered by a provincial government or a provincial

[28] Davies, *The Problem of the North-West Frontier*, Chapter 5.

[29] As Matthew Edney argues in his *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1763–1843* (Chicago, 1997), mapping and boundary building was an essential tool of imperial control. Moreover, it created a "precise imperial space, a rational space within which a systematic archive of knowledge about Indian landscapes and people might be constructed," p. 319. For the Frontier/Afghanistan, see Simanti Dutta, *Imperial Mappings in Savage Spaces: Baluchistan and British India* (Delhi, 2003); and Marsden and Hopkins, *Fragments*, Chapter 1.

[30] See Michael Barthorp, *The Frontier Ablaze: The North-West Frontier Rising, 1897–1898* (London, 1996).

[31] On the life and legacy of Curzon, see e.g., David Gilmour, *Curzon: Imperial Statesman* (New York, 2003); Lawrence John Lumley Dundas, the Earl of Ronaldshay, *The Life of Lord Curzon: Being the Authorized Biography of George Nathaniel, Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, KG*, 3 Vols. (New York, 1928); and David Dilks, *Curzon in India*, vol. 1: *Achievement* and *Curzon in India*, vol. 2: *Frustration* (London, 1969).

administrative cadre. He therefore severed the Frontier districts from the Punjab. Thus, the "settled" districts of Hazara, Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, and Dera Ismail Khan were split off from the Punjab to form the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) in 1901. The tribal tracts adjacent to the settled districts were included in the NWFP and either made into tribal agencies, which included Malakand, Khyber, Kurram, and North (Tochi) and South (Wana) Waziristan, or recognized as independent tribal territory, such as the Tirah and Mohmand country. Whether organized as an agency or an independent territory, all these areas came under the purview of a Political Agent. The Deputy Commissioner of Peshawar acted as Political Agent for the Mohmand country, and the Deputy Commissioner for Kohat served as Political Agent for a number of independent tribes, such as the Samana Orakzais, but the specific Political Agent of particular tribal agencies, with the exception of Malakand, had no administrative duties.[32] Rather, he served as the Government's agent to the tribes, conducting relations between the independent tribes and the Government of British India. This arrangement repudiated the local dimension of the forward school, since it explicitly recognized the tribes as independent and also involved the withdrawal of all regular Army units from the tribal belt. In their place, tribal levies called *khassadars* and irregular scout units were instituted to enforce some semblance of the King's peace. In a nod to past policy, however, Curzon maintained the allowance system by which tribal *jirgas* (councils) dispersed funds among their membership in exchange for certain assurances against raiding and kidnapping. This "modified close border" policy remained in place until 1919.

The Frontier administration and the Indian Political Service

With Curzon's creation of the new province, ultimate control of the NWFP was placed in the hands of the Viceroy, but the day-to-day administration was carried out by a Chief Commissioner, a member of the Indian Political Service who reported to the Foreign Secretary to the Government of India.[33] Within the Government of India, the

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[32] The Political Agent, Malakand, was also responsible for the northern Pathan states of Chitral, Dir, and Swat, which were also incorporated into the NWFP.

[33] In 1933, the position of Chief Commissioner was promoted to that of Governor. In his capacity as agent to the Governor-General in the North-West Frontier, he continued to report to the Foreign Secretary in Delhi. Following the establishment of ministerial responsibility over the settled districts in 1937, however, the Governor reported to the Viceroy when it came to the administered districts and

Foreign Secretary was unique in that he reported directly to the Viceroy, whereas the other secretaries (Home, Law, and Finance) reported to a member of the Viceroy's Council. The Foreign Secretary presided over the Foreign and Political Department and was in charge of relations with the princely states, the Frontier tribes, and those territories that carried on direct relations with the Government of India, such as Tibet and the Persian Gulf States. After 1914, the portfolio was divided and a separate "political secretary" was given charge of the princely states.[34] From then until the end of British rule, the position of Foreign Secretary was always filled by a member of the Frontier cadre. This close proximity of career Frontier officers to the Viceroy meant that throughout the 1920s and 1930s Frontier issues and problems always enjoyed a pride of place at the center of Government.[35]

On the local level, the apex of the Frontier administration included the Chief Commissioner, who also acted as Agent to the Governor-General in relations with the tribes, his Chief Secretary, and the Revenue Commissioner. Beneath the Chief Commissioner each settled district was headed by a Deputy Commissioner (DC), who often also served as Political Agent (PA) for the adjoining independent tribes. The independent tribal agencies, such as Kurram, possessed PAs whose sole responsibility was that agency. The preeminent DC was the head of the populous Peshawar District. He also served as PA to the Mohmand tribe and had two Assistant Commissioners (ACs) who administered the Peshawar subdivisions of Mardan and Charsadda. The other principal administrator in the NWFP was the Resident in Waziristan, who had nominal control over the DCs for Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan, and the PAs for North and South Waziristan.

The Frontier administration was staffed by members of the elite Indian Political Service. Controlled by the Foreign and Political Department, the Political Service was a small cadre of 120 to 170 officers, two-thirds

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to the Foreign Secretary, now styled "External Affairs" Secretary, when it came to tribal matters.

[34] See William Murray Hogben, "The Foreign and Political Department of the Government of India, 1876–1919: A Study in Imperial Careers and Attitudes" (University of Toronto Dissertation, 1973), p. vi.

[35] The Foreign Secretaries of the Government of India from 1914 to 1946, were as follows: Sir Alfred Hamilton Grant, 1914–1919; Sir Henry Dobbs, 1919–1922; Sir Denys Bray, 1922–1928; Sir Evelyn Howell, 1928–1932; Sir Aubrey Metcalfe, 1932–1939; and Sir Olaf Caroe, 1939–1946. Several of the Foreign Secretaries in this period, notably Bray, Howell, and Caroe, also exercised a great deal of influence through the sheer weight of their personalities.

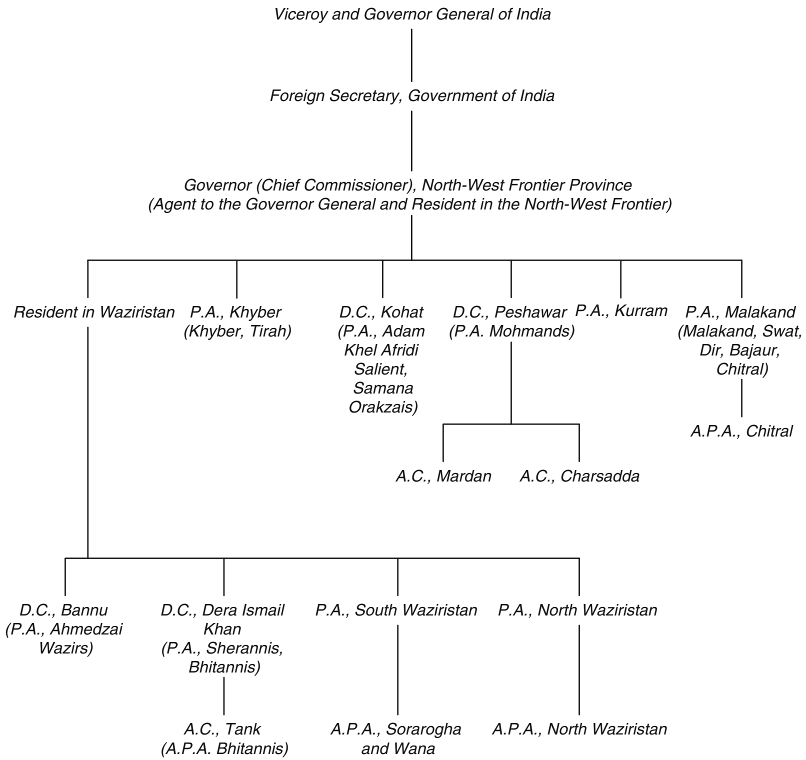

Figure 1 Administrative Structure, North-West Frontier Province

of whom were seconded from the Indian Army, with the remainder from the ICS. They served in the Princely States, the Frontier (both NWFP and Baluchistan), and in the Raj's overseas diplomatic posts throughout the Middle East and Asia. The "Politicals," as they were known, essentially acted as the agents of the Britain's indirect rule throughout India and the Middle East.[36] In the Princely States and the Persian Gulf, the Political officer, usually styled as "Resident," stood as the power behind the

[36] On the influential role of the Indian Political Service in the modern Middle East, see James Onley, *The Arabian Frontier of the British Raj: Merchants, Rulers, and the British in the Nineteenth-Century Gulf* (Oxford, 2007); Robert J. Blyth, *The Empire of the Raj: India, Eastern Africa and the Middle East, 1858–1947* (Basingstoke,

throne, "advising" his nominally independent charges. In posts situated outside of India, such as Afghanistan or Tibet, the Political Service functioned in a more traditional diplomatic manner, representing Britain and India's interests to the courts of the Amir and the Dalai Lama.[37]

The settled districts of the NWFP were the only area where Politicals assumed responsibilities similar to those of regular members of the ICS, collecting revenue and administering justice. In the rest of the NWFP and Baluchistan, however, Politicals carried out the daily practice of indirect rule. Here they were charged with dispensing allowances, keeping tribal raiding and other incursions into British India to a minimum, and tamping down any signs of unrest through negotiations with the *jirga*, a tribal council that served as both jury and parliament.

There were no separate States or Frontier cadres within the Political Service. Over the course of a 20-to-30-year career, a Political might serve on the Frontier, in several Princely States, in a Persian Gulf Emirate, at the central secretariat in Delhi or Simla, and in the British Indian legation in Kabul. Yet it is still possible to speak of a "Frontier cadre." Different types of men performed better in different posts and thus tended to stay in one area of the Political Service. Expertise and mentality also encouraged retention in a specific branch of the Political Service. As the Indian Foreign Secretary, Sir Harcourt Butler, wrote in 1907: "We want lean and keen men on the Frontier, and fat and good natured men in the States."[38] Those Politicals who began their careers on the Frontier, learning Pashto and coming to grips with Pathan culture, usually remained there for most of their professional life. There

2003); and Toby Dodge's *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied* (New York, 2003).

[37] There is no single work on the history of the British Indian legation to Kabul. Leon B. Poullada's *Reform and Rebellion in Afghanistan, 1919–1929: King Amanullah's Failure to Modernize a Tribal Society* (Ithaca, 1973), provides a good introduction, however. See also Sir Kerr Fraser-Tytler's (British minister in Kabul from 1936–1947), *Afghanistan: A Study of Political Developments in Central and Southern Asia* (Oxford, 1967). There are several memoirs by the small cadre that manned the diplomatic and consular stations in Tibet and Sikkim, including Sir Charles Bell's *Tibet: Past & Present* (Oxford, 1924); and Basil Gould's *The Jewel in the Lotus: Recollections of an Indian Political* (London, 1957). The Tibet cadre of the Political Service has also been blessed with an outstanding monograph which should serve as a model for any study of its type, Alex McKay's *Tibet and the British Raj: The Frontier Cadre, 1904–1947* (London, 1997).

[38] Quoted in Sir Terence Creagh-Coen, *The Indian Political Service: A Study in Indirect Rule* (London, 1971), p. 37.

were, however, a finite number of high-ranking positions in both the NWFP and Baluchistan. Thus, a "high-flyer" in the Frontier service would often serve as Resident in one of the "first class" Princely States such as Kashmir or Mysore. An alternate path was to be "taken into" the Government of India, as a deputy Foreign Secretary, and, eventually, Foreign Secretary.

The Political Service was, therefore, an essential part of the British Raj's vaunted steel frame. Perhaps because its officers spent their careers involved with the most "exotic" aspects of British rule, like the States, the Frontier, or Tibet, memoirs and policy prescriptions penned by Politicals are legion, yet academic studies of this group have been rare.[39] In order to understand the character of the Political Service and its relationship to the nature of British imperialism in South Asia in its closing decades, two fraught and erroneous preconceptions must be abandoned: that these administrators possessed some sort of imperial omnicompetence that allowed them to "get the Frontier right," and the commonly held view that late British imperial administrators were merely martinets too encumbered by their cultural context to comprehend indigenous societies. An investigation into the interplay of ideology with personality and events demonstrates the centrality and importance of the solidly conservative, and even reactionary, nature of the men of the Indian Political Service in the twentieth century.

This conservatism grew out of the way in which the service was recruited and in the environment in which its members worked. Long

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[39] See W. Murray Hogben's dissertation and two articles "An Imperial Dilemma: The Reluctant Indianization of the Indian Political Service," in *Modern Asian Studies*, 15, 4 (1981), pp. 751–769, and "British Civil-Military Relations on the North-West Frontier of India," in Adrian Preston and Peter Dennis, (eds), *Swords and Covenants* (London, 1976), pp. 123–146. Christian Tripodi's recent study of the Political Service on the Frontier, *Edge of Empire: The British Political Officer and the Tribal Administration on the North-West Frontier, 1877–1947* (Farnham, 2011), chronicles the cadre from the Victorian period to independence. Tripodi is particularly strong on the composition and background of the cadre. Ian Copland's "The Other Guardians: Ideology and Performance in the Indian Political Service," in Robin Jeffrey (ed.), *People, Princes, and Paramount Power* (Delhi, 1978); and *The Princes of India in the Endgame of Empire, 1917–1947* (Cambridge, 1997) present a rather damning critique of the Politicals who served in the Princely States. Apart from these, there are Creagh-Coen's *The Indian Political Service* and Charles Chenevix Trench's *Viceroy's Agent* (London, 1987). Both Creagh-Coen and Chevenix Trench were former Political officers. Creagh-Coen is useful in that it offers all the basic material needed to understand the organization and structure of the service, whereas Chevenix Trench offers a very well written and entertaining narrative by former Politicals.

after the ICS began recruiting by competitive examination, the Political Service still operated on the basis of nomination. This often meant that, on the Frontier in particular, father was succeeded by son, who often brought with him his father's views and prejudices. As Christian Tripodi and others have pointed out, the last British Governor of the NWFP, Sir George Cunningham, was a great nephew of Robert Sandeman, and his schoolmaster in Scotland was father of another governor of NWFP, Sir Robert Lockhart.[40] Family ties – many of them Scottish – stretched throughout the Frontier cadre. The classic example of this was found in the Bruce family, where Lieutenant-Colonel Richard Bruce, and his son, Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Bruce, not only both worked in Waziristan but also kept up an almost pathological insistence on the need to extend Sandeman's Baluchistan system of control via Government-appointed headmen (*maliks*) to Waziristan from the early 1890s up until the Second World War.[41]

The nomination process also contributed to a certain continuity of thought and type. There was no recruitment process, and nomination, which was only open to unmarried men (with at least 18 months' experience if ICS and under the age of 26 if military) who undertook to refrain from marriage until they were 28, was usually made by high-level officers or officials. There was an application form and applicants were expected to pass an exam in a useful language for the Political Service, ranging from Pashtu to "Higher Standard Arabic." Thereafter, the nominee would be put through a series of interviews, often with the Viceroy himself. As one Army nominee recalled: "I was put through the hoops by a number of officers of the Foreign and Political Department at the end of which time I was invited to lunch with the Viceroy, who, as Crown representative, wished to approve the choice of all candidates … it was a fairly alarming experience for a young subaltern, but [the Viceroy] Willingdon was charming and quickly put me at ease."[42] From there "you were accepted or rejected with no reason given."[43] If

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[40] Tripodi, *Edge of Empire*, p. 30, Norval Mitchell, *Sir George Cunningham: A Memoir* (Edinburgh, 1968), p. 15.

[41] See, for example, Richard I. Bruce, CIE, *The Forward Policy and Its Results or Thirty-Five Years' Work Amongst the Tribes on Our North-Western Frontier of India* (London, 1900); and Lieutenant-Colonel Charles E. Bruce, *Waziristan, 1936–1937: The Problems of the North-West Frontiers of India and Their Solutions* (Aldershot, 1938).

[42] Unpublished Richard Saker Memoirs, IOR MSS EUR PHOTO EUR 432.

[43] G. Leslie Mallam and Diana Day, *A Pair of Chaplis and a Cassock* (London, 1978), p. 24, Mallam Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, Cambridge University (CSAS).

accepted, the young Political would undergo three years' probation in which the candidate was evaluated for temperament, work ethic, and, in particular, language skills. The probationary period was followed with a series of written examinations. Only after all of these steps had been completed successfully was a candidate accepted as a permanent member of the Indian Political Service.[44] From the outside, the Politicals – especially those whose careers were dominated by service in the Princely States – were often viewed as somehow second-rate to the regular ICS or normal military service. The Viceroy Lord Wavell quipped in the 1940s: "Isn't that the Service staffed with civilians [ICS] who don't want to work and soldiers who don't want to fight?"[45] Nevertheless, the men within the Indian Political Service – and those who spent their careers on the Frontier in particular – saw the numerous steps in the admittance process as a validation of their elite status. Internally, they saw themselves as a cut above the rest, a belief that extended not only to the regular ICS and Army, but to their indigenous charges as well.

The environment in which Politicals worked also contributed to their overall conservatism. The initial Frontier cadre that came into existence in 1901 was either seconded Army officers or veterans of the ICS in the Punjab. The Punjab school of administration, created by the staunch nineteenth-century evangelicals Herbert Edwardes, John Nicholson, and the Lawrence brothers, was notorious for being the most conservative and paternalistic of the provincial cadres. Inherent in the Punjab tradition was the belief that the district officer should be the *ma-bap* (mother-father) to his people. The legacy of the Punjab service continued well into the twentieth century, and was reinforced by the fact that a number of the prominent ICS Politicals, such as George Cunningham, Olaf Caroe, and Evelyn Howell, began their Indian service doing district work in the Punjab.

Moreover, unlike regular ICS officers in the provinces of British India who, beginning with the Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909 and gathering pace thereafter, had to deal with a changing and increasingly democratic India, the Political Service worked in an almost entirely different milieu. Political officers served either in the tribal belt of the North-West Frontier and Baluchistan where they assisted in the maintenance of a rough, and theoretically indigenous tribal system, or in the Princely States which were, by and large, entirely autocratic, or in

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[44] For a fuller account see Tripodi, *Edge of Empire*, pp. 27–32.

[45] See Copland, "The Other Guardians;" and Hogben, "British Civil-Military Relations," p. 140.

postings outside of India where the governments were, by definition, indigenous, such as Afghanistan or Tibet. Crucially, as practitioners of indirect rule, they were naturally inclined to view Indian traditions as immutable. They were there to preserve and protect rather than reform the cultures they encountered. Even when posted to the administered areas of the NWFP, Politicals dealt with few democratic structures until the mid-1930s and spent a large portion of their time overseeing the "proper" functioning of traditional *jirgas* and *riwaj*, or tribal customary law.

Finally, these tendencies were reinforced by the fact that two-thirds of the Political Service was drawn from the Indian Army. The officer corps of the Indian Army had always been traditionalist and remained one of the most resolutely conservative groups within the British imperial firmament throughout the inter-war period. The strong Army presence in the Political Service guaranteed that it would be less accommodating of political change than its sister service, the ICS.[46] This was also borne out in the question of "Indianization" in the twentieth century. Though partly due to the nominating process, the low number of indigenous Indians among the Politicals was also attached to prevailing attitudes within the service. The high number of military officers in the Political Service meant that "martial race" theory carried considerable influence. On the Frontier in particular, the British believed that a Hindu from the plains lacked the requisite masculinity to deal with the "virile" Pathan tribesmen, a sentiment summed up in Kipling's "Head of the District" in which Pathan tribesmen go on a rampage after learning that an "infidel" – and cowardly – Bengali Indian Civil Servant has been sent to administer them. At the end of the story, Tallantire, the British officer who has pacified the situation, says to the local Pathan *malik*: "'Get

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[46] In the immediate aftermath of the First World War, Gandhi's non-cooperation campaign and the introduction of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms led to a number of resignations from the ICS. Thereafter both recruitment and retention picked up again and stabilized for the remainder of the inter-war period. For the ICS in this period, see Clive Dewey, *Anglo-Indian Attitudes: The Mind of the Indian Civil Service* (London, 1993); Roland Hunt and John Harrison, *The District Officer in India, 1930–1947* (London, 1980); David C. Potter, *India's Political Administrators, 1919–1983* (Oxford, 1986); Ann Ewing, "The Indian Civil Service, 1919–1924: Service Discontent and the Response in London and Delhi," in *Modern Asian Studies*, 18, 1 (1984), pp. 33–53; H. M. L. Alexander, "Discarding the 'Steel Frame': Changing Images Among Indian Civil Servants in the Early Twentieth Century," in *South Asia*, 5, 2 (1982), pp. 1–12; and T. H. Beaglehole, "From Rulers to Servants: The I.C.S. and the British Demission of Power in India," in *Modern Asian Studies*, 11, 2 (1977), pp. 237–255.

hence to the hills – go, and wait there starving, till it shall please the Government to call thy people out for punishment – children and fools that ye be! Rest assured that the Government will send you a man!' 'Aye,' returned Khoda Dad Khan, 'for we also be men.' As he looked Tallantire in the eyes, he added, 'And by God, Sahib, may thou be that man!'"[47] "Natives," it was argued, lacked the all-important prestige of the European. Views like this guaranteed that, unlike the ICS, which was over 50% Indian in 1947, the Political Service remained overwhelmingly European. At independence, the Political Service contained 124 officers. Of these, only 17 were Indian.[48]

The Army in India, the Frontier, and interwar imperialism

The conservative nature of the Political Service in the inter-war period was reinforced by the strong military presence on the Frontier and the strategic imperatives that the area represented for the leadership of the Army in India. Despite numerous other threats to the survival of the Raj, many British officials and officers continued to deem the Frontier the greatest peril. Accordingly, the military maintained intimate ties with the region. Tellingly, throughout the inter-war years, well over half the Army in India was stationed on the North-West Frontier. From the end of the First World War up until the first year of the Second World War, the plans for the defence of India continued to focus almost exclusively on supposed threats to the North-West Frontier, and tribal warfare or foreign invasion remained the Indian Army's primary responsibility. The police, rather than the Army, dealt with the vast majority of internal "disturbances" in India during the 1920s and 1930s. The Army could be called to provide "aid to civil," but its main preoccupation was the North-West Frontier, which, as numerous official and unofficial reports, articles, books, lectures, and pamphlets emphasized, remained the most vital land frontier in the Empire.[49] Moreover, Frontier defence provided the British with a rationale for maintaining a massive military establishment in India. In the early 1920s, defence formed a substantial

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[47] Rudyard Kipling, *Life's Handicap: Being Stories of Mine Own People* (London, 1919), pp. 187–214.
[48] Creagh-Coen, *The Indian Political Service*, p. 4.
[49] See, e.g., Stephen P. Cohen, *The Indian Army: Its Contribution to the Development of a Nation* (New Delhi, 1991); Anirudh Deshpande, *British Military Policy in India, 1900–1945: Colonial Constraints and Declining Power* (New Delhi, 2005); and David Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj: The Indian Army, 1860–1940* (Basingstoke, 1994).

Image 3 British military encampment at Landi Kotal, Khyber Agency, early 1930s

59% of the Government of India's central expenditure. Although the Army Reforms of 1922 lowered this cost to some extent, the Army in India remained the biggest drain on the Indian exchequer throughout the inter-war period. Control over the Army in India ultimately meant control of India, and it was one of the few issues on which the British refused to compromise during the constitutional wrangling of the period.

The Army in India, as it was officially called, comprised two separate military establishments. The first was the actual Indian Army, which was based in India and included British officers, commissioned from the regular British Army, indigenous Indian officers holding a Viceroy's commission, and Indian regular soldiers and non-commissioned officers. Established on the old East India Company forces, the Indian Army was the largest force in the subcontinent. The second force comprised the regular regiments of the British Army, made up of entirely British units that cycled in and out of India. Overall command of the Army in India was wielded by the Commander-in-Chief, India, a position that rotated between Indian Army and British Army officers throughout the inter-war period. The Commander-in-Chief served on the Viceroy's council and therefore reported directly to the Governor-General. An indication of the Commander-in-Chief's prominence in the Raj's chain of command may still be seen today in Christchurch, Simla, where the Army head's pew sits directly behind the Viceroy's in order of precedence.

The near constant warfare on the Frontier meant that it was viewed as the proving ground for the Empire's soldiery. Curzon, who was infatuated with the region, argued that the experience of the North-West Frontier was similar to the role played by the western frontier in American history.[50] Taking Frederick Jackson Turner's thesis, Curzon saw "a corresponding discipline for the men of our stock on the outskirts of Empire." The North-West Frontier offered "an ennobling and invigorating stimulus for our youth, saving them alike from the corroding ease and morbid excitements of western civilization."[51] This view was central to the leadership of the Army in India and subsequent Commanders-in-Chief agreed with Curzon. The last one, Claude Auchinleck, believed that the countless skirmishes on the North-West Frontier made it the finest military training ground in the British Empire.[52]

Indeed, rather than fading away in the interwar period, Curzon's views about the centrality of the Frontier to British imperialism were reinforced as many British officials reverted to Edwardian and even Victorian tropes amidst the upheavals on Indian nationalism. The refurbishment in the 1920s and 1930s of nineteenth century attitudes about India and Indians is a crucial, and often overlooked, aspect of British imperialism in the subcontinent in the inter-war years. Recent studies by Pillarisetti Sudhir, Andrew Muldoon, and Mrinalini Sinha have all touched upon this tendency among various constituencies, both in India and Britain, to insist on looking "back to the future" when confronting a rapidly changing India in the inter-war period. The erroneous belief that India was eternal and immutable provided comfort for those most invested in the maintenance of the British Raj. This was Kipling's India. Sleeman's mid-nineteenth century works on *Thuggee* were reincarnated in the works of popular writers such as Katherine Mayo and the retired Quartermaster General of the Indian Army, Lieutenent-General Sir George Fletcher MacMunn. This inclination to view India and Indians as if they were in some 1885 time-warp was also evidenced by the entirely British composition of the 1928 Simon Commission and the calculus behind the 1935 Government of India Act.[53]

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[50] See Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York, 1920).

[51] See Curzon, *Frontiers*, p. 17.

[52] Charles Allen, *Plain Tales from the Raj: Images of British India in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1975), p. 197.

[53] See Pillarisetti Sudhir, "Radicals, Reactionaries, and the Retreat of the Raj: A Look at British Attitudes to Indian Nationalism in the Inter-War Period" (Presentation made to the British Studies Seminar, The University of Texas at

Nowhere was this tendency stronger than in the Army. The Army leadership emphasized the ever-present existential threat posed by the North-West Frontier and hewed close to martial race theory. Inter-war attempts to Indianize the officer corps of the Indian Army were agonizingly slow and, as the records of the host of committees charged with the issue over the course of the 1920s and 30s indicate, fought by much of the Army leadership with arguments firmly embedded in the nineteenth-century ideology of an unchanging India. As late as 1929, the Chief of the Indian General Staff, Field Marshal Sir Claud Jacob, made the astonishing assertion to the Simon Commission that "the moment an Indian becomes literate he becomes effeminate."[54]

This worldview had a profound impact on overall British perceptions and policies on the North-West Frontier. Much has been written of the conflict between civil (Political Service) and military (the Army in India and Royal Air Force) authorities on the Frontier. The Army was stationed in the region for the fundamental purpose of defending India from outside aggression and suppressing tribal uprisings through the use of force. The Political Service, on the other hand, was ostensibly there to maintain the Raj's relationships with the tribes and ensure smooth relations with Afghanistan through civil means. Bedeviled by questions of purpose and jurisdiction, this meant that there was real tension between the two groups that presided over the Frontier, especially in times of war. Soldiers were rankled by the restrictions placed upon them by the Politicals. As John Masters, the one-time Gurkha officer and author, wrote: "We fought with one hand tied behind our backs," and that the basic plan of action prescribed by the Political Service when dealing with hostile tribal sections was "announce your intentions to the enemy, in order that he may have more time to remove his women and children to safety – and time to counter your plan."[55] Army officers

Austin, 18 April 2008); Andrew Muldoon, *Empire, Politics and the Creation of the 1935 India Act: Last Act of the Raj* (Farnham, 2009); and Mrinalini Sinha, *Specters of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of an Empire* (Durham, North Carolina, 2006). For a small sampling of contemporary examples see Katherine Mayo, *Mother India* (New York, 1927) and Lieutenant-General Sir George Fletcher MacMunn, *The Underworld of India* (London, 1933).

[54] Field Marshal Sir Claud Jacob, Testimony to the Indian Statutory Commission, 20 June 1929, Simon Papers IOR F77/56. and also see Pradeep P. Barua, *Gentlemen of the Raj: The Indian Army Officer Corps, 1817–1949* (Westport, Connecticut, 2003).

[55] Robert Johnson, "Small Wars and Internal Security: The Army in India, 1936–1946" in Allan Jeffreys and Patrick Rose (eds), *The Indian Army, 1939–1947: Experience and Development* (Farnham, 2012), pp. 223–224.

were also mystified by the complicated relationship between the Political officers and the tribes. The oft-told story about Waziristan in the late 1930s was that the Political Agent disappeared at the beginning of a campaign day against a rebellious tribal *lashkar*, only to return at night to ask how the British "side" had done, before remarking that his "side" (the *lashkar*) had done quite well![56] On the political side, however, the basic tension stemmed from the belief that the Army – and by the 1930s the Air Force as well – was ham-fisted in its approach. The noted Political officer, Arthur ("Bunch") Parsons, commented that: "The average Army officer knows practically nothing about the tribal area, the people that inhabit it, their language and the way in which they are controlled … for these reasons, the regular army is unsuitable for either administration or control."[57]

The civil-military relationship on the Frontier was troubled. Yet focusing too much on these tensions can obscure the immense commonality of outlook shared between the two groups. Crucially, until the Second World War, the Frontier cadre and the officers of the Army in India both believed that the Afghan Frontier constituted the most important land frontier of the British Empire. Both Frontier officers and military authorities tended to focus on the Russian threat and Afghan perfidy throughout the 1920s and 30s, thus turning a blind eye to internal problems in the settled districts of the Frontier. As late as the 1930s, trainee Political officers were still examined on Valentine Chirol's *The Middle Eastern Question*, a thoroughly Curzonian volume published in 1903 that focused almost exclusively on the growing Russian threat (occasionally assisted by Pan-Islamism) to British India's western Frontiers. The anachronistic nature of this book, written with certainties predating the Russo-Japanese War and the Anglo-Russian convention of 1908, let alone the cataclysms of the First World War and Russian Revolution, was more than matched by the Soviet-centric focus of Army planning and intelligence in this period.[58] Locally, both groups shared the conviction that the Pathans were an immutable group who, ultimately, acted out of an inherent violence and could and should be dealt with through state-sanctioned violence, in the form of the Frontier Crimes Regulations, blockades, military columns, or aerial bombings. Finally, they shared the

[56] Alan Warren, *Waziristan, the Faqir of Ipi, and the Indian Army: The North West Frontier Revolt of 1936–1937* (Karachi, 2000), p. 27.
[57] Quoted in Tripodi, *Edge of Empire*, p. 40.
[58] Tripodi, *Edge of Empire*, p. 32; and Valentine Chirol, *The Middle Eastern Question or Some Political Problems of Indian Defence* (London, 1903).

belief that the Frontier was a place apart and that total British control of the NWFP – and later of at least the tribal tracts – was an essential element for the survival of the British Raj.

Postwar continuities

In the post-World War One era, when Britain's Indian Empire was under immense pressure both from within and without, the North-West Frontier – the ramparts of the British Empire in South Asia in more ways than one – was a bastion of the conservative, militaristic, and paternalistic side of the Raj. In the immediate aftermath of the First World War, the British, in Peshawar, Delhi, and London, continued to act as if the Frontier was a place apart. In an era of reform and imperial accommodation, the authorities imposed long-term military occupation on large swathes of the Frontier and excluded the NWFP from the wide-ranging Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms introduced throughout the rest of British India. The region was inhabited by a people who reinforced the contradictory yet complementary ideologies of sameness and difference that characterized British thought in the subcontinent. The NWFP was administered by a cadre of officials noted both for their conservatism and their deep paternalism. It was also the centerpiece of the Indian Empire's vast military establishment. Here, the British believed, was the first line of defence against internal and external enemies. The Frontier not only provided "a bit of action" for countless officers; it also provided the justification for continued British control of the Indian Army, which was a central pillar of the British Empire in the East.

2

"A Continual and Gratuitous Provocation": The North-West Frontier and the Crisis of Empire, 1919–1923

In the wake of the First World War, the British Empire stood at its greatest territorial extent. The Empire emerged from its four-year struggle with the central powers not only intact but enlarged. In Africa, the seizure of German East Africa completed Cecil Rhodes' dream of a continent painted red from Cairo to Cape Town. In the Middle East, Lord Cromer's "veiled protectorate" over Egypt was superseded by outright rule. Jerusalem and Baghdad, along with Nineveh and Tyre, lay at the victors' feet. In the far-off Pacific, New Zealand's occupation of German Samoa meant that, quite literally, the sun never set on the British Empire. Unfortunately for the British, this territorial sweep failed to translate into actual strength, and was in fact indicative of imperial overreach and weakness. As John Gallagher noted, once the Empire reached this extent, "the sun never set upon its problems."[1] In the aftermath of the First World War, Britain was financially weakened, pressed for manpower it could not spare, and confronted by an international order transformed by Bolshevism and Woodrow Wilson's vision of "self-determination."[2] This weakened imperial structure was further shaken by nationalist revolts in Ireland, Egypt, India, and Iraq between 1919 and 1922.

The British Empire survived these years of upheaval, but it did so by accommodating the new realities that confronted it.[3] Flexibility was the

[1] John Gallagher, "Nationalisms and the Crisis of Empire, 1919–1922," in *Modern Asian Studies*, 15, 3 (1981), p. 355.
[2] See Keith Jeffery, *The British Army and the Crisis of Empire, 1918–1922* (Manchester, 1984) and Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Colonial Nationalism* (New York, 2007).
[3] See John Gallagher, *The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire: The Ford Lectures and Other Essays* (Cambridge, 1982).

order of the day, as the political, economic and even ideological foundations of British imperialism were reviewed and reformed. Southern Ireland and Egypt received independence.[4] The administration in Iraq was drastically overhauled and the Hashemite Arab Emir Feisal placed on the throne.[5] Elsewhere in the Middle East, the British were forced to make new arrangements with a resurgent Persia and Turkey that seriously curtailed the eastern dreams of the Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon.[6] In India, the linchpin of Britain's world system, reforms were enacted and agreements concluded that gave greater control to both the Government of India and the Indian electorate.[7]

In the midst of these events, the Third Anglo-Afghan War broke out in May 1919. The war sparked a nearly three-year conflagration among the Pathan tribes living in Waziristan. British attempts to suppress the revolt nearly bankrupted the Government of India and led to calls for an entirely new approach to the North-West Frontier and the troubled Waziristan region. The debate that ensued exhibited a great deal of flexibility commensurate with wide-ranging changes that were taking place throughout the Empire. Yet, in the end, the argument that carried the day, after being insisted upon by London, was one of military occupation at great expense to the Indian exchequer.

This chapter examines the British response to this crisis, and why a "modified forward policy" of military occupation in Waziristan prevailed. Although the Indian authorities, faced with a host of new political and economic constraints, were able to exercise a large degree of independence in this era, the British, and the Indian officer corps in particular, believed that the Frontier should be the exception to this trend.[8] Although the Army leadership was willing to make

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[4] For Ireland, see David Harkness, *The Restless Dominion: The Irish Free State and the British Commonwealth of Nations, 1921–1931* (London, 1969). For Egypt, see John Darwin, *Britain, Egypt, and the Middle East: Imperial Policy in the Aftermath of War, 1918–1922* (New York, 1981).

[5] See Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq: Contriving King and Country, 1914–1932* (New York, 2007).

[6] See George Henry Bennett, *British Foreign Policy during the Curzon Period, 1919–1924* (Manchester, 1995).

[7] See John Gallagher and Anil Seal, "Britain and India Between the Wars," in *Modern Asian Studies*, 15, 3 (1981), pp. 387–414, and Judith Brown, "Imperial Façade: Some Constraints Upon and Contradictions in the British Position in India, 1919–1935," in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 26, 5 (1976), pp. 35–52.

[8] India, for instance, fended off the recommendations of the British Government's Esher Committee, which called on India to garrison and pay for Britain's Empire

large cuts in the size of the military, the Frontier and Waziristan were sacrosanct. Seeing the Waziristan revolt as an opportunity to take control of the region, the Army used its considerable clout within both the Government of India and the India Office to win the day, despite the financial damage this policy would wreak on India. The new policy in Waziristan thus represented a counter to the general trend towards devolution of power in the post-war period and illustrates both the central standing of the Frontier within the British Empire and the continued influence and power of India's officer corps well into the twentieth century.

The Waziristan "problem"

If the British experience on the North-West Frontier in general could be characterized as "an imperial migraine," then Waziristan was its pulsing epicenter.[9] Although other areas of the Frontier, such as the Khyber, were of greater strategic significance, Waziristan produced a disproportionate number of raids into the administered districts, and two of its principal tribes, the Wazirs and Mahsuds, had remained fiercely independent. In his history of the Government's dealings with the Mahsuds, the eminent Political officer and former Resident in Waziristan, Sir Evelyn Howell, observed that if a "civilization has no other end than to produce a fine type of man," then that of the Mahsuds must "surpass all others."[10] The British believed that while Islam and Kabul played a role in the Mahsuds' perceived intransigence, the main motivator was an "instinct" for independence. This independence, though admirable, proved problematic. Waziristan remained the most troublesome spot in what, for the British at least, was a very troubled region of their Empire.

There had been violent debates over the correct policy towards Waziristan since the 1860s, divided into the "forward" and "close border" schools. The cliques were "big tent" groupings and precise definitions are therefore difficult, but the essentials were as follows. The forward school

East of Suez, and managed to cut the size of the Indian Army and conclude a new tariff convention with Britain.

[9] See Charles Miller, *Khyber: British India's North West Frontier, The Story of an Imperial Migraine* (New York, 1977).

[10] Evelyn B. Howell, *Mizh: A Monograph of Government's Relations with the Mahsud Tribe* (Simla, 1931), p. xii. Many of Howell's fellow Frontier officers, including Caroe, believed Howell's monograph, *Mizh*, to be "the most penetrating of all tribal studies" (Sir Olaf Caroe, *The Pathans, 550BC–AD1957* (London, 1958), p. 395).

was historically linked to those who took an aggressive stance towards Afghanistan and Russia. They advocated some sort of occupation of Waziristan. The forward school emphasized the importance of military action and, using the analogy of Wade's policy in the Scottish Highlands, the construction of roads.[11] Their ultimate goal was the "civilization" of the tribes. In the 1890s, the Commissioner for Derajat, Richard Bruce, attempted to bring the Sandeman system of ruling through *maliks* to Waziristan. The system never took hold, however. Its champions argued that the policy failed because the Government, faced with mounting debts during the period, failed to provide any real assistance. With this in mind, many within this school – though not all – maintained that the solution lay in another attempt to institute new *maliks* in Waziristan who, with enough encouragement and allowance, would stand as the appropriate interlocutors between the Government and tribesmen.[12] The close border school, on the other hand, had historical connections to those who advocated minimal British interference on the western banks of the Indus. They held that the Waziristan tribes were too inherently democratic to embrace the *malik* system, and any attempt to bring the Mahsud and Wazirs under British control would spark a tribal uprising. Although the close border school did not oppose military intervention, as a rule they preferred what their detractors referred to as "masterly inactivity." Importantly, this approach gave little weight to the forward school's emphasis on a civilizing mission.

In 1919, a modified version of the close border policy held sway in Waziristan. A half-hearted forward policy premised on retaliatory strikes, or "burn and scuttle," had reigned supreme in the 1890s, but when Lord Curzon assumed the viceroyalty he blamed the forward policy for the major tribal uprisings of 1897–1898. In 1901, he instituted a revised close border policy. Curzon's new Frontier policy was not a complete victory for partisans of the close border school, however; tribal allowances remained. Moreover, Curzon realized that the tribes' relationships with their brethren in the settled districts and the threat marauding tribal *lashkars* presented to nearby towns and villages precluded a total withdrawal of law and order from the tribal tracts.

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[11] Note by Colonel C. H. Hasell (Chief Engineer, Waziristan) to the Indian Statutory Commission, 4 April 1928, Simon Papers, India Office Records (IOR) F77/47.

[12] See Richard I. Bruce, CIE, *The Forward Policy and its Results or Thirty-Five Years' Work Amongst the Tribes on Our North-Western Frontier of India* (London, 1900).

He thus inaugurated a corps of tribal militias led by British officers.[13] It was this system that fell apart in the summer of 1919.

The NWFP remained relatively quiet during the First World War, but in May 1919 the Frontier problem emerged once again when the charismatic young tennis-playing Amir of Afghanistan, Amanullah Khan, provoked the Third Anglo-Afghan War. Ascending to the throne after his father's murder in February, the new Amir was a modernizer and fervent nationalist. He immediately sought to persuade the British to relinquish their control over Kabul's foreign policy, thus assuring the kingdom full independence.[14] Failing to convince them, Amanullah used the plight of India's Muslims and the recent Jallianwalah Bagh massacre at Amritsar as his *casus belli*.[15] On 3 May, a group of Afghan regulars seized a strip of land in the Khyber Pass. On 6 May, after Amanullah failed to reply to an ultimatum sent by the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, the extended skirmish known as the Third Anglo-Afghan War officially commenced.[16] Although many of its best regiments were still overseas, the Army in India remained a formidable opponent. Amanullah therefore used every possible weapon at his disposal. He made tentative moves towards the new leadership in Russia – "coquetting with Bolshevism," as the British put it.[17] More importantly, his pronouncements and declarations were laden with Islamic rhetoric aimed at the trans-border tribes. These tribes, rather than the regular Afghan army, constituted Amanullah's main weapon against the British.

The British were fortunate in the northern theater around the Khyber Pass. Although the Afridi troops enlisted in the Khyber Rifles shot their British officers and went over to the Afghans, their kinsmen remained neutral throughout the spring.[18] In the south, Waziristan was a different story. On 23 May, Afghan troops, accompanied by tribal irregulars, began marching towards northern Waziristan.[19] The British evacuated their small posts in northern Waziristan as these combined forces

[13] General Staff Memorandum on North-West Frontier Policy, 1 November 1920, IOR L PO 4/4.
[14] Translation of a Letter from Amir Amanullah Khan to His Excellency the Viceroy, 3 March 1919, The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA) FO 371/3990.
[15] Abdul Ali Arghandawi, *British Imperialism and Afghanistan's Struggle for Independence, 1914–1921* (New Delhi, 1989), p. 176.
[16] Government of India, *The Third Afghan War: Official Account Compiled in the General Staff Branch, Army Headquarters, India* (Calcutta, 1926), pp. 14–15.
[17] Notes on Bolshevik Situation, 17 September 1919, IOR L P&S 10/886.
[18] Arghandawi, *British Imperialism*, p. 202.
[19] *The Third Afghan War, Official Account*, p. 54.

advanced. In retrospect, these evacuations were a mistake. Interpreting these withdrawals as a general retreat, the local Mahsud and Wazir tribesmen deserted their militias *en masse* and, after ejecting their officers, joined the Afghans. A relief force, commanded by Reginald Dyer, fresh from ordering the Amritsar massacre, was sent to northern Waziristan and a truce with the Afghans was concluded on 3 June.[20] The damage was done, however. The tribes of Waziristan were in revolt.

Meanwhile, the formal war between the British and Afghanistan was rapidly drawing to a close. The regular Afghan forces were routed and the Amir sued for peace. The Third Anglo-Afghan War officially ended on 8 August when a treaty between Amanullah's representatives and the Indian Foreign Secretary, Sir Anthony Hamilton Grant, was signed at Rawalpindi. Some aspects of the treaty were expected. It prohibited the movement of war *materiel* to Afghanistan, ended the Amir's subsidy, provided for a new friendship treaty after a period of six months, and arranged for a British commission to carry out a new demarcation of the international border in the Khyber.[21] These articles were accompanied by a surprise, however. Grant attached a diplomatic note to the Treaty promising Amanullah complete control over Afghan foreign policy and thus full independence.[22]

Grant believed that Britain's control over Afghanistan's foreign policy was in fact a sham and needed to end. He was right; the free reign given to German and Turkish agents in Afghanistan during the Great War revealed the real limits of Britain's management of Kabul's foreign policy. To London's chagrin, Grant decided to end this charade.[23] The Government of India, however, was keen to end the conflict as soon as possible and supported Grant's move. India's internal situation was getting worse every day. With Gandhi's Non-Cooperation Movement growing, food prices skyrocketing, and bankruptcy looming, Delhi believed there was nothing to lose and everything to gain by ending hostilities with a promise of full independence. In this way, the Third Anglo-Afghan War mirrored the general British response to the other crises that shook the Empire in this period – they exhibited flexibility and made concessions in order to regroup in a stronger position.

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[20] Lieutenant-General George Noble Molesworth, *Afghanistan 1919: An Account of Operations in the Third Afghan War* (Bombay, 1962), pp. 120–122.

[21] Treaty of Peace Between the Illustrious British Government and the Independent Afghan Government, 8 August 1919, FO 371/3990.

[22] Letter from Sir Anthony Hamilton Grant to Chief Afghan Representative, 8 August 1919, FO 371/3990.

[23] Arghandawi, *British Imperialism*, p. 212.

The war with Afghanistan was over. But as Evelyn Howell observed in 1930: "Unlike other wars, Afghan wars become serious only when they are over."[24] Encouraged by Amanullah's lieutenants, and believing that the British intended to retire beyond the Indus, the Mahsuds and Wazirs continued to raid the administered districts of the Frontier. Curzon's militia system had failed miserably.[25] As the Mahsud raids into Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan persisted into the autumn it was clear to the British that a new approach was necessary. The Indian General Staff fired the opening salvo in this latest incarnation of the Frontier debate in June 1919. With the Afghan War settling down, the role that Kabul played as *agent provocateur* in Waziristan seemed the most pressing need. The military argued that the centerpiece of any new policy in Waziristan must lie with Afghanistan. The Indian Commander-in-Chief, Sir Charles Monro, insisted that the Indian authorities could no longer "remain with blind-folded eyes on our side of the Frontier."[26] To this end, the Chief of the Indian General Staff, Sir George Kirkpatrick, recommended major border changes, including the seizure of the "Khost salient," which jutted into northern Waziristan.[27] Kirkpatrick argued that the "trans-border" element of the Frontier problem would be fixed if the tribes in question ceased to be "trans-border" and were instead entirely contained on the British side of the international boundary, seemingly forgetting the fact that any annexation would place the British in the midst of yet more "fanatical and hostile" tribesmen, when they could scarcely control their own. In a sign of the times, officials in the India Office noted that, despite the fact that the seizure was "entirely justified," grabbing territory from Afghanistan would be inconsistent with the spirit of "self-determination."[28]

Apart from the unrealistic attempt at territorial realignment, the General Staff focused on two other major issues as well over the stiflingly hot summer of 1919.[29] The first was the problem of communication.

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[24] Howell, *Mizh*, p. 80.

[25] Laurence Rushbrook Williams, *India in 1919* (Calcutta, 1920), p. 17.

[26] Note to the India Office by General Charles Monro (Commander-in-Chief, India), 17 June 1919, IOR L MIL 7/6645.

[27] Memorandum on the Strategical Considerations Affecting the Alignment of the North-West Frontier of India by Lieutenant-General George M. Kirkpatrick (Chief of the Indian General Staff), 11 June 1919, L MIL 7/6645.

[28] Memorandum by General Sir Edmund Barrow (Military Secretary to the India Office), 26 July 1919, L MIL 7/6645. This became a moot point following the terms of the Rawalpindi Treaty signed in August.

[29] The high temperatures on the Frontier were a major impediment to British and Indian forces. By June, temperatures in the shade rose to 127° Fahrenheit

Kirkpatrick wrote that the disadvantages of the "bad and limited roads through tribal territory" had made it almost impossible to hold "vital portions of the frontier." The solution, he argued, lay in the construction of lateral roads through the heart of Mahsud territory. The second point on which the General Staff focused was the failure of Curzon's militia system. The militias worked well enough in peacetime, but, in an emergency, they were neither strong nor efficient enough to operate without regular troops. The General Staff argued that the militias should be replaced by a full-scale military occupation with regular troops. With the help of a road system, military occupation would lead to the gradual extension of "civil administration over tribal tracts until it reaches the Afghan border."[30]

With these two objects – road construction and military occupation – in mind, the Indian Army began major operations against the rebellious tribal sections in the autumn of 1919. As Viceroy, Curzon had written in 1899 that "no patchwork scheme – and all our present recent schemes: blockade, allowances, etc., are mere patchwork – will settle the Waziristan problem . . . not until the military steam roller has passed over the country from end to end, will there be peace." Curzon noted that given the cost in men and treasure of such an endeavor, he had no desire to put that machine in motion.[31] In 1919, the Army felt no such compunction. The Government of India had granted the Army complete control over the region. Wazir and Mahsud *jirgas* called at the end of the year were informed that the British were there to stay.

Fighting in Waziristan continued through the winter and spring, with the bulk of operations ending on 7 May 1920.[32] That summer, however, the Wana Wazirs embarked on a series of raids into British territory, and campaigning in Waziristan resumed.[33] The tribesmen could not be pacified under the current system. Moreover, this anarchy, the Army argued, could open the floodgates to Bolshevik propaganda, weapons, and perhaps even invasion. The Soviet overthrow of the Amir of Bokhara in 1920 had alarmed the Indian General Staff. Though they doubted that the Soviets were organized enough to mount an invasion

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(Molesworth, *Afghanistan*, p. 81).

[30] Memorandum of the Strategical Considerations.

[31] Quoted in Howell, *Mizh*, p. 36.

[32] Laurence Rushbrook Williams, *India in 1920* (Calcutta, 1921), p. 8.

[33] See Government of India, *Operations in Waziristan, 1919–1920: Compiled by the General Staff, Army Headquarters, India* (Calcutta, 1921) and Government of India, *N. W. Frontier of India, 1920–1935: Official History of Operations, Parts I, II and III* (New Delhi, 1945).

of India or even Afghanistan, they were convinced that the Soviets would lean on Amanullah to allow them to send Bolshevik agents into the tribal areas. The Commander-in-Chief argued that the Soviet government considered the British Empire its "primary enemy," and that it was extremely unlikely that such a "government as the present one in Russia can hope to retain its power unless by the agency of foreign aggression."[34] The Army leadership now believed that they needed to convince the Government of India to pursue a long-term forward policy. To do this, they launched a frontal assault on Curzon, then serving as Britain's Foreign Secretary. The fundamental problem with Curzon's policy in Waziristan, they asserted, was that he had failed to understand the "Pathan character" and "human nature" in general. Although the Pathan did well when directed by a strong, resolute Englishman, the General Staff maintained that it was foolish to gamble on the Pathan's loyalty, especially when religion was involved. The General Staff asked the rhetorical question: could the "influence of a quasi-military discipline and an ever increasing loyalty to the British Government" be expected to withstand the chance for blood and loot or the call of the mullah?[35]

Arguments about character and instinct dominated the Army's position. Yet paradoxically, the General Staff also emphasized an apparent mutability in the Pathan character, arguing that the chief problem in Waziristan was *deprivation*. They remarked that "the hills breed many and feed few." Occupation would allow road construction and other employment opportunities that would bring "wealth into the country, removing what is after all the chief cause of lawlessness and crime – poverty."[36] This emphasis on the possibility of change and "civilizing" the Mahsuds and Wazirs was echoed elsewhere. The former Chief Commissioner of the NWFP, Sir George Roos-Keppel, a legendary figure on the Frontier and previously a firm adherent of Curzon's policy of

[34] Minute by His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief, 1 November 1920, L PO 4/4.

[35] General Staff Memorandum on North-West Frontier Policy, 1 November 1920.

[36] General Staff Memorandum on North-West Frontier Policy, 1 November 1920. Recruitment into the regular Army, the usual employment path open to so-called "martial races" in British India, was closed to the trans-border tribes at this point. Mahsud enlistment was expanded in 1910, but despite the fact that one Mahsud won the Victoria Cross on the Western Front, the majority of recruits either refused to reply to the call-up or deserted *en masse*. Howell reported that when "deploring the loss to their countrymen of military service Mahsuds not uncommonly sum up the discussion with the remark '*Mizh ser beitabora khalq vi*'" [we are very untrustworthy people] (Howell, *Mizh*, p. 67).

non-interference, made a dramatic *volte-face* in favor of a new policy. In a memorandum to the India Office, Roos-Keppel wrote: "The only policy on the frontier which can give permanently satisfactory results is for Government to realize their responsibilities towards . . . the independent tribesmen who fell to our lot in the Durand Agreement." He based his argument on what he saw as Afghan precedent, stating (without foundation) that beginning in the 1890s the Amir had "inaugurated a series of campaigns" against his tribes, and had succeeded in pacifying his tribal population. On the British side, Roos-Keppel cited lack of continuity, maintaining that the only permanent result of the prevailing policy was "a legacy of hatred." Therefore, the Indian authorities should initiate a policy of "civilizing the frontier tribes up to the Durand Line, first by crushing their fighting power and disarming them, and then by making roads throughout their country."[37] The "military steam roller" must be applied – but as an agent of "civilization."

This sounded increasingly attractive. Since the outbreak of hostilities in 1919, no fewer than 611 raids into the settled districts had occurred, resulting in 298 British subjects being killed, 392 wounded, and 463 kidnapped and over Rs. 30/- lakhs (£220,000) looted.[38] Statistics like these, along with the ongoing fighting in Waziristan, convinced the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, that the Army was right. Although Chelmsford privately stressed the need for "opportunism" in Waziristan rather than a dogmatic policy, he was firmly convinced of the need for military occupation.[39] In August 1920, Chelmsford declared that "this continual and gratuitous provocation" could no longer be suffered. The Army would permanently occupy Waziristan. Also using the language of "civilization," the Viceroy noted that this was for the tribesmen's own good:

> We hope that the peace which must eventually attend our domination of these tribesmen will bring its usual blessings in its train; that they may be weaned from their life of rapine and violence and may find both in material improvements in their country, such as the extension of irrigation and cultivation, and in the civilizing intercourse with India, a more stable prosperity than they have ever derived from their traditional profession of robbers and marauders.[40]

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[37] General Staff Memorandum on North-West Frontier Policy.
[38] *India in 1920*, p. 11. A Lakh is 100,000. The average exchange rate between the rupee and sterling in this period was roughly £1=Rs. 15/-.
[39] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 21 December 1920, L PO 4/4.
[40] Quoted in *India in 1920*, pp. 10–11.

An all-out military occupation could provide security for the settled districts and economic development for the Mahsuds and Wazirs. The way now seemed open for a full forward policy in Waziristan.

The financial crisis and the viceroy's council

There remained the question of how the Government of India planned to carry out such a large-scale project. In the wake of the First World War, the Indian Army was stretched to its limits. Four divisions and two cavalry brigades remained in Egypt, while Mesopotamia retained two divisions, two cavalry brigades, and 17 line-of-communication brigades. The situation worsened in the summer of 1920 following the outbreak of a revolt in Mesopotamia.[41] Moreover, the Indian Government faced financial ruin. The recently enacted Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms devolved a number of powers to the provinces, and with this, large parts of the budget. The reforms also mandated budget votes by the Central Legislative Assembly, now shorn of its official majority. The Viceroy could override the Legislature on specific budget items, but this was to be avoided at all costs lest it arouse further opposition from Indian nationalists. On top of this, 1920 saw a slump in international trade and a fall in the exchange rate between the rupee and sterling that destroyed the best-laid plans of the India's administrators.[42] In 1919–1920, the Government ran a deficit of Rs. 23/- crores (£15,333,333).[43] It was likely to get worse in 1921.[44]

Throughout this fiscal crisis, defence formed 59% of central expenditure. Combining all civil expenditure, central and provincial, defence accounted for a staggering 35% of spending.[45] Since most of the deficit stemmed from the aftermath of the Anglo-Afghan War and the ongoing attempt to "pacify" the tribes, the Finance Member on the Viceroy's Council, Malcolm Hailey, grew alarmed at the possible costs of an occupation of Waziristan. Considered by many to be the greatest Indian Civil Servant of the twentieth century, Hailey was a charming if unknowable man, who had begun his career doing

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[41] Mark Jacobsen (ed.), *Rawlinson in India* (Stroud, 2002), p. xxiii.

[42] Between September and December 1920 the rupee fell from 1s. 10d to 1s. 5¾d (*India in 1920*, p. 81).

[43] A crore is 10 million rupees.

[44] Minute by William Malcolm Hailey (Finance Member, Viceroy's Council), 6 May 1921, Hailey Papers IOR E220/3c.

[45] Memorandum by William Malcolm Hailey on the General Financial Position of India and its Bearing on the Military Budget, July 1921, Hailey Papers E220/3c.

settlement work in the Punjab but quickly moved on to greater things in the secretariat and then the Government of India.[46] Hailey was fully aware of India's post-war constraints, and began a concerted campaign against the adoption of an expensive forward policy, in the process becoming its chief opponent.

Hailey received a formidable foe at the end of 1920 in the form of the new Commander-in-Chief in India, Lord Rawlinson of Trent. A veteran of the western front, Rawlinson carried the ignominy of being the commander of the Fourth British Army at the Battle of the Somme.[47] Since then he had served in Russia and held the Aldershot command. Rawlinson was sent out to modernize the Indian Army with structural and technological reform. Faced with an Indian Army in need of retrenchment, Rawlinson was willing to negotiate. Upon arrival he confided to his journal that:

> My job is even more complicated and difficult than I had imagined. Hailey has an even stiffer job. He cannot balance his budget, and it looks as if the exchange will get worse. In the present state of India any big increase of taxation would be dangerous, yet money must be found somehow. I have told Hailey that I am out to help him all I can.[48]

He added, however, that "security must come first." For Rawlinson, this meant the security of the Frontier.

Given the internal situation in India in this period with both the Non-Cooperation and the Khilafat movements in full swing, it is striking how much emphasis the Commander-in-Chief placed on Frontier defence rather than internal security. Like most of his inter-war colleagues, Rawlinson consistently ranked the Army's role in suppressing internal disturbances as secondary to Frontier defence.[49] Moreover, he was an

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[46] See John W. Cell, *Hailey: A Study in British Imperialism, 1872–1969* (Cambridge, 1992).

[47] Peter Hart's recent *The Somme* (London, 2005) for example, places the bulk of the blame for the Somme debacle – particularly the infamous first morning – on Rawlinson's shoulders rather than on his superiors, such as Field Marshal Haig.

[48] Rawlinson Journal Entry, 18 December 1920, in Major-General Sir Frederick Maurice (ed.), *Soldier, Artist, Sportsman: The Life of General Lord Rawlinson, from his Journals and Letters* (Boston, 1928), p. 285.

[49] See for example Testimony provided by General Walter Mervyn Kirke (Deputy Chief of the Indian General Staff) to Indian Statutory Commission, 1928, Simon Papers IOR F77/55.

avowed "forward policy" man. It was not simply temperament that led Rawlinson to support the forward school, but family infuences as well. The new Commander-in-Chief's father, the noted Assyriologist and member of the Council of India, Sir Henry Rawlinson, was one of the greatest proponents of the forward school in the nineteenth century. Alarmed at Russian expansion in Central Asia, Sir Henry had published *England and Russia in the East*, in which he attacked the close border school as "masterly inactivity" and urged the vigorous establishment of British influence over the trans-border tribes.[50] Rawlinson the father found an ally in the future Lord Roberts, another proponent of the forward school. Rawlinson the son arrived in India in 1884 and, through his father's connections, joined Roberts' staff at Army Headquarters at the height of Roberts' battle with Garnett Wolseley over the implementation of a forward policy. Rawlinson's biographer acknowledged that, "his many conversations with [Roberts] on the development of the problem served naturally to strengthen the views he had received from his father."[51] Confronted by Hailey's doubts about the feasibility of military occupation in Waziristan, Rawlinson threw himself into battle.

In December 1920 and January 1921, Rawlinson began his defence of the new Waziristan policy while simultaneously fighting against reductions in the Indian Army budget. On the latter he was soundly defeated, but he won when it came to the Frontier.[52] He wrote:

> Hailey trotted out all the old arguments; I don't blame him, poor chap. He has to fight to save every rupee these days. But I was in a very strong position. The memories of recent events on the Frontier are still fresh, and no one who went through the anxieties of last year wants to have them repeated.[53]

Hailey even agreed to sign the report for Rawlinson's committee on India's military requirements, which stressed the fact that due to tribal "unrest," pan-Islamic sentiment, and the supposed spread of Bolshevism, the Frontier was "more vulnerable than ever." Addressing the local

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[50] See Sir Henry Rawlinson, *England and Russia in the East: A Series of Papers on the Political and Geographical Condition of Central Asia, by Major-General Sir Henry Rawlinson* (London, 1875).

[51] Maurice, *Soldier*, p. 277.

[52] Rawlinson Journal Entry, 7 January 1921, in Maurice, *Soldier*, p. 288. Keith Jeffery provides an excellent overview of the military fiscal battle in this period in Chapter 6 of his *The British Army and the Crisis of Empire*.

[53] Rawlinson Journal Entry, Undated, in Maurice, *Soldier*, p. 287.

dimension of the "tribal problem" in Waziristan, the Government's committee called for a forward policy of roads and military occupation. Moreover, it adhered to the Army's newfound faith in Pathan mutability – that tribal poverty was the "root of the evil."[54]

The row over Waziristan was far from finished, however. Hailey renewed his attack in the summer of 1921. Operations in Waziristan were now costing the cash-strapped government over Rs. 50/- lakhs (£333,000) a month with no discernable end.[55] The General Staff now proposed the occupation of two major posts, at Razmak in central Waziristan and at Wana in the south. Hailey believed that when the forward policy was agreed to in 1920–1921 no one honestly contemplated an occupation of Wana. He argued that all that was intended was a *coup de demonstration* against the local Wazirs, who would hopefully refrain from further raiding for fear of being occupied like the Mahsuds to the north at Razmak. The proposal was to stay for a fortnight and then withdraw. Now the Army was suggesting that the area be occupied. Given the state of India's finances, this was untenable.[56]

Rawlinson held firm, arguing that as he had "an opportunity now of settling the Waziristan problem once and for all, it would be suicidal . . . not to take advantage of it."[57] He also enjoyed strong support from the new Viceroy, Lord Reading. Through the rest of 1921 matters stood pat, with the Government continuing to endorse the occupation of central Waziristan in the face of Hailey's opposition. In early 1922, however, as the Non-Cooperation Movement and the Khilafat campaign collapsed, the debate was joined afresh. The Government's financial situation had not improved and higher taxation was out of the question. Rawlinson had to admit that having survived on "capital for the last four years," India was "on the verge of bankruptcy."[58] On 6 January, Hailey scored his biggest victory yet, convincing the Viceroy's budget council to reduce expenditure in Waziristan by Rs. 3·36/- crores (£2,240,000).[59]

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[54] Report of Committee Appointed by the Governor-General in Council to Examine the Military Requirements of India, 1921, Hailey Papers E220/3c.

[55] Rawlinson to Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, 27 September 1921, in Jacobsen, *Rawlinson*, p. 64.

[56] Minute by William Malcolm Hailey, 6 May 1921.

[57] Confidential Memorandum on Waziristan and the Lessons of the Last 60 Years, General Lord Rawlinson, 7 July 1921, Hailey Papers E220/3c.

[58] Rawlinson to Wilson, 4 January 1922, in Jacobsen, *Rawlinson*, p. 81.

[59] Rawlinson Journal Entry, 6 January 1922, in Jacobsen, *Rawlinson*, p. 82.

Confronted with these cuts, Rawlinson was put in charge of a committee on the future of Waziristan.[60] The committee's report stated unequivocally that "the only really sound scheme is that of the permanent occupation of Waziristan by regular forces, and the domination of the country up to the Durand line." Only full occupation would illustrate Britain's "firmness of purpose." But compromise was necessary. Dropping any pretense of "civilizing" the Mahsuds and Wazirs, the committee proposed the adoption of a *Khassadar* system to replace Curzon's militias, the occupation of Razmak by local levies, and a road from Razmak to Idak in the Tochi Valley.[61] Rawlinson believed this was far from the best policy, but given India's state of "financial bankruptcy" it was the only option.[62]

Yet the Government still faced a massive deficit and Hailey pushed for a complete evacuation from Waziristan, a stance echoed by *The Times* and other newspapers in Britain.[63] Rawlinson possessed well-placed friends, however. His Chief of Staff, Major-General Sir Archibald Montgomery, whom Hailey privately called Rawlinson's "familiar and evil spirit," was then home on leave.[64] Montgomery and the India Office's military secretary, General Sydney Muspratt, whom Rawlinson referred to as his "rat" in Whitehall, gained the ear of Lord Peel, the new Conservative Secretary of State for India. In early April, Peel telegraphed the Viceroy and ordered the Government to build the circular road to Razmak, an action that had stood at the center of the policy agreed to in 1920. This would increase the Government's deficit by Rs. 2/- crores (£1,333,000). This enraged Hailey, who was aware of the machinations of Rawlinson's allies in London. The next meeting of the Viceroy's Council degenerated into a shouting match, with Hailey

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[60] Among others, the committee included the new Indian Foreign Secretary, Sir Denys Bray; the Chief Commissioner of the NWFP, Sir John Maffey, and the Resident in Waziristan, Steuart Pears.

[61] Report of a Committee Assembled under an Order in Council, dated 6 January 1922, to Consider Future Policy in Waziristan, Hailey Papers E220/3c. The *Khassadar* system was different from Curzon's militia system in that tribesmen were paid by the Government to keep the peace, but they had no British officers and were armed with their own weapons and housed in posts of their own building.

[62] Rawlinson to Major-General Sir Archibald Montgomery, 22 February 1922, in Jacobsen, *Rawlinson*, p. 88.

[63] Rawlinson to Montgomery, 9 April 1922, in Jacobsen, *Rawlinson*, p. 97.

[64] Hailey to Sir John Maffey (Chief Commissioner, NWFP), 3 October 1922, Hailey Papers E220/3c.

and the Commander-in-Chief calling one another names.[65] Afterwards, Rawlinson took the unprecedented step of writing to Peel personally, asking him effectively to dismiss Hailey by way of a governorship.[66]

Following the Secretary of State's Razmak Road order, the Committee of Imperial Defence weighed in on Waziristan. The sub-committee charged with Indian matters, which included, among others, Austen Chamberlain and Winston Churchill, hewed to an aggressive line. The committee reviewed a number of possible policies, including the most recent recommendations of the Government of India (Rawlinson's January 1922 committee), the Indian General Staff (a proposal similar to the Government's), and the Government of India's original plan, which provided for the occupation of Waziristan with regular troops.

The committee believed that an evacuation would be disastrous. Sir Henry Dobbs, the former Indian Foreign Secretary and Britain's new minister in Kabul, told the committee that friendship with Afghanistan depended on "a firm adherence to our present policy of dominating Waziristan and the Khyber." They believed that the recent schemes put forward by the Government of India and the General Staff were but half measures. They, therefore, plumped for the original plan of 1920. Although the initial outlay would be exorbitant, they believed that the road-building would make the whole policy effective and thus lead to future economy.[67] It was hoped that further saving could be met through the use of the Royal Air Force, a policy which Churchill was pursuing in Mesopotamia. Finally, in what would become a theme in the inter-war period, they cited the relationship between the Frontier and the internal situation in India, saying:

> [T]he general unrest prevailing among Mahomedans in India render it an inopportune moment to initiate any scheme for partial evacuation of Waziristan, which might be interpreted by the tribesmen as a first step towards withdrawal from their country.[68]

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[65] Rawlinson to Montgomery, 20 April 1922, in Jacobsen, *Rawlinson*, p. 98.

[66] Rawlinson to Viscount Peel, 16 May 1922, in Jacobsen, *Rawlinson*, p. 105.

[67] The scheme would cost Rs. 4·68/- crores in 1922, Rs. 3·98/- crores in 1923–24, and Rs. 3·32/- crores in 1924–1925, for a total cost of Rs. 11·98/- crores (£7,986,666).

[68] Committee of Imperial Defence, Report of the Subcommittee on Indian Military Requirements, June 1922, L PO 4/4.

Thus, despite the desperate financial situation in India, both the India Office and the Committee of Imperial Defence decided that the security of the Empire came first.

The major issue seemingly decided, the opposing parties sat down to haggle over specifics. During that autumn, however, a bomb was lobbed by the Chief Commissioner of the NWFP, Sir John Maffey. Having previously signed on to the Government's plans for the occupation of Waziristan, Maffey now made a striking and inexplicable reversal, attacking this policy in a blistering memorandum. Like Hailey, Maffey was one of the Indian Civil Service's (ICS) "high-flyers." A noted Frontier officer, he had served as Political Agent, Khyber, before joining the Secretariat as Deputy Foreign Secretary. He then served as Chelmsford's Private Secretary before becoming Chief Commissioner of the NWFP. Although the Army now ran Waziristan, it was due to return to civilian oversight in the near future. Maffey would be in charge of the Government's policy, so his opinion held a disproportionate amount of weight. He could not be ignored.

For a man accustomed to the subtleties of power, Maffey's attack was remarkably brutal and *ad hominem*. Infused with Latin tags and snippets of poetry, his onslaught began by pointing out the "greenness" of the Viceroy and the military leadership in India. Not only did they not understand Indian conditions but, he slyly implied, given the recent history of British casualties on the Western Front, their military credentials were also questionable. In fact, the military was a large part of the problem in both Waziristan and the Frontier in general. The Chief Commissioner charged – not without reason – that much of the violence on the Frontier stemmed from soldiers looking for glory and a spot of action: "this great blood-sucking Frontier which has drained us of men and money for nearly a hundred years is still the playground of chance decisions, personal predilections and professional ambitions."[69] Mistakes that led to the Frontier's "ignoble little wars" were ignored as a result of the honors that flowed in the wake of a campaign – the "genial rays from the Star of India," as Maffey put it.[70]

The Chief Commissioner's argument touched on the rupture between the "political" or civilian administration, and the Army on the Frontier. The military often viewed the "Politicals" as little better than traitors, more interested in assisting the tribes than in securing the safety of India.

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[69] Memorandum by Sir John Maffey: Unsolicited Views on an Unsolved Problem, 2 August 1922, Hailey Papers E220/3c.
[70] Lord Lansdowne quoted in Bruce, *The Forward Policy*, p. 357.

Rawlinson, for example, claimed that the Resident in Waziristan, James A. O. Fitzpatrick, had the mind of a Mahsud and was delighted when Fitzpatrick was replaced by Steuart Pears, whom Rawlinson believed to be a "white man to his fingertips."[71] Maffey posited that there were two sorts of men who came out to India: sportsmen and schoolmasters. The "sporting strain" was strongest in the Army and the "corrective" in the ICS. But, in his opinion, these two schools were essentially the same. The sportsman might shout "tally-ho" and the schoolmaster might talk about a "sharp lesson," but both led to unnecessary interference with the tribes. The idea that Waziristan could be occupied was, he maintained, sheer nonsense. All the Army held was a communication trench called the Ladha Line, which was "littered with . . . the skeletons of camels and motor-cars." Any attempt at a real occupation would result in constant warfare. Maffey claimed that the tribes, with their martial spirit, would "enjoy" this immensely, while the Army suffered. A forward policy would be disastrous for morale. Bases in tribal territory would be a "string of particular hells behind barbed wire . . . *sans* wife, *sans* children, *sans* joy, *sans* everything." For Indian troops, forward positions would be "bazaarless" prisons "amid merciless neighbours."[72] Occupation was not the answer. Maffey asserted that rather than focusing on the "minor problem" of the tribes, the Government should expend it energies on two things: quarantining Waziristan and dealing with the "major problem" on the Frontier: Afghanistan. Kabul encouraged the tribes to "misbehave," but the major form of this tribal misbehavior was raiding. The Chief Commissioner's elegant solution was to seal off Waziristan from the rest of the province through a ring road and series of guard blocks.[73]

Maffey's memorandum was met with astonishment. On one level, officials were taken aback by the "lurid" nature of his prose, but even more than this they were surprised by the reversal of his earlier adherence to a forward policy.[74] Rawlinson found it "shocking," while the

[71] Rawlinson to Montgomery, 22 February 1922, in Jacobsen, *Rawlinson*, p. 88; and Rawlinson to Montgomery, 13 March 1922, in Jacobsen, *Rawlinson*, p. 93.
[72] On this Maffey was quite prescient. Bases in tribal territory were essentially prisons. One British soldier recalled that a plaque at the entrance to the Landi Kotal Fort in Khyber Agency read "Abandon hope all ye who enter here" (Charles Allen, *Plain Tales from the Raj: Images of British India in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1975), p. 203).
[73] Memorandum by Sir John Maffey: Unsolicited Views on an Unsolved Problem.
[74] Note by Sir Denys Bray, 11 October 1922, Hailey Papers E220/3c.

Secretary of State was thoroughly confused.[75] Peel wrote to Reading that "of course every man is entitled to change his mind," but only in January Maffey had sat on a committee that unanimously stated several times that the only real solution to the Waziristan problem was permanent occupation.[76] The Viceroy asked what fresh circumstances had induced the Chief Commissioner to alter his opinion completely.[77] Maffey himself never fully explained his change of heart. It was left to speculation. The only certainty was that the Chief Commissioner's missive had once again opened the debate. Maffey's reversal spawned a revolt among many Political officers. The former Chief Commissioner of NWFP, Sir Hamilton Grant, and the Indian Foreign Secretary, Sir Denys Bray, both came out against occupation. Like Hailey, they resented the General Staff's influence over policy discussions.[78] Not all defected. Pears, the new Resident in Waziristan, was a staunch advocate of occupation as was his deputy, Arthur Parsons.[79] Reading, whom Rawlinson had believed to be "reliable," despite the fact that he was both a "lawyer and a Jew," began to waver.[80] He sent two members of the Viceroy's Council, Sir William Vincent and Sir Muhammad Shafi, to investigate Waziristan.[81]

On their return, Shafi in particular was critical of the Government's policy.[82] One of the few Indians whose opinion was sought, Shafi agreed with Maffey on a number of issues. But his report was more cogent than the veteran Frontier officer's. More than anything, Shafi put the General Staff's talk of "civilizing" the tribes in his crosshairs. He believed that the tribes would elude the military's "steam-roller" by melting into Afghanistan, which would likely lead to yet another war. The Mahsuds and Wazirs would never agree to permanent occupation. There was more, however. He wrote that:

> Apart from considerations based upon the principle of self-determination accepted at the Versailles Conference, even a casual consideration of the existing conditions, internal and external must make it abundantly clear that India cannot afford such a

[75] Rawlinson Journal Entry, 17 October 1922, in Jacobsen, *Rawlinson*, p. 117.
[76] Report of a Committee Assembled under an Order in Council, dated 6 January 1922, to Consider Future Policy in Waziristan.
[77] Secretary of State to Viceroy, 25 October 1922, Reading Papers IOR E238/5.
[78] Hailey to Maffey, 3 October 1922.
[79] Maffey to Hailey, 7 December 1922, Hailey Papers E220/3c.
[80] Rawlinson to Lord Derby, 9 May 1922, in Jacobsen, *Rawlinson*, p. 103.
[81] Maffey to Hailey, 17 November 1922, Hailey Papers E220/3c.
[82] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 16 November 1922, Reading Papers E238/5.

> philanthropic adventure. There is within our own Indian territories sufficient ignorance, poverty, and disease calling for all the efforts that we can make towards their eradication.

Since the Great War, India had faced financial deficits amounting to over Rs. 100/- crores (£66,666,666):

> It is undeniable that heavy military expenditure, including that on the Frontier, has contributed very largely towards the financial stringency which we have had to face, resulting in the crippling of our educational, sanitary, and industrial activities . . . We have, in the existing financial conditions, to cut our coat according to our cloth; otherwise the resulting dangers, financial and political, would be ruinous for India.[83]

Shafi's argument, with its heavy dose of common sense in lieu of the usual wishful thinking, was compelling. Moreover, Hailey, who had returned from home leave in a new incarnation as Home Member on the Viceroy's Council, threw himself back into the breach. Grieving over the death of his 24-year-old daughter who had died on 10 October, Hailey sent Peel an excessively long 40-page memorandum urging a reversal of policy.[84]

Given this renewed resistance along with Shafi's report, Reading asked Peel for a Royal Commission.[85] The Secretary of State refused. He told Reading that neither he nor the Committee of Imperial Defence would accept another vacillation in policy simply because a "frontier officer" had "conscientious objections" to carrying out the new policy.[86] The game was nearly at its end. Maffey and his allies made a last-ditch attempt to ward off the new policy at the end of January through *The Times*, but this served only to further convince the India Office and the Committee of Imperial Defence of the need to pursue the forward policy

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[83] Confidential Memorandum on the Waziristan Problem by Muhammad Shafi, December 1922, Hailey Papers E220/3c.

[84] Confidential Memorandum from Hailey to Eric Burden (Civilian Military Secretary in the India Office), 29 October 1922, Hailey Papers E220/3c. See Leslie Gilbert Pine, *The New Extinct Peerage 1884–1971: Containing Extinct, Abeyant, Dormant and Suspended Peerages With Genealogies and Arms* (London, 1972), p. 141.

[85] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 28 December 1922, Reading Papers E238/5. By this point, Rawlinson was privately referring to Shafi as a "cur-dog"! (Rawlinson to Montgomery, 22 November 1922, in Jacobsen, *Rawlinson*, p. 119).

[86] Secretary of State to Viceroy, 6 December 1922, Reading Papers E238/5.

in Waziristan. On 30 January 1923, Peel sent a telegram to Reading ordering the Government of India to adopt the new policy.[87] Instructions to execute the sanctioned policy "with utmost determination and vigour" were sent to the Frontier on 23 February. The new "modified" forward policy had prevailed.[88]

Waziristan and the maintenance of empire

The post-war crisis of Empire was fueled in large part by Britain's search for security, which, as one notable historian wrote, is "like love affairs or solvency, it is here today and gone tomorrow."[89] Britain's war-time and post-war expansion, carried out in the name of security led, ironically, to greater insecurity. Throughout the Empire, the initial British response to the outbursts of colonial nationalism soon took a conciliatory turn in which British security interests were maintained while outright control was relaxed. Both Southern Ireland and Egypt gained independence, but at the cost of the treaty ports and the occupation of the Canal zone. In Iraq, Arab rulers were put in place and the path to independence assured. Even in Afghanistan, outside the colonial empire, but where Britain had theoretically exercised control over foreign policy, complete independence was won after the Anglo-Afghan War of 1919. Placating the Afghans was considered the best way to guarantee Britain's strategic interests.

In India as well, the unrest of the war years and their aftermath led to major concessions. Chief among these were the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. But there were others, including the 1919 Anglo-Indian convention that, in practice, granted the Government of India control over its tariff policy, and the decision to ignore the recommendations of the Esher Committee. The latter was of great importance, since it was an acknowledgment that India would not, and could not pay, to be Britain's policeman in the East. Hand-in-hand with this was the decision, on financial grounds, to shrink the Indian Army. Taken together, these reforms and agreements represented a dramatic change in the way that Britain and India interacted with one another. It was of course empire

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[87] Telegram from the Secretary of State to the Viceroy, 30 January 1923, Hailey Papers E220/3c.

[88] Telegram from the Foreign Secretary to the Government of India to the General Officer Commanding, Waziriforce, 23 February 1923, Hailey Papers E220/3c.

[89] Gallagher, "Nationalisms and the Crisis of Empire," p. 358.

by different means, but it was still a step back from the overt and overweening imperialism of the war years.

Yet in Waziristan there was not a retreat from Empire but rather a *revanche*, a return to, and aggrandizement of, the forward policy of the nineteenth century. Despite the dire financial constraints facing India, and the fact that large sums would have to be taken from elsewhere to pay for it, London, in collusion with the leadership of the Indian Army, insisted on a forward policy. Much of this stemmed from the ideological hold that the Frontier held over the British in India. For this was the premier rampart of the Empire and could not be compromised. An aggressive policy should be followed, in spite of the protests of Hailey and the Indians, or as Rawlinson put it, the "black men" in the Viceroy's Council and Legislative Assembly.[90]

The decision to occupy Waziristan also demonstrates the continued dominance of the Army within the British Raj in the inter-war period. The Army had to accept some troop reductions in the name of retrenchment, but they balked when it came to the Frontier, which many in the officer corps saw as sacred ground. Maffey's characterization of the relationship between the Army and the tribes was in many ways correct, but not entirely: the General Staff's decision to utilize the language of civilization and economic development shows that the Army too could play the role of schoolmaster on the Frontier.

Rawlinson saw very little of what had become his project. Slated to return to England as Chief of the Imperial General Staff, he collapsed with appendicitis in March 1925 and died shortly thereafter. Hailey, having lost the battle of the Waziristan, threw himself into work as Governor of the Punjab and later still, the United Provinces. After retirement he became an imperial figure, compiling the monumental *African Survey* and working for Britain's imperial interests vis-à-vis the Americans in the Second World War.[91]

Rawlinson believed Maffey had reconciled himself to the new policy, but Maffey resigned in protest from the ICS on the day he reached a pensionable 25 years' service, a move which the future Governor of NWFP, the famously even-keeled George Cunningham, considered "theatrical."[92] Maffey's career was far from over, however. He too

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[90] Rawlinson to Montgomery, 22 January 1923, in Jacobsen, *Rawlinson*, p. 135.

[91] See William Malcolm Hailey, Baron Hailey, *An African Survey: A Study of Problems Arising in Africa South of the Sahara* (Oxford, 1938).

[92] George Cunningham to his Sister, 22 May 1926, Cunningham Papers IOR D670/38.

became an imperial figure, serving as Governor-General of the Sudan (1925–1933), and later as Permanent Undersecretary at the Colonial Office before finishing his career as the British envoy in Dublin (1939–1948). As for Waziristan and the Frontier, the modified forward policy was widely considered a success throughout the 1920s. The military occupation, roads, allowances, and the newest tool for tribal pacification, aerial bombing, were credited with keeping Waziristan relatively quiet. But concern remained that once a new generation of tribesmen grew up and forgot the last time the Army's "schoolmasters" had "taught them a lesson," there would be another tribal conflagration. Writing in 1929, Evelyn Howell, who served as Resident in Waziristan from 1924 to 1926, remarked that, like Tipperary in the wartime song, the ultimate solution to Waziristan had "a long way to go."[93]

[93] Howell, *Mizh*, p. 101.

3
A Cigarette in a Powder Magazine: The Frontier, Nationalism, and Reform, 1919–1930

In August 1917, the Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu, announced Britain's long-term goals in India. He declared that the British intended to increase the number of Indians in "every branch of the administration," and develop self-governing institutions, "with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire."[1] This declaration, made in the heat of war and in a time of growing opposition to British rule, opened the way for the enactment of the cautious and gradualist Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919.

British rule in India was premised on the central administration's control of India's finances and the Indian Army. With the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, the British hoped to maintain their grip on the military and finance while simultaneously strengthening the hand of moderate nationalists. Key to this effort was the transfer of local government, public health, education, land revenue administration, and "law and order" from the central government to the provinces. At the provincial level a policy of "dyarchy" was inaugurated in which the agriculture, public works, local self-government and Indian education portfolios were transferred to Indian ministers, while British governors and their executive councils kept control over reserved subjects such as irrigation, land revenue administration, police, justice, and prisons, as well as control of newspapers, books, and presses. The reforms also enlarged the Central Legislative Assembly, freed the Viceroy's Council from the constraints of an official majority, and placed the provinces on

[1] Peter G. Robb, *The Government of India and Reform: Policies Towards Politics and the Constitution, 1916–1921* (Oxford, 1976), p. 318.

a more equal footing with the "presidencies" of Bengal, Bombay, and Madras by raising them to full governor's status.

The reforms were not extended to the whole of India, however. The North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) was exempted from the new system "for reasons of strategy."[2] Both the administered and tribal tracts of the province remained under the autocratic rule of the Chief Commissioner and the Government of India throughout the 1920s. Although the NWFP eventually became a full "Montagu-Chelmsford" province in 1932, it did so only after the province exploded in revolt in April 1930. This chapter examines the British administration's decision to withhold reforms from the NWFP from the Third Anglo-Afghan War in 1919 to the publication of the Simon Commission's report in 1930. It argues that because the British viewed the Frontier as a place geographically, ethnically, culturally, and most importantly, strategically apart from the rest of India, they believed that reforms could be indefinitely postponed. This view originated in the British fixation on external threats to the North-West Frontier and the tribal areas. Reforms that were deemed safe enough in the rest of India were considered too dangerous on the Frontier. Since, as Clement Attlee argued, "the inherent right of a man to smoke a cigarette must necessarily be curtailed if he lives in a powder magazine," so too must reforms be withheld on this rampart of Empire.[3] Moreover, there was a deeply held belief among the British administration that this province, with a Pathan majority, possessed neither the means nor the desire for western representative institutions. Yet, despite these old assurances about the Pathan "character," the All-India context was changing in the 1920s, with nationalists taking a greater interest in the Frontier. In response, the British increasingly sought to seal off the NWFP from the rest of the subcontinent and, by extension, "political India." This ill-fated gambit blinded the authorities to the nationalist upsurge in the settled districts that ultimately came to a head in April 1930.

Rowlatt, the *Hijrat*, and reform

The relative peacefulness of the Frontier during the Great War was shattered by the Third Anglo-Afghan War in 1919, which swept

[2] Government of India Act, 1919, quoted in Indian Statutory Commission, *Report of the Indian Statutory Commission*, Vol. 1, *Survey* (London, 1930), p. 316.

[3] Draft by Major Attlee on the Simon Commission's Recommendations for NWFP – Suggested Continuation to SC/J566, 22 November 1929, Simon Papers, India Office Records (IOR) F77/49.

through the tribal belt. Yet the first signs of trouble on the Frontier came not from Waziristan or the Khyber Pass, but from the settled district of Peshawar where, by early spring 1919, there was growing unrest over the Government's adoption of what was known as the "Rowlatt Act." During the war, the British had enlarged their already substantial extra-judicial powers with the Defence of India Act in 1915. But, rather than reverting to the pre-war rule of law in 1918, the Government, wary of the growing discontent fueled by inflation, high food prices, and political repression, convened a committee under a British judge, Sir Sidney Rowlatt, to investigate Indian "sedition."[4] Rowlatt's committee suggested what amounted to a continuation of the war-time controls on civil liberties throughout India. The Government duly pushed bills based on Rowlatt's recommendations through the Central Legislature in the face of unanimous Indian opposition. This decision undercut any goodwill that may have been gained by the enactment of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. Mohandas Gandhi, a relative newcomer on the Indian stage, called for protests throughout the country. The British, who had considered the Frontier apolitical, were shocked by the sight of large anti-Rowlatt demonstrations in Peshawar.[5] The Chief Commissioner of the NWFP, Sir George Roos-Keppel, wrote:

> The effect of the Rowlatt Bill agitation has been extraordinary, and I am receiving petitions to the Viceroy from every tribe, every community in the district, the biggest men have signed these, even including the ones who are most on our side. Many of my most reliable and oldest Indian friends tell me that the men of the Indian Army are also very bitter against the Bill.[6]

Protests broke out in other areas of the NWFP as well. The future Frontier nationalist leader, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, claimed that a demonstration in Peshawar District drew tens of thousands – it also provided him with his first of many trips to British prisons after the imposition of martial law that spring.[7]

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[4] See *Report of the Sedition Committee, 1918.*

[5] Laurence Rushbrook Williams, *India in 1919* (Calcutta, 1920), p. 9.

[6] Roos-Keppel to Sir John Maffey, 8 May 1919, quoted in Abdul Ali Arghandawi, *British Imperialism and Afghanistan's Struggle for Independence, 1914–1921* (New Delhi, 1989), p. 176.

[7] Abdul Ghaffar Khan, *My Life and Struggle: Autobiography of Badshah Khan as Narrated to K. B. Narang* (Delhi, 1969), pp. 40–41.

In the Punjab, what the British called "anti-Rowlatt agitation" grew violent after a female English missionary, Miss Sherwood, was assaulted on the streets of Amritsar in April 1919. The chief executive officer in the Punjab, Lieutenant Governor Sir Michael O'Dwyer, as well as imbibing the conservative and paternalistic approach of the so-called "Punjab school" of Indian administration, was also a former Frontier officer (1901–1908), having served as the Chief Commissioner of the NWFP in 1906. In the aftermath of the attack on the missionary, O'Dwyer became convinced that he was dealing with another Indian Mutiny. He declared martial law and sanctioned courts-martial, public floggings, and aerial bombardment of civilians, all of which mirrored regular "law and order" practices in the NWFP under the Frontier Crimes Regulation. Also, in a departure from usual British Indian practice – but a typical practice on the Frontier – he called out the Army to deal with this civil unrest.[8] The commanding officer sent to Amritsar, Brigadier Reginald Dyer, declared all public meetings illegal. When a large gathering nevertheless took place in an enclosed space known as Jallianwalah Bagh on the afternoon of 13 April, Dyer moved in troops to break up the meeting. Rather than issuing the customary warning, Dyer's troops immediately opened fire on the crowd. By the Government's own estimate, 379 men, women, and children died in the ensuing mêlée – the actual death toll was probably higher.[9] Dyer subsequently imposed a "crawling order," which stipulated that all Indians using the street on which Miss Sherwood was assaulted should proceed on hands and knees. Failure to comply would result in public flogging. The shootings and crawling order proved catastrophic. Indian nationalists turned against the Government and April of 1919 is rightly seen as a key moment in the long-term demise of British rule in India.[10]

The events at Amritsar further incensed public opinion on the Frontier, but the more important impact was to provide the Afghan Amir Amanullah with a pretext for the Third Anglo-Afghan War in

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[8] See Sir Michael O'Dwyer, *The Punjab Disturbances of April 1919: Criticism of the Hunter Committee Report* (London, 1919) and Sir Michael O'Dwyer, *India as I Knew It, 1885–1925* (London, 1928), pp. 104–134.

[9] Rushbrook Williams, *India in 1919*, p. 36. See also *Report of the Committee Appointed in the Government of India to Investigate the Disturbances in the Punjab, etc. [and Evidence taken Before the Disorders Inquiry Committee]* (London, 1920).

[10] See, for example, Alfred Draper, *Amritsar: The Massacre that Ended the Raj* (London, 1981) and Nigel Collett, *The Butcher of Amritsar: General Reginald Dyer* (London, 2005).

May 1919. Amanullah claimed that the war was intended to save Indian Muslims from "English tyranny," which had been brought to light by the massacre. Although the trans-border tribes eventually rallied to his banner, the first support for Amanullah's holy war came not from the tribal belt but from Peshawar. The city's Afghan postmaster, Ghulam Haider, assisted by the local "Indian Revolutionary Committee," planned to recruit 7,000 Afridi tribesmen to attack the cantonment area, destroy mobilization stores, and kill the resident Europeans. What would have been a major blow to both the British presence on the Frontier and perhaps in India itself was narrowly averted by the quick actions of the Chief Commissioner, Roos-Keppel. Hearing of the plot, the Chief Commissioner closed the gates to the city on the morning of 8 May and surrounded it with troops, arresting Ghulam Haider and defusing the conspiracy.[11]

Shaken by this intrigue, the Government of India contemplated extending the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms to the NWFP. Roos-Keppel, an old school paternalist, vetoed this. In spite of the numerous anti-Rowlatt demonstrations throughout Peshawar District, he insisted that the province was untouched by the nationalism that was affecting the rest of India. The reforms were therefore unnecessary. Moreover, he argued, democratic reforms would be a poor cousin to the already robust *jirga* system where the Frontier's leading men could express themselves to the administration in a more honest manner than they would in British-style assembly.[12]

The ailing Roos-Keppel retired in autumn 1919 and was replaced as Chief Commissioner by India's Foreign Secretary, Sir Anthony Hamilton Grant. A staunch Liberal, Grant believed that British policies could catch more flies with honey, a philosophy borne out in his recent negotiations on the Afghan peace treaty. Grant was politically an outsider among the Frontier cadre and was, by and large, genuinely sympathetic to "political India." He believed that Indians had shown immense loyalty during the First World War, and "had a right to expect generous treatment," but instead they received the Rowlatt Act, "a stupid, blundering, act," which had resulted in the Amritsar shootings and a "legacy of hate" that would take decades to wipe out. Although Grant believed that the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, with their provincial dyarchy

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[11] Abdul Ali Arghandawi, *British Imperialism and Afghanistan's Struggle for Independence, 1914–1921* (New Delhi, 1989), pp. 176–179.

[12] Note by Roos-Keppel to Government of India, 15 October 1919, IOR L P&J 9/19.

were already "moribund," any reforms were positive and he hoped to begin the process in the NWFP.[13] Within weeks of assuming the Chief Commissionership, he wrote to the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, asking him to approve a provincial advisory council. Chelmsford, however, denied the request.[14] Grant's sympathy for political reform failed to win him many admirers within the Political Service. Olaf Caroe, who was then beginning his career, recalled that although Grant had many fine qualities, including a "rather Rabelaisan turn of wit," he was "not a good head" of the province. Caroe believed that Grant had been in Delhi and Simla for far too long, did not "really care for the Pathans and found Frontier life too dangerous and exciting for a man who enjoyed the fleshpots."[15]

Both Grant's sympathies and his administrative abilities were to be tested during his period as Chief Commissioner by the All-India political situation, which was to have a dramatic impact on the Frontier in the form of the Khilafat movement and the attendant *Hijrat* in 1920. The Khilafat movement had its origins in Muslim objections to fighting the Ottoman Empire in the First World War. These smoldering grievances were aggravated after the war when it became clear that Britain and her allies meant to vitiate the old empire, stripping Turkey of almost all its possessions, including Mecca and Medina. Many Indian Muslims viewed this as a direct assault on Islam as the Ottoman Sultan, who was also the *Khalifah*, or spiritual head, of Islam. Formed by the brothers Mohamed and Shaukat Ali in 1919, it soon took on a nationalist hue, allying with Gandhi in 1920.[16]

In the NWFP, where Muslims comprised over 95% of the population, the Khilafat movement made considerable inroads. In particular, the Khilafat movement on the Frontier was characterized by what was called the *Hijrat*.[17] Based on Muhammad's flight from Mecca to

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[13] Sir Anthony Hamilton Grant, "India," in *Essays in Liberalism: Being the Lectures and Papers which were Delivered at the Liberal Summer School at Oxford, 1922*, (London, 1922), pp. 92–110.

[14] Stephen Alan Rittenberg, *Ethnicity, Nationalism, and the Pakhtuns: The Independence Movement in India's North-West Frontier Province* (Durham, North Carolina, 1988), p. 48.

[15] Unpublished Caroe Memoirs, Caroe Papers IOR F203/79.

[16] See Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India* (New York, 1982) and M. Naeem Qureshi, *Pan-Islam in British Indian Politics: A Study of the Khilafat Movement, 1918–1924* (Leiden, 1999).

[17] See Dietrich Reetz, *Hijrat: The Flight of the Faithful – A British File on the Exodus of Muslim Peasants from North India to Afghanistan in 1920* (Berlin, 1995); Chapter 4 in Qureshi, *Pan-Islam*; and Lal Baha, "The Hijrat Movement and the North-West

Medina, a *Hijrat* constitutes an emigration to *daru'l-Islam* (land of peace), where Muslim rule and law are supreme, and the abandonment of *daru'l-harb* (land of war), where it is not. Among Indian Muslims, the exact status of India vis-à-vis the Islamic world had been a subject of debate since the inception of British rule, but in the wake of the war, with the future of the Khalifah and the Muslim holy places in the balance, the argument over India's status began anew. The leadership of the Khilafat movement believed that British actions in the Middle East meant that India was now *daru'l-harb*. The Ali brothers informed the Viceroy that given the choice between "*Jihad* or *Hijrat*," the best option for India's "weakened" Muslims was immigration to the *daru'l-Islam* of Afghanistan.[18]

Encouraged by the Amir Amanullah, who remained a thorn in Britain's side, emigrants or *muhajirin* en route to Afghanistan began to stream into the NWFP in the summer of 1920. At first the bulk of *muhajirin* came from the Sind, but by the end of July the overwhelming majority hailed from the administered districts of the NWFP. Grant reported that the *Hijrat* was seriously affecting the rural areas of the Peshawar District and hundreds flocked daily to Peshawar to join the exodus.[19] The Charsadda subdivision of Peshawar District, which would become the epicenter of Frontier nationalism in the 1930s, was drained of people and crops rotted in the fields. Rather than clamp down on the movement, Grant urged his superiors in Simla to pressure the British Government to revise the soon-to-be-signed Sèvres Treaty with Turkey. He wrote:

> Though the *Hijrat* movement and the Non-Cooperation Movement may die a natural death, these movements will be replaced by others of perhaps a more dangerous kind; and we shall not again secure the whole-hearted loyalty of the Muslim community until we have done something to redress what . . . they consider a breach of faith, a bitter wrong, and a deep injury to their religion.[20]

Frontier Province," in Fazal-ur-Rahim Marwat and Sayed Ali Shah Kakakhel (eds), *Afghanistan and the Frontier* (Peshawar, 1993), pp. 168–183.

[18] Qureshi, *Pan-Islam*, p. 180.

[19] Chief Commissioner, NWFP (Sir Hamilton Grant) to Foreign Secretary, Government of India (Sir Denys Bray), 13 July 1920, IOR L P&J 6/1701, and Chief Commissioner, NWFP to Acting Foreign Secretary, Government of India (Norman Cater), 27 July 1920, L P&J 6/1701.

[20] Chief Commissioner, NWFP to Acting Foreign Secretary, Government of India (Norman Cater), 27 July 1920.

In reply, the Indian Foreign Secretary informed Grant that the "last word" had been spoken on the Turkish Peace and recommended that the authorities in NWFP "take stronger action" against the Khilafat "agitators."[21]

Despite this advice, Grant continued to treat the *Hijrat* with a strict policy of non-interference, and no action was taken to prevent the movement of emigrants across the Afghan Frontier. In the first week of August 1920, *hartals*, or strikes, were observed throughout the province and by mid-month over 20,000 *muhajirin* had migrated to Afghanistan.[22] Of these, 17,000 came from the NWFP.[23] By this point both the Government of India and the Army began to worry. Fretting over desertions and a possible uprising throughout the Frontier, local military commanders insisted that the civil authorities' reluctance to interfere in "religious matters" meant that rumors about the destruction of Mecca went unchecked and were even encouraged – a charge which the NWFP government strenuously denied.[24] The Viceroy was increasingly concerned about "the close historical connection between the *Hijrat* and *Jihad*."[25]

Through all this, Grant remained calm. He knew from intelligence reports that the massive influx of *muhajirin* was taxing Afghanistan's rudimentary infrastructure. Moreover, there was growing unrest among the Afghans displaced by the newcomers.[26] Grant correctly gambled that the Afghan side of the equation would soon collapse, bringing the *Hijrat* to an end. Overwhelmed by Indian emigrants, Amanullah issued a *firman* on 9 August 1920 suspending the *Hijrat*. Five days later, migrants were turned away by Afghan authorities at the Khyber Pass and they began to return home. Sincerely worried about the welfare of the *muhajirin*, Grant reported that the local situation was rapidly improving and that the local Khilafat Committee realized that they had "aroused forces they cannot control and are paralysed with fear of a public who are bitterly resentful at having thus been duped."[27] Conditions for the

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[21] Acting Foreign Secretary, Government of India (Norman Cater) to Chief Commissioner, NWFP, 3 August 1920, L P&J 6/1701.
[22] Viceroy (Chelmsford) to Secretary of State (Montagu), 6 August 1920, L P&J 6/1701.
[23] Chief Commissioner, NWFP to Foreign Secretary, Government of India, 10 August 1920, P&J 6/1701.
[24] The General Officer Commanding, Northern Command, Murree, to the Chief of the General Staff, India (Sir George Kirkpatrick), 14 August 1920, L P&J 6/1701.
[25] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 13 August 1920, L P&J 6/1701.
[26] Chief Commissioner, NWFP to Foreign Secretary, Government of India and Resident, Waziristan, 10 August 1920, L P&J 6/1701.
[27] Chief Commissioner, NWFP to Foreign Secretary, Government of India, 14 August 1920, L P&J 6/1701.

30,000 *muhajirin* already in Afghanistan grew increasingly grim over the following months and the trickle of returning emigrants turned into a river. The NWFP administration set up a privately funded relief effort for the estimated 17,000 returning emigrants.[28]

Amanullah's suspension effectively ended the *Hijrat* and took the steam out of the province's Khilafat movement. Telling the Viceroy that "we are always so afraid of appearing weak that we lose our opportunities of profitable generosity," Grant enacted a conciliatory policy towards the thousands who trekked back to India, helping them resettle and offering relief.[29] This policy succeeded, and what had begun as a challenge to British rule on the Frontier served to consolidate the Raj's hold over the now thoroughly disenchanted *muhajirin*.[30] Moreover, the failure of the *Hijrat* and the role that the local religious leadership played in encouraging it, convinced nationalists such as Abdul Ghaffar Khan that any future anti-British movement must jettison the mullahs.[31] As part of his sympathetic policy, Grant again requested the extension of reforms to the NWFP in late 1920.[32] This time Chelmsford offered to grant the province a Legislative Council.[33] As he prepared for retirement, Grant informed a provincial *Durbar*, or court, that the province could soon expect new reforms.[34] With the tribal tracts quiet and the *Hijrat* movement utterly destroyed, the way was now seemingly open for the settled districts to begin their experiment with a parliamentary system.

The Bray Committee and the question of reforms

Grant retired in March 1921, and Sir John Maffey replaced him as Chief Commissioner. Although Maffey and Grant agreed on many aspects of Frontier policy, including their opposition to the Government's new Waziristan plan, Maffey, who was of a far more conservative bent than

[28] Foreign Secretary, Government of India, to Chief Commissioner, NWFP, 23 August 1920, L P&J 6/1701.
[29] Grant to Chelmsford, 20 July 1920, Grant Papers IOR D660/25.
[30] Reetz also makes this point in his *Hijrat: The Flight of the Faithful,* p. 74.
[31] Interview with Khudai Khidmatgar leader Abdul Aziz in Mukulika Banerjee, *The Pathan Unarmed: Opposition & Memory in the North-West Frontier* (Delhi, 2001), p. 50.
[32] Viceroy (Reforms Office) to Secretary of State for India, 14 October 1920, L P&J 9/19.
[33] NWF Enquiry – India Office Minutes on Advance Proof forwarded without Comment by Government of India, 1 January 1923, L P&J 9/19.
[34] Copy of speech delivered by Grant at Provincial Durbar at Peshawar, 28 February 1921, Grant Papers IOR D660/26.

his predecessor, strongly opposed reforms in the NWFP. The new Chief Commissioner reported that he found "absolutely no interest or enthusiasm" for reform among the people that "count[ed]" in the province: the large landowning Khans. Rather than providing the NWFP with representative reforms, Maffey believed that the administration should "put the clock back" and revive the powers of the big Khans. Invoking the strategic importance of the Frontier for all of India, Maffey argued that only under firm conservative leadership would the province "fulfill its role of being a roof to the rest of India and not a constant source of danger."[35] Relieved with this opinion, the Government of India concurred, and once again reforms were off the table.

Yet only a few months later, in September 1921, the Indian Legislative Assembly reopened the questions of reforms, passing a resolution urging a committee to examine the possibility of re-amalgamating the five administered districts of the NWFP with the Punjab.[36] Looking at the history of the last three tumultuous years, the Viceroy, Lord Reading, believed that the inhabitants of the Frontier were indeed discontented with the *status quo* and in April 1922, without consulting London, he set up a committee under India's Foreign Secretary, Sir Denys Bray, a Frontier veteran and noted etymologist of Baluchistan's Brahui population.[37] The committee's first charge was the question of re-amalgamation with the Punjab. Their second question was whether, in the likely event that re-amalgamation was deemed unworkable, internal reforms should be enacted in the NWFP. In May 1922, the committee members travelled to the NWFP and began taking evidence. They heard from a variety of witnesses, including Frontier officials, representatives of the local bar, large landowners, and spokesmen for civic organizations. On the first question – the subject of re-amalgamation – the witnesses split along communal and racial lines. The vast majority of the Muslims

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[35] Quoted in Rittenberg, *Ethnicity*, p. 49.

[36] Report of the North-West Frontier Enquiry Committee and Minutes of Dissent by Mr. T. Rangachariar and Mr. N. M. Samarth, 1922, IOR V/26/247/1. The Resolution was introduced by Sir Sivaswamy Aiyer, Member Legislative Assembly (MLA Madras).

[37] Viceroy (Reading) to Secretary of State (Peel), 25 May 1922, Reading Papers IOR E238/5. Along with Bray, the Committee included Saiyid Raza Ali (Member of the Council of State) Rao Bahadur Tiruvenkata Rangachariar (MLA Madras) Chaudri Shahabuddin (MLA Punjab) Narayan Madhav Samarth (MLA Bombay) Khan Bahadur Abdul Rahim Khan (MLA NWFP) A. H. Parker (District and Sessions Judge, Punjab) and Norman Bolton (Revenue Commissioner, NWFP).

interviewed – almost all of them large landowners – came out against it, arguing that the Pathans in the tribal belt and the settled districts should remain within a single administration. The Europeans in the Frontier administration, such as Maffey, were also opposed, and usually stressed the strategic need to keep the entire trans-Indus tracts, both settled and tribal, under imperial rather than provincial control.[38] The NWFP's small, urban, Hindu community, which made up much of the merchant and legal populations of the towns, tended to support re-amalgamation with the Punjab.

Deliberating over its findings in the fall of 1922, the Bray Committee too split along communal lines. The Muslims and Europeans on the committee declared that not only was it impossible to divide the tribal tracts from the five administered districts of the NWFP, but, for strategic, cultural, and economic reasons, it would be unworkable to re-amalgamate these districts with the Punjab. The two Hindu members came to the opposite conclusion, arguing that re-amalgamation was not only advisable, but necessary.[39] The dissenting members were motivated in part by the fact that as an "infidel" minority, the Hindu population suffered disproportionately from tribal raids on the settled districts. They believed that Hindus would receive greater protection from the Punjab administration.[40] The majority's report stated clearly that "the ultimate object of our whole frontier policy is the security of India" and that no political arrangement in the NWFP could be made that did not address the continual threats posed by the transfrontier tribes. The committee reasoned that one of the Government's few powers over the independent tribes was the fact that most of the tribes were economically dependent on the districts, where they came to trade and offer seasonal labor. Separation would deprive the NWFP Chief Commissioner of the "only peaceful means" he had for controlling the tribes. Only if the Government of India was prepared to mount a massive military operation across the width and breadth of the tribal belt and impose a forward policy of total occupation, could the amalgamation of the NWFP with the Punjab be countenanced. The fact that two members of the Bray Committee did not sign on to these findings, the majority argued, stemmed from the fact that they were both Hindus from the south (Bombay and Madras). A north Indian, even one who

[38] Interview with Sir John Maffey, Chief Commissioner, NWFP, North-West Frontier Enquiry Committee, 1922, IOR V/26/247/2.

[39] Report of the North-West Frontier Enquiry Committee.

[40] Minutes of Dissent by Mr. T. Rangachariar and Mr. N. M. Samarth, V/26/247/1.

wore the "rosiest coloured spectacles," could not deny the "grimness of the frontier or its ever present peril to all-India."[41]

After dismissing re-amalgamation, the Bray Committee's report moved on to the issue of reforms. During their tour of the Frontier, the committee collected a number of views, the most important of which was the Chief Commissioner's. In his interview, Maffey took a less reactionary view than he had the previous year, but he still counseled against reforms. The Chief Commissioner told the committee that he was in sympathy with the "reform movement," but that the question of extending representative institutions to the NWFP was "difficult." Introducing an argument that would become increasingly common in the coming years, he averred that the danger of reform was not to the Frontier *per se*, but rather to India as a whole. He argued that any "rash move" – by this he meant reforms – in the NWFP might unleash so much turmoil that it could "end the whole reform movement in India."[42] Despite Maffey's warnings, the majority of the committee agreed that there was clearly a "strong and conscious desire" for reforms and the time had come for "liberal institutions" in the NWFP. These reforms would be incremental, however. Rather than the introduction of the Montagu-Chelmsford policy of dyarchy, in which Indian ministers controlled portfolios such as education and agriculture, the reforms on the Frontier would be relatively small, with the creation of a Legislative Council. The Bray Committee suggested a council with an elected majority of 60% and special representation reserved for the large landowning Khans. In view of the "hot-headedness" of the Pathans, the committee felt that special representation for the Khans was essential, so that the "introduction of democratic institutions" did not undermine the influence of conservative leaders in the administered districts. As well as recommending an enlarged representation for the NWFP in the Central Legislature, the report also called for unspecified All-India safeguards to be provided in an amendment to the Government of India Act 1919.[43]

The committee's thoroughly conservative recommendations offered elements of representative government and minimal concessions, but guaranteed British control over the levers of power. Moreover, the committee had defeated the move to re-amalgamate the settled districts with the Punjab. Had this taken place, the settled districts would have

[41] Report of the North-West Frontier Enquiry Committee.
[42] Interview with Sir John Maffey, Chief Commissioner, NWFP, North-West Frontier Enquiry Committee.
[43] Report of the North-West Frontier Enquiry Committee.

enjoyed all the fruits of Montagu-Chelmsford as part of the Punjab. It also would have possibly placed this region in the clutches of Indian nationalist politicians, something the British wished to avoid at all costs. Yet, despite the conservative nature of the Bray Committee's proposals, many, including Maffey, called for their rejection and as a result Reading failed to provide the India Office with a clear recommendation.[44] Faced with this indecision, London played it safe and opted to reject the entire report. In coming to this conclusion, the Secretary of State for India, Lord Peel, cited Maffey's concerns about the strategic vulnerability of the Frontier, as well as his fear that any reforms or increase in representation for the Frontier in the Central Legislature would lead to amendments to the 1919 Government of India Act and create unwanted publicity. Any increase in provincial representation would upset the communal balance of Hindus and Muslims in the legislature and, more importantly, lead to the Frontier becoming a subject of public debate within India. This was to be avoided at all costs. The publication of the report was suppressed and reforms were shelved.[45]

The Frontier and the Simon Commission

By 1925, it appeared that the Frontier administration could afford to be sanguine about their position. The modified forward policy pushed steadily forward in Waziristan, with small skirmishes here and there, but nothing on the level of 1919–1922. Political strife in the administered districts all but disappeared as the Government used its wide powers under the Frontier Crimes Regulation to exile or imprison any nationalist "agitators." But despite this localized calm, the issue of reforms on the Frontier grew increasingly important to All-India politics. After the alliance that accompanied the Non-Cooperation Movement, the 1920s witnessed a growing political polarization between India's Hindus and Muslims.[46] By the mid-1920s, a growing number of All-India Muslim politicians began to call for the extension of reforms to the NWFP so that this Muslim majority province could serve as a counterweight against what they saw as Hindu domination.[47] Likewise, overtly Hindu

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[44] Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, 21 May 1923, L P&J 9/19.

[45] Secretary of State to Viceroy, 16 July 1923, L P&J 9/19, and Laurence Rushbrook Williams, *India in 1925–26* (Calcutta, 1927), p. 107.

[46] See David Page, *Prelude to Partition: Indian Muslims and the Imperial System of Control, 1920–1932* (New York, 1982).

[47] See Secretary of State to Viceroy, 16 July 1923. In the 1920s, Muslims comprised 91.6% of the settled districts (Report of the North-West Enquiry Committee).

nationalists, like Madan Mohan Malaviya, argued against reforms, citing tribal attacks upon the NWFP's Hindu minority as proof that the Frontier was too backwards for reforms.[48] Shades of this split had been present in the Bray Committee, which had divided upon communal lines.

The question of reforms in the NWFP was reopened in 1926, when a Muslim member for Madras, Maulvi Syed Murtaza Bahadur, brought up the issue in the Indian Legislative Assembly. A member of the Congress-affiliated Swaraj Party, Murtaza pointedly declared that he passed the resolution not as a Swarajist but "as a member of the All-India Muslim League." Arguing that his resolution was based on the Bray Committee's proposals, Murtaza told the assembly that it was simply a question of granting "elementary rights" to the inhabitants of the Frontier. Murtaza's speech was followed by Nawab Sahibzada Sir Abdul Qaiyum, the future Chief Minister of NWFP, and one of the province's two members in the Central Legislature.[49] Qaiyum was one of the most powerful and influential men in the NWFP. Joining the Political Service in 1887, he served under Roos-Keppel as Assistant Political Agent for the Khyber, and then as Political Agent for the Khyber, the first full-blooded Indian to hold a post of this nature. Reflecting the views of the province's large landowning Khans – the group which Maffey had sought to bolster – Abdul Qaiyum stated that, although he had little confidence in the benefits of reform, he believed that the Frontier should be treated like the rest of India and therefore supported the motion. Despite having authored the report on which Murtaza's resolution was based, Denys Bray, who as Foreign Secretary had an official seat in the assembly, fought the motion. Reflecting the heightened fear of Afghan or Soviet invasion that the British had in the period, he argued that the Frontier must remain an all-India concern, to be dealt with by the Viceroy in Council. It could not be treated "parochially but imperially." He sought to use the communal divide to his advantage, stating that the assembly would have to "eschew light and easy decisions which communal or

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In May 1924, the All-India Muslim League passed a resolution insisting upon "the immediate and paramount necessity of introducing reforms in the N. W. F. Province and of placing the province in all respects in a position of equality with the other major provinces of India" (Rittenberg, *Ethnicity*, p. 50).

[48] Note by Donald Gladding (Home Department, Government of India): Compilation of Assembly Debates on Grant of Reforms in the NWFP, 6 June 1930, National Archives of India (NAI) HOME (POL.) F. 318/1930.

[49] Although the province sent two members to the Central Legislature, the members were nominated by the Chief Commissioner. In the Montagu-Chelmsford provinces, the representatives were elected.

other biases may . . . suggest."[50] For the time being, the communal aspect of the debate offered the British a strong argument for withholding reforms and they encouraged this division. The issue contributed to a further deterioration of Hindu-Muslim unity in the Swaraj Party, something the British had fully anticipated and now welcomed.[51]

Yet British attempts to use communal balance in blocking reforms was hindered by their own wariness of blatantly manipulating the subcontinent's Muslims. Ever since 1857, the British viewed India's Muslims as, paradoxically, both the bulwark of the Army in India, and as a potential fifth column, ready to rise and expel their imperial masters at a moment's notice.[52] By 1926–1927, the administration was troubled by Muslim anger at the lack of reforms on the Frontier. Although the resolutely Conservative Secretary of State for India, Lord Birkenhead, believed that the extension of reforms to the NWFP was "probably impossible for many years to come," the new Viceroy, Lord Irwin, believed that some action must be taken.[53] Communal tensions were high throughout northern India in the spring of 1927 following the publication of the *Rangila Rasul* ('Colorful Prophet'), an Urdu pamphlet that discussed the private life of Muhammad. Serious rioting occurred both in the Punjab and the NWFP and many within the Indian administration were concerned that this would lead to even greater violence. Focusing on the communal arithmetic at an All-India level rather than the specific security concerns or the racial character of the Frontier, Irwin told Birkenhead that if the Government continued to "shelve the question," the "reaction on Moslem [sic] opinion in India may be serious and may cause us trouble."[54]

There was another reason for the Government of India to reassess its approach to the NWFP: the Indian Statutory Commission. The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms included a provision for a commission to investigate the progress of the reforms and what, if any, further steps should be taken in India's constitutional advance, after a period of ten years. A plotter to his core, Birkenhead believed that by the time this commission was inaugurated in 1929, the Labour Party would likely

[50] *Indian Central Legislative Assembly Debates*, 16 February 1926, p. 1326.
[51] See Note by Gladding and *India in 1925–26*, p. 105.
[52] See Tan Tai Yong, *The Garrison State: Military, Government and Society in Colonial Punjab, 1849–1947* (New Delhi, 2005) and David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India* (Princeton, 1978), Chapter 2.
[53] Secretary of State (Birkenhead) to Viceroy (Irwin), 18 November 1926, Halifax Papers IOR C152/2.
[54] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 19 May 1927, Halifax Papers IOR C152/3.

have a majority in the House of Commons. This he could not allow. Birkenhead opposed any further "concessions" to Indian nationalists. A contemporary remarked, with a great deal of truth, that "[Birkenhead] would like to take back everything that has been done in India since Montagu, or perhaps since Macaulay."[55] In order to deny a Labour government the ability to appoint a commission prone to making concessions, he jumped the gun and appointed a Conservative-majority Indian Statutory Commission in 1927.[56] The commission, presided over by the serpentine lawyer and Liberal MP, Sir John Simon, included no Indians, a decision that enraged Indian nationalists.[57] Although the Viceroy was a very different creature from his Secretary of State, Irwin, in one of his more tone-deaf moments, agreed to this arrangement, following the old Conservative Party tactic of making gradual reforms before their opponents fomented revolution.

Irwin followed this line in his views on Frontier reform. He believed that the Government could shed this "perpetual source of embarrassment" by introducing a new scheme for "conservative and prudent" reforms in the NWFP before a Statutory Commission made more liberal recommendations. Ever cautious, the Viceroy worried that introducing reforms might be seen as indefensible when they "were on the threshold of the investigation" by the Simon Commission.[58] Nevertheless, he moved forward. Irwin discussed reforms with Sir Norman (Bill) Bolton, who replaced Maffey as Chief Commissioner of the NWFP in 1923. Bolton, who had served on the Frontier since 1902, was opposed to most reforms but endorsed the creation of a legislative council along the lines of those inaugurated by the Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909.[59] Yet, wary of any change on the Frontier, especially when the nationalist lull of the mid-1920s gave them a perfect excuse to stand pat, the Viceroy's Council failed to agree even to this backwards-looking proposal.[60]

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[55] Geoffrey Dawson (Editor of *The Times*) to Irwin, 14 November 1929, Halifax Papers C152/18/304.
[56] Judith M. Brown, *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy*, 2nd Edition (Oxford, 1994), p. 251. See also Carl Bridge, *Holding India to the Empire: The British Conservative Party and the 1935 Constitution* (New Delhi, 1986).
[57] The Commission included a single Liberal (Sir John Simon), four Conservatives (Lord Burnham, Edward Cadogan, Colonel George Lane-Fox, and Lord Strathcona) and two Labourites (Clement Attlee and Vernon Hartshorn).
[58] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 24 November 1926, Halifax Papers C152/2.
[59] Notes of a Conversation between Sir Horatio (Norman) Bolton and Lord Winterton (Under Secretary of State for India) at Peshawar, 22 January 1927, IOR L PO 5/24A. For a description of the Indian Councils Act of 1909, commonly known as the Morley-Minto Reforms, see Brown, *Modern India*, pp. 148–152.
[60] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 19 May 1927.

Events were outpacing the Government of India's reticence, however. The Simon Commission's exclusively British membership helped to reawaken an adversarial Indian nationalism. When Simon arrived in India in February 1928, he was met by a mass boycott by Congress.[61] Dogged by protests every step of the way, the Commission carried out its increasingly quixotic tour of the subcontinent. This upsurge in nationalist feeling led to the creation of a counter commission formed by Congress and chaired by the eminent jurist and nationalist, Motilal Nehru. Nehru and his colleagues realized that since the Frontier was part of India, consistency demanded that Congress support the call for reforms there. Following a year of deliberation, Nehru's commission published conclusions (widely known as the Nehru Report), which were submitted and accepted by the All-Parties Conference (Congress, Muslim League, etc.) in late 1928, and then confirmed by the Congress Party as a whole.[62] Among a number of resolutions, the most important of which was the call for immediate Dominion Status for India, the report officially endorsed full Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms for the NWFP. The report, and the fact that it had been endorsed by Muslim nationalist groups, seriously weakened the British attempt to use the argument of communal balance in the legislature as a weapon against the extension of greater liberties to the Frontier. More than this, however, the Nehru Report opened the door to a much wider discussion of the future of the Frontier on an All-India level.[63]

After a brief respite in England, the Simon Commission visited the Frontier in November 1928. In preparation for this, Irwin drew up guidelines for Bolton's upcoming discussion with the Commission. The Viceroy now believed that in the wake of the All-Parties Conference resolution in favor of full reforms in the NWFP, the Frontier's Pathans would no longer tolerate "being treated as more backward" than the rest of India. The *status quo* could not stand. Irwin proposed that a number of liberal measures be taken, including the establishment of a legislature with the "power to make laws and vote supplies."[64] The Frontier administration, however, remained opposed to most reforms. In his interview with the "Joint Committee," which included the Simon

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[61] See Shiri Ram Bakshi, *Simon Commission and Indian Nationalism* (New Delhi, 1977).
[62] See All Parties Conference, *Report of the Committee appointed by the Conference to Determine the Principles of the Constitution for India: Together with a Summary of the Proceedings of the Conference Held at Lucknow* (Allahabad, 1928).
[63] Note by Gladding.
[64] Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State, 8 October 1928, IOR L P&S 12/3135.

Commission members and Indian "auxiliaries" known as the Indian Central Committee, Bolton made clear his hostility to reforms.[65] While he reiterated his support for a powerless "talking shop" council on the Morley-Minto model, he refused to contemplate "the introduction of any element of responsibility" since this would weaken the executive, a dangerous move in the NWFP. The elected element in this weak and ineffectual council might comprise 50% of its members, but within this group there should be special constituencies for landholders and retired Army officers. When an Indian member reminded him that the Bray Committee of 1922, of which Bolton had been a member, went much further in its recommendations, the Chief Commissioner said that "further reflections," combined with unspecified "experience now gained of the working dyarchical system elsewhere," led him to alter his opinion. In an area of India where the British much lamented the "democratic instinct" of the population, Bolton felt that the it would be more appropriate if the constitutional "development of the province should proceed more on autocratic or oligarchic than on democratic lines."[66]

When pressed by Sir Zulfiqar Ali Khan, an Indian member of the "Joint Committee," as to why democratic reforms should be avoided, Bolton said that his "personal enquiries convinced him that the ordinary villager was indifferent as to the introduction of reforms." Citing the old and outdated argument against further reforms throughout India, the Chief Commissioner asserted that the only groups interested in constitutional advancement were the "unrepresentative" educated classes in urban areas.[67] He argued that although the large landowning Khans were interested in some reforms, they were divided over the extent to which changes should be made.[68] Yet, as Sir Abdul Qaiyum had made clear in 1926, the Khans wanted reform; a deputation from this group assured the Simon Commission that they were deeply interested

[65] The Indian Central Committee included Sir Sankaran Nair, Sir Hari Singh Gour, Sir Arthur Froom, Dr. Abdullah Suhrawardy, Sir Kikibai Premchand, Nawab Ali Khan, Sardar Singh Oberoi, Sir Zulfiqar Ali Khan, and M. C. Rajah. The records of the Commission show that these individuals, many of whom were noted Indian Liberals, often took a leading part when interviewing witnesses, yet they had little to no involvement in the actual drafting of Simon's report. Instead the Central Committee published a separate report in 1929 (See Sir C. Sankaran Nair, *Report of the Indian Central Committee, 1928–1929* (London, 1929)).
[66] Summary of the Views Expressed to the Joint Conference by Sir H. N. Bolton, Chief Commissioner, NWFP, 20 November 1928, Simon Papers F77/47.
[67] See, for example, Interview with Muhammad Aurangzeb Khan, 28 March 1928, Simon Papers IOR F77/132.
[68] Summary of the Views Expressed to the Joint Conference by Sir H. N. Bolton.

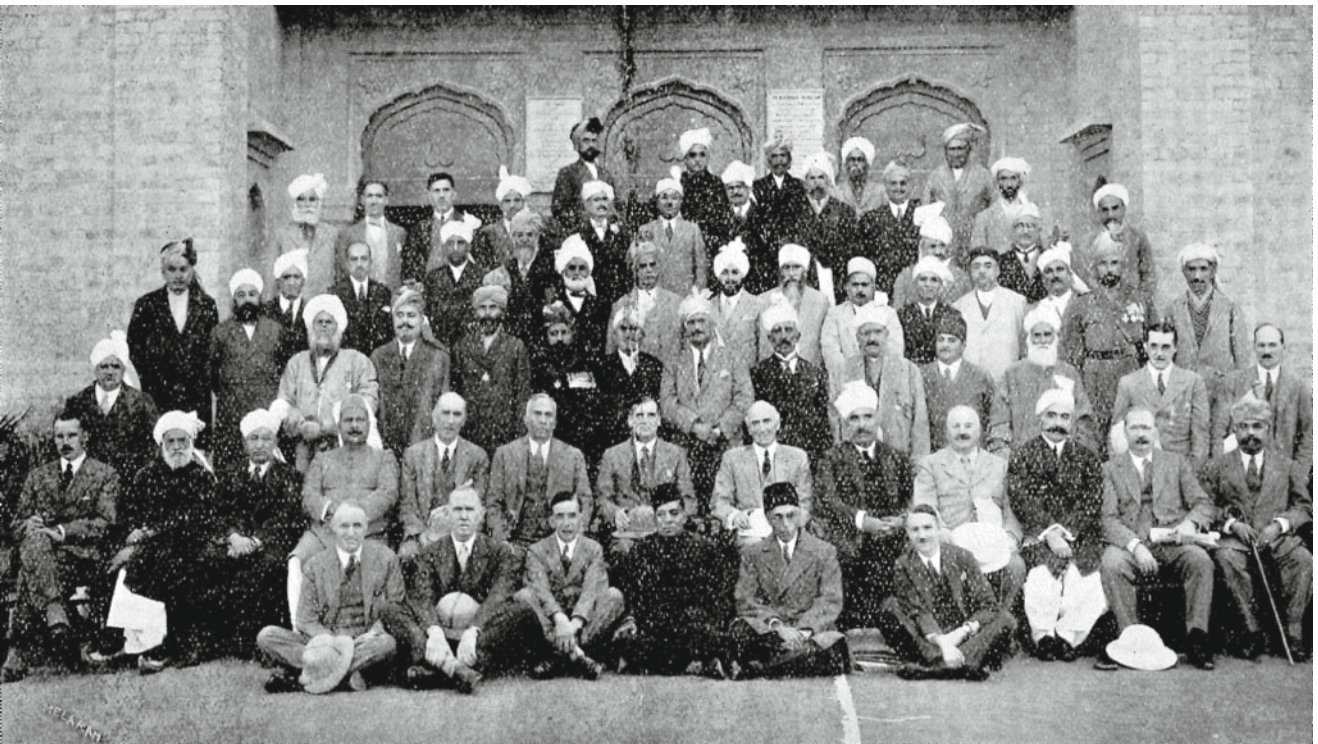

Image 4 Combined Indian Statutory Commission and Indian Central Committee in Peshawar with witnesses, November, 1928. Sir H. Norman Bolton, Chief Commissioner, NWFP, sits in centre, second row, with topi on lap. He is flanked by Sir C. Sankaran Nair and Sir John Simon

in reforms containing elements similar to those granted in other provinces.[69] Moreover, villagers, especially in Peshawar District, were also increasingly interested in reforms.[70]

The Simon Commission chose to disregard completely any testimony favoring reforms in the NWFP. Heavily influenced by both Frontier authorities and the military, which argued that the strategic position of the region meant that it must remain an explicitly *imperial* concern, the Commission opted against the extension of any Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms to the Frontier. It would remain a place apart. In a note to his fellow commission members, Simon wrote in Peshawar that border raids, the influence of local religious leaders over the "fanatical and ignorant tribesmen," and the "risk of threatening movements on a larger scale in Central Asia," by which he meant either the Soviets or pan-Islamic feeling harnessed by the Afghans, rendered reform impossible. Although he "sympathized" with those who argued that the best way to encourage "greater respect for law" among the Pathan was to treat them as responsible citizens, he had many reservations. The peoples of the North-West Frontier could not be "permanently denied their share in the constitutional advantages" enjoyed by the rest of India, yet the region was, due to its strategic position and racial composition, different. Simon therefore recommended the continuation of strong British control over the region.[71]

The Simon Commission wrapped up its investigation in the spring of 1929 and returned to Britain to write its report. The section on reforms in the NWFP was entrusted to the Labour member and future Prime Minister, Clement Attlee (still universally known as "Major Attlee"). Although Attlee was a liberal on imperial issues and the man who would preside over Britain's relinquishment of India in 1947, his draft recommendations – which were accepted in full – were remarkably conservative.[72] Attlee gave weight to Bolton's argument that the common man had little interest in reforms, writing that neither he nor his colleagues believed that that the NWFP population desired reform. Instead, the commission members were convinced that many of the calls for a new system on the Frontier were motivated by Muslims who wished to increase their All-India strength by establishing another

[69] Representation from the Khans, NWFP, to Simon Commission, no date, Simon Papers F77/49.
[70] See Chapter 4.
[71] Note on the NWFP by Sir John Simon, 20 November 1928, Simon Papers F77/49.
[72] See Indian Statutory Commission, *Report of the Indian Statutory Commission*, Vol. II, *Recommendations* (London, 1930), pp. 101–107.

Muslim-majority self-governing province. Although this was a "natural" desire, it did not mean that the British should acquiesce.[73]

The paramount concern, however, was the Frontier's strategic position. Attlee followed the Bray Committee's assertion that the ultimate object of Britain's entire Frontier policy was the security of India. In dealing with the fraught constitutional issue of control of the Army in India, which the Nehru Report had wanted to bring under Indian supervision, the Simon Commission recommended that, as the defence of India was of concern to both India and the Empire as a whole, power over India's armed forces be transferred from the Government of India to the Viceroy personally. The North-West Frontier was the linchpin to the defence of India, since it alone in the Empire was "open to any serious threat of attack by land."[74] It would therefore be impossible to separate the "control of the Army from the control of the area which forms the inevitable terrain for military operations in the defence of India." Those responsible for the defence of the Frontier would have to be responsible for the administration of the NWFP as well. Using an analogy that vexed nationalists throughout India, Attlee wrote:

> We are not insensible to the claims put forward by some witnesses that the inhabitants of this area are not less virile and intelligent than those in other provinces and that therefore it is unfair that their geographical position should prevent them from attaining the rights of self-government granted to others, but it is not possible to change the plain facts of the situation. The inherent right of a man to smoke a cigarette must necessarily be curtailed if he lives in a powder magazine. We cannot, therefore, recommend provincial autonomy and responsible govt. for the NWFP.[75]

The final version of the Simon Commission's report softened Attlee's language, but maintained his "powder magazine" analogy and his conclusions. The defence of India precluded wide-ranging reforms on the Frontier.

Ultimately, the Commission's findings hewed to a line somewhere between the Bray Committee's 1922 recommendations, and the changes suggested by Bolton in 1928. Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms would not be extended to the province. Instead the settled districts of the

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[73] Draft by Major Attlee.
[74] See *Report of the Indian Statutory Commission*, Vol. II, pp. 167–180.
[75] Draft by Major Attlee.

NWFP would receive a form of the 1909 Morley-Minto Reforms. The Frontier would be served by a Legislative Council, in which 50% of the members would be elected (Bray had suggested 60%); the electorate would be divided into special constituencies as Bolton and Maffey had suggested, with representation for the Khans and ex-military officers. The powers of the Council would be heavily curtailed with full executive authority remaining in the Chief Commissioner's hands. The Simon Commission's report insisted that "these recommendations represent an important advance."[76] Yet it was too little, too late. At the moment that Attlee was drafting his recommendations, the nationalist movement on the Frontier was rapidly growing. When the dam of Pathan nationalism finally burst in 1930, the Government was forced to make concessions far larger than the Simon Commission's paltry offerings.

The Frontier exception

The period between 1919, when Gandhi launched the Non-Cooperation Movement, and 1930, when he strode to Dandi on his Salt March, witnessed momentous changes in India. The Congress Party grew into an increasingly popular national movement, and British rule in the subcontinent was challenged to a degree unseen since 1857. The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms changed the way the British administered their Indian Empire and provided a host of new opportunities for Indians willing to collaborate with them. Faced with new constraints, the Raj made gradual concessions. Throughout British India, the provinces received legislatures with elected majorities and Indian control over certain minor portfolios. The exception was the NWFP. In this period, the administered districts remained under the nearly autocratic control of a Chief Commissioner and the Government of India. British reluctance to extend reforms to the region was based on two assumptions: that the Pathan personality precluded a vigorous nationalist sentiment in favor of reform and, more importantly, that reforms could not operate in an area so strategically sensitive. Numerous threats mandated a continuation of direct British rule. As Indian nationalism surged in the late 1920s with demands for home rule or Dominion Status, the relationship between constitutional reform and the Frontier took on an additional dimension. The British had no intention of relinquishing control over the Army in India. Since the settled districts and the tribal tracts continued to be one unit under the Chief Commissioner, NWFP,

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[76] See *Report of the Indian Statutory Commission,* Vol. II, pp. 101–107.

and the Army was a crucial element in "controlling" the Pathan tribes, reforms were deemed impossible. Any element of military control could not be ceded to Indian politicians, even if the chances of this happening were remote. Simultaneously, as we will see in later chapters, the intimate relationship between India's armed forces and the Frontier became a central British argument against larger constitutional reforms at the center. The Simon Report concluded that the threats posed to the North-West Frontier menaced India's very existence, and since Indian politicians failed to grasp this elementary fact, they could not be trusted with the levers of power. This was doubly true for the NWFP, where security could not be sacrificed to the whims of a westernized minority and Muslim communalists.

In making these arguments, British officers and administrators attempted to remove the Frontier from the All-India equation of reform and constitutional advance, while simultaneously integrating the region into the larger debate about India's future. This strategy revealed the fundamental paradox of British thinking about the Frontier: that it was both an integral part of India and at the same time very different – a place removed. This contradiction could not hold, however, and events on the Frontier were moving rapidly beyond British control. Upheaval soon gripped the Frontier. To the surprise of the British, the catalyst for this turmoil was not the Soviets, the Afghans, or the tribes. Instead, the British were confronted by a new threat in the form of home-grown nationalism.

Part II
The North-West Frontier and the Nationalist Challenge

4
"A Considerable Degree of Supineness": Nationalism and the British Administration, 1928–1930

In early April 1930, the Viceroy of India, Lord Irwin, visited the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP). Hosted by the Chief Commissioner of the province, Sir Norman Bolton, the tour appeared to be a success. Upon Irwin's return to Simla, Bolton wrote to the Viceroy, thanking him for his visit and commenting on the "tranquility" of the province, which he chalked up to the "level headed loyalty of the people."[1] Within a week of his letter to Irwin, the Frontier was ablaze. By the end of April, the NWFP had witnessed mass shootings in Peshawar, the occupation of the city by local nationalists, the mental collapse of the Chief Commissioner, a mutiny within the Indian Army, a revolt throughout the rural areas of the Peshawar District, and threatening noises from the trans-border tribes. By August, Irwin informed the Secretary of State for India that "the whole of Peshawar District . . . must be considered in [a] state of war."[2]

Throughout the previous decade, the Government of India, aided by the Frontier administration, had insisted that political reform was both unnecessary and unwise in the NWFP. Whereas the rest of India made important if limited gains in self-government with the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919, the NWFP was left out. The British argued that strategic concerns, combined with the lack of nationalist sentiment among the Pathans, precluded reforms. These views appear to have blinded many within the administration to the fact that nationalism was in fact growing rapidly throughout the settled districts in the late

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[1] Sir Norman Bolton, Chief Commissioner, NWFP to Viceroy, 19 April 1930, Halifax Papers, India Office Records (IOR) C152/24.

[2] Viceroy to Secretary of State (William Wedgwood Benn), 11 August 1930, National Archives of India (NAI) HOME (POL.) F. 255/5/1930.

1920s. Insisting that the forces of nationalism were absent from the Frontier, the British were stunned by the outburst of nationalist sentiment in April 1930.

This chapter examines the British response to the growth of the nationalist movement on the Frontier between late 1928 and what was euphemistically called the "Peshawar Disturbances" of 23 April 1930. It explores the events of 23 April and the days immediately following, arguing that despite the fact that the All-India nationalist movement was gathering strength from 1928, parallel developments in the NWFP were consistently played down by the local administration. This "considerable degree of supineness," as India's Foreign Secretary, Evelyn Howell, scathingly put it, stemmed from the British administration's preoccupation with external and tribal threats to the Frontier and the close-held belief that the vast majority of the province's inhabitants had little to no interest in reforms or political advance.[3] By the time the administration belatedly realized the depth of nationalist feeling in the province in April 1930, their ignorance of the nature of Frontier nationalism resulted in an overreaction of tragic proportions. Assuming nationalist crowds in Peshawar to be violent by dint of the fact that they were Pathan, officials and officers ordered military operations against the demonstrators, unleashing what the British referred to as the Peshawar riots and the nationalists called the Qissa Khwani massacre of 23 April 1930. The day's violence led to a breakdown in the administration, a mutiny within local units of the Indian Army, the evacuation of Peshawar, and the mental collapse of the Chief Commissioner, Sir Norman Bolton.

The emergence of Frontier nationalism

By the late 1920s, if asked to name the preeminent threat on the Frontier, British officials at all levels would have identified the Soviet Union and Afghanistan. Not nationalism. Whereas authorities in London and Delhi had given little thought to the Soviet Empire beyond the Pamir mountains in the mid-1920s, by the end of the decade they were once again alarmed at the prospect of Bolshevik "intrigue", or even invasion, in Afghanistan and the tribal areas. This upsurge in fear stemmed from three specific issues. First, there was the Russo-Afghan crisis of late 1926, when the Soviets seized a disputed island in the Amu Darya, which the Afghans had possessed for many years. Second, the

[3] Note by Evelyn B. Howell, 24 May 1930, NAI HOME (POL.) F. 206/1930.

Afghan Amir Amanullah, was intent on building a modern army and air force and, despite his ongoing disagreement with the Russians, he had employed Soviet advisors to help him. Finally, in London at least, this sudden concern about the Soviets was linked to wider anxieties connected to the British General Strike of May 1926. The Secretary of State for India, Lord Birkenhead, for instance, only brought the potential for a Russian invasion to the Viceroy's attention in the immediate aftermath of the strike.[4]

Although the high-level discussions in Delhi and London concluded that it was highly unlikely that the Soviet Union possessed the organization and ability to launch a land invasion of India, it was highly probable that they could and would launch an invasion of Afghanistan. If the Soviets succeeded in setting up a hostile Afghan regime, then "the tribes of the Frontier" would be against the British "to a man," and "a military situation of the greatest gravity would be inevitable." Several members of British Government's sub-committee on Indian Defence, including Winston Churchill, Field Marshal Sir Claud Jacob, and Lord Salisbury – all of whom were violently opposed to Indian constitutional reform – suggested a preemptive invasion of Afghanistan. Cooler heads, such as Sir Samuel Hoare and Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin prevailed, however, and the suggestion was dropped.[5] Fears of a Soviet invasion of Afghanistan diminished by 1928 after the Russians gave back the disputed island in the Amu Darya, but the Bolshevik menace remained firmly rooted in the psyche of the British administration in India.[6]

On the Frontier the nascent nationalist movement had entered a dormant phase following the demise of the Khilafat movement and this lasted until the final years of the decade.[7] The failure of the *Hijrat* in

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[4] Secretary of State to Viceroy, 10 June 1926, Halifax Papers IOR C152/2.

[5] Committee of Imperial Defence: Minutes of the 223rd Meeting, 17 March 1927, The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA) CAB 16/83. See also Memorandum by Field Marshal Sir Claud Jacob, on Government of India Despatches Nos. 9 and 10, 29 November 1926, CAB 16/83.

[6] Although the concerns about a Soviet invasion were driven by London, Delhi was also worried about internal communism. See Lester Hutchinson, *Conspiracy at Meerut* (New York, 1972). For the Indian intelligence service's longstanding interest in internal and external communism see Richard J. Popplewell, *Intelligence and Imperial Defence: British Intelligence and the Defence of the Indian Empire, 1904-1924* (London, 1995).

[7] *Report [With Evidence] of the Peshawar Enquiry Committee, Appointed by the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress* (Allahabad, 1930), p. 4 (Hereafter "Patel Report").

particular convinced many in the rural areas that challenging the British administration was a fruitless enterprise. Indeed, the Government's hand was strengthened among the *muhajirin* by its efforts to help returning emigrants regain their land. The administration was further reinforced by the continued employment of the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR), a set of draconian laws unique to the NWFP and Baluchistan. The FCR granted the British administration vast powers over the population, including the power to jail and exile after only a cursory trial and collective punishment. The FCR also provided the Deputy Commissioner of any district the power to refer cases to *jirgas*, or tribal assemblies, rather than British courts. Ostensibly meant to support *riwaj*, or customary law, this practice served to bolster the power of the administration's conservative interlocutors, the landowning Khans, who presided over these *jirgas* in the settled districts.[8] Thus the FCR denied the inhabitants of the Frontier the judicial system enjoyed by the rest of India.

When the Indian National Congress had attempted to create a Frontier Congress Party in December 1920, the administration, using the FCR, jailed or exiled the organizers, effectively destroying the Congress in the province.[9] Among those arrested in this crackdown was Abdul Ghaffar Khan. The son of a prosperous landowning family in the Charsadda subdivision of the Peshawar District, Abdul Ghaffar had a spotty education at Edwardes College in Peshawar and a brief spell at the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh. Rather than join his older brother, Khan Sahib, who was in England gaining a medical degree, Abdul Ghaffar stayed in the NWFP, becoming convinced of the need for social reform among Pathans. Deeply involved with the *Hijrat*, Abdul Ghaffar journeyed to Kabul in autumn 1920, where he unsuccessfully pled the *muhajirin* case in front of Amanullah following the latter's decision to suspend emigration. Upon his return he served as president of the Provincial Khilafat Committee. Having been converted to the creed of Gandhian non-violence, he was also involved with the fledgling Congress organization. He was arrested in fall 1921 and sentenced to three years' rigorous imprisonment.[10]

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[8] See Report of the Frontier Regulations Enquiry Committee, 1931 IOR L P&S 12/3182.

[9] Interview with Deputy Commissioner, Bannu, North-West Frontier Enquiry Committee, IOR V/26/247/3.

[10] Abdul Ghaffar Khan, *My Life and Struggle: Autobiography of Badshah Khan as Narrated to K. B. Narang* (Delhi, 1969), p. 58.

The British released Abdul Ghaffar in 1924 and he returned to his home village. Like many nationalists in the Frontier province, Abdul Ghaffar refrained from outright political activity in this period and instead focused on social reform and rural uplift. In particular, he threw himself into the work of an organization he and his fellow Charsadda nationalists founded prior to his incarceration: the *Anjuman-i-Islah-ul-Afghania* (Society for the Reform of the Afghans), which ran a number of free schools. The goal of the *Anjuman* was to "cleanse society of bad customs; to create a real Islamic love and brotherhood amongst the people . . . to teach the Pakhtun nation their responsibility of serving Islam."[11] Abdul Ghaffar and his associates hoped that social reform would strengthen the "nation" and awaken a cultural revival as a first step in a wider nationalist struggle against British rule. In this they succeeded, and the 1920s witnessed a flowering of Pathan literature and culture.[12] Members of the *Anjuman* regarded British rule as the source of the economic and social problems bedeviling Pathan society. Thus the ultimate goal was the extinction of the British administration. As one member recalled: "Without education it [would] be impossible to oppose the British."[13]

Some of the ills that Abdul Ghaffar and his allies hoped to eradicate from Pathan society were traditional problems, such as endemic feuding, but others were of a more recent vintage. As in the rest of India, British rule had led to massive changes in the ownership and cultivation of the land. In the settled districts, the traditional Pathan system of *shambled* (common lands) was replaced by private ownership in the hands of the larger Khans, who supported the British administration. This led to a growing inequality within Pathan society, reducing previously independent cultivators to a subordinate position. The discontent and resentment spawned by this rise in inequality galvanized smaller landowners into challenging the large Khans and their British patrons. As this group, which made up the foundation of Abdul Ghaffar's *Anjuman*, grew overtly nationalistic by the late 1920s, they found willing followers among the shopkeepers and peasantry of the

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[11] Quote from the *Anjuman's* official publication, *Pakhtun*, October 1928, in Stephen Alan Rittenberg, *Ethnicity, Nationalism, and the Pakhtuns: The Independence Movement in India's North-West Frontier Province* (Durham, North Carolina, 1988), p. 70.

[12] Sir Olaf Caroe, *The Pathans, 550BC–AD1957* (London, 1958), Chapter 26.

[13] Interview with unnamed Khudai Khidmatgar veteran in Mukulika Banerjee, *The Pathan Unarmed: Opposition & Memory in the North-West Frontier* (Delhi, 2001), p. 53.

settled districts.[14] In an atmosphere in which political consciousness had been aroused by the arrival of the Simon Commission, the settled districts' economic dislocation was further exacerbated by the onset of the worldwide depression.[15]

In 1928, societal and economic grievances were joined by wider political concerns stemming from the outbreak of revolution and civil war in neighboring Afghanistan. In July 1928, the Afghan king, Amanullah, decided to put his long-cherished dream of modernizing Afghan society into action.[16] Amanullah had carried out a number of nation-building reforms throughout his ten-year reign, including the modernization of Afghanistan's military, but he now went a step further. In a number of public speeches he called for the emancipation of Afghan women, urging them to follow his Queen's example and shed their veils. He outlawed polygamy, ordered that Afghan men adopt western dress, and, critically, attacked the country's religious leadership. The British feared that these policies would lead to the king's overthrow and political upheaval on the Afghan Frontier. The British Minister to Kabul, Sir Francis Humphrys, related an episode in which the exiled Amir of Bokhara, then resident in Kabul, was fined for publically wearing a turban rather than a Homburg. In light of these events, Humphrys worried that "a Gilbertian situation has been reached which may at any time be succeeded by a tragedy."[17]

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[14] Rittenberg, *Ethnicity*, Chapter 3. Rittenberg's assertion that nationalism in the NWFP was caused by the agricultural changes that triggered a societal earthquake in the settled districts, stands as the prevailing interpretation of the origins of the movement. The fact that the largest percentage of irrigated land and Khan-held estates were in the Charsadda subdivision of the Peshawar District gives a great deal of credence to his argument, as this was the era's hotbed of nationalism.

[15] Fortnightly Report Extracts Compiled by Evelyn B. Howell: 1928–1930, 24 May 1930, HOME (POL.) F. 206/1930. See also Fortnightly Report on the Internal Situation in the NWFP for the Second Half of August 1929, IOR L P&J 12/9 and Note by Herbert Emerson (Home Secretary, Government of India), 26 May 1930, HOME (POL.) F. 206/1930. Already beset by poor harvests and heavy floods, the administration decided to raise the rural tax rate within the Peshawar District to 22% in early 1929 and inexplicably refused to lower it despite the collapse of agricultural prices.

[16] See Leon B. Poullada, *Reform and Rebellion in Afghanistan, 1919–1929: King Amanullah's Failure to Modernize a Tribal Society* (Ithaca, 1973) and Roland Wild, *Amanullah: Ex-King of Afghanistan* (London, 1932).

[17] Sir Francis Humphrys to Lord Cushendun (Acting Foreign Secretary), 26 November 1928, TNA AIR 5/736. The first British minister to an independent Afghanistan, Humphrys had spent his career on the Frontier. Following his

Tragedy did indeed follow. By the end of October, Humphrys reported that the army was discontent and the mullahs "openly hostile."[18] A tribal rebellion inspired by local mullahs broke out in eastern Afghanistan in November and soon spread to Kabul.[19] Bereft of support, Amanullah withdrew to Kandahar.[20] He abdicated in January 1929 and left for India and exile in May.[21] In both the tribal belt and the administered districts, the Pathan population was keenly interested in political activities among their ethnic brethren in Afghanistan. Understandably, given Amanullah's stormy relationship with the British, many Pathans suspected a British hand in his downfall. Nationalists and religious leaders encouraged this view.[22] Amanullah's cause gained widespread support on the Frontier and the local Khilafat and Congress committees, which had regrouped in the wake of Simon's visit to the Frontier, exploited these sympathies, organizing protests in favor of Amanullah. These constituted the first major demonstrations in the province since the anti-Rowlatt protests of 1919.[23]

Although Abdul Ghaffar was a staunch supporter of Amanullah, whom he saw as a fellow Pathan nationalist, he was also deeply concerned for his fellow Pathans involved in the Afghan Civil War that followed Amanullah's abdication.[24] Abdul Ghaffar organized a medical mission to Afghanistan under the auspices of the Red Crescent Society

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retirement from the Indian Civil Service in 1929, he succeeded another Frontier officer, Sir Henry Dobbs, as High Commissioner in Iraq.

[18] Humphrys to Cushendun, 22 October 1928, AIR 5/736.

[19] Humphrys to Government of India, 27 November 1928, TNA FO 371/13290. Tribesmen entered the city and threatened the British Legation. In February, Humphrys decided to evacuate the Legation, prompting history's first airlift in which over 500 people were flown out of Kabul in Victoria bombers (See Anne Baker, *Wings Over Kabul: The First Airlift* (London, 1975)).

[20] Humphrys to Sir Austen Chamberlain (Foreign Secretary), 28 January 1929, TNA FO 371/13992.

[21] Foreign Department, Indian Office, Minute on Relations with Afghanistan, 1932 IOR L PO 5/23.

[22] NWFP Fortnightly Report for the First Half of April 1929, L P&J 12/9. British and Indian archives contain scant evidence for British collusion with Amanullah's many enemies. The British did not support Amanullah's reforms and Humphrys counseled the king to relent on them throughout this period, arguing that he had alienated both the army and the *Ulema*. The minister hoped that a policy retreat would preserve Amanullah's throne and prevent the chaos of a power vacuum. The British feared that this would lead to unrest among their own tribes. Moreover, they worried that the Soviets would take this opportunity to assert greater powers in Afghanistan (Humphrys to Government of India, 12 December 1928, FO 371/13290).

[23] Viceroy to Secretary of State (Viscount Peel), 14 February 1929, FO 371/13992.

[24] Khan, *My Life and Struggle*, pp. 90–91.

and began touring the province to solicit funds. In the course of this tour the activities of the *Anjuman* grew increasingly political, with Abdul Ghaffar making strong speeches in support of Amanullah.[25] The political temperature on the Frontier rose again in August when Abdul Ghaffar, who served as Congress vice-president, called for support for the minuscule but Marxist *Anjuman-i-Naujawanan-i-Sarhad*, which had recently been established in Peshawar.[26]

Around this time Abdul Ghaffar founded the Frontier Provincial Youth League or "Afghan *Jirga*."[27] Drawing its leadership from the *Anjuman*, the *Jirga* was an overtly political organization with the declared object of complete independence for the Pathans and India as a whole.[28] While allied with Congress, Abdul Ghaffar was sure to make clear that the Afghan *Jirga* was an explicitly Pathan organization. The organization grew quickly, aided in the autumn of 1929 by the Indian Central Legislature, which, under pressure from Indian reformers, international bodies like the League of Nations, and those who argued that India's social practices made them unfit for home rule, passed the Child Marriage Restraint, or Sarda, Act.[29] The Act placed the minimum age of marriage at 14 for girls and 16 for boys, making no mention of ages of consent. In practical terms, the Sarda Act had little impact on actual marriage law in the NWFP, which had pre-existing age of consent legislation that placed the minimum age for a girl at 16. The real concern in the NWFP, and not only as Bolton put it, "among those whose business it is to offer opposition to Government on all occasions," was that it would interfere with Shariah law. There was also a widespread rumor that the Act would require the medical examination of Muslim brides by European physicians. This fear drew many devout Muslims into the nationalist fold.[30]

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[25] NWFP Fortnightly Report for the First Half of April 1929.

[26] NWFP Fortnightly Report for the Second Half of August 1929.

[27] See F. C. Isemonger, *The Frontier Provincial Youth League ("Suba Sarhad Zalmo Jirga") also known as The Afghan Jirga or the Annjuman of the Servants of God and its Organisation of Volunteers "The Khudai Khidmatgaran"* 1929–1930, IOR L P&J 12/424.

[28] Express Letter from Chief Commissioner, NWFP to Home Department, Government of India, 12 June 1930, NAI HOME (POL.) F. 11/III/1930.

[29] See Geraldine Forbes, *Women in Modern India* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 83–91. For a recent interpretation of the Sarda Act, see Mrinali Sinha, *Specters of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of India* (Durham, North Carolina, 2006), Chapter 4.

[30] NWFP Fortnightly Report for the First Half of October 1929, L P&J 12/9. The fact that Congress sponsored the Sarda Act was inexplicably ignored. This was

The Afghan *Jirga* continued to grow and soon established a quasi-military volunteer organization known as the Khudai Khidmatgars, or "Servants of God."[31] An odd marriage of military organization and Gandhian principles of non-violence, the Khudai Khidmatgars wore purplish-red clothing which was cheap to dye and disguised dirt, earning them the sobriquet "Red Shirts" from the British.[32] The nationalist movement grew apace through the winter of 1930 and Abdul Ghaffar made extensive lecture tours throughout Peshawar District.[33] Events were leading rapidly towards confrontation. Despite this growth in political activity, the Frontier administration continued to indulge in "wishful thinking."[34] As early as January 1927, the Chief Commissioner was aware of the "growing discontent with Government on the part of the inhabitants of the province," yet he took few steps to address possible grievances. He chalked these feeling up to the dearth of essential services in the NWFP, over which he exercised little control, as it was a "deficit province."[35] Bolton, who had been at his post since 1923, had spent his entire career on the Frontier, and was sure that he "knew" the people of the Frontier far better than any nationalist "agitator." His sincere belief that the people in the villages had no desire for reforms or inkling towards nationalism appears to have blinded him to the growing wave of unrest.[36] Bolton's denial was shared by many in the Frontier administration. Examining the Fortnightly Reports from the previous three years in May 1930, the Indian Foreign Secretary, Evelyn Howell, wrote of the entire administration:

> The facts, or at any rate, many facts, are reported, but there is no trace of any effort to coordinate them or to appreciate their real significance, and nothing, or very little, is said of counter measures . . . There is a

a source of constant frustration to the British (see Communiqué from Herbert Emerson, 5 May 1930, HOME (POL.) F. 11/III/1930).

[31] Express Letter from Chief Commissioner, NWFP to Home Department, Government of India, 12 June 1930.

[32] See Banerjee for discussion of the principle of non-violence among the Khudai Khidmatgars.

[33] NWFP Fortnightly Report for the First Half of February 1930, L P&J 12/20.

[34] Note by Evelyn B. Howell, 24 May 1930.

[35] Notes of a conversation between Sir [Norman] Bolton and Lord Winterton (Under Secretary of State for India) at Peshawar, 22 January 1927, IOR L PO 5/24A. Much of the Frontier's budget was supplied by the central exchequer.

[36] Summary of the Views Expressed to the Joint Conference by the Honorable Sir H. Norman Bolton, Chief Commissioner, NWFP, 20 November 1928, Simon Papers IOR F77/47.

> marked tendency towards optimism whenever any favourable circumstance occurs, and to drift on, clutching at straws.[37]

Howell believed that the threat had been consistently downplayed. Despite the fact that political meetings grew immense in 1929–1930, the administration remained convinced that there was nothing to worry about. In September 1929, for instance, Bolton endorsed the view of Peshawar's Deputy Commissioner, Aubrey Metcalfe, that the "general public are unaffected by this flood of oratory."[38] The administration also emphasized nationalist weaknesses, such as an apparent split in the Peshawar Congress Committee.[39]

The only aspect of Frontier nationalism that the administration seemed concerned about was the Marxist *Anjuman-i-Naujawanan-i-Sarhad*, despite its small membership and lack of support outside of Peshawar city. Since the British remained convinced that the real threat on the Frontier was external – Afghanistan, trans-Frontier tribes, and Soviet Russia – rather than internal, it was natural that Bolton and his subordinates focused on what appeared to be a Soviet front organization. A relatively innocuous organization of "the youth of the province, of labourers and peasants against the curse of capitalists and imperialism," it was the only party that the British seriously discussed prosecuting, due to its "frankly communist and revolutionary" nature.[40] In the midst of these discussions, Abdul Ghaffar was essentially building an army with his Khudai Khidmatgars, but Bolton's reports to the Viceroy utterly ignored this, focusing instead on the *Anjuman's* use of "sickle and hammer" emblems during demonstrations.[41]

Some within the administration appear to have been aware of the deep discontent within the province. Olaf Caroe, who had been serving as Deputy Commissioner in Kohat, returned to Peshawar in late 1929 to take up the post of Secretary to the Chief Commissioner. Caroe recalled being surprised by the "groundswell" of opposition to the Government in the district and thinking that neither Bolton nor the district officer, Metcalfe, were "taking the measure of this movement."[42]

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[37] Note by Evelyn B. Howell, 24 May 1930.
[38] NWFP Fortnightly Report for the Second Half of September 1929, L P&J 12/9.
[39] NWFP Fortnightly Report for the Second Half of October 1929.
[40] NWFP Fortnightly Report for the Second Half of September 1929 and NWFP Fortnightly Report for the Second Half of January 1930.
[41] NWFP Fortnightly Report for the First Half of February 1930.
[42] Unpublished Caroe Memoirs, Caroe Papers IOR F203/79. Metcalfe's insouciant attitude towards the nationalist movement may have been related to the

One of the few Frontier officers who certainly did "take the measure" of the nationalist movement was the Resident in Waziristan, Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Bruce. In what was possibly the only warning offered to the central government by a member of the local administration, Bruce wrote to George Cunningham, a Frontier Officer who was then serving as Lord Irwin's Private Secretary, in February 1929. Cunningham enjoyed a close personal and working relationship with the Viceroy.[43] Yet, he admitted to Bruce, "I was rather perturbed about what you say about things going wrong in the NWFP . . . I had heard nothing about it before." Cunningham added that as far as the Frontier was concerned, the Viceroy and his government were fixated on the civil war in Afghanistan.[44]

After months of ignoring this groundswell, Bolton finally grew alarmed at the vast array of political activity taking place in the province in early April 1930.[45] In Peshawar, demonstrations against the Sarda Act continued unabated and anti-Government pamphlets were confiscated.[46] In Peshawar District, parallel courts were being established and tax revenue was drying up.[47] For the first time, the Chief Commissioner informed Simla of the existence of the Khudai Khidmatgars.[48] Yet, as witnessed by his glossing over of the situation in his communication with the Viceroy, Bolton was apparently loath to alert his superiors to the severity of the situation.[49]

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fact that he was, as his former subordinate, K. P. S. Menon, put it: "not one of the world's workers." Menon, a future Foreign Minister of India and one of only two Hindu Indians in the Political Service in the 1930s, noted that Metcalfe's work day consisted of mornings only, and not even mornings on Monday and Thursday when he rode to the Peshawar hounds (see Kumara P. S. Menon, *Many Worlds: An Autobiography* (Bombay, 1965), p. 92).

[43] See Norval Mitchell, *Sir George Cunningham: A Memoir* (Edinburgh, 1968), Chapter 3.

[44] Letter from George Cunningham to Charles Bruce, 14 February 1929, Bruce Papers IOR F163/20.

[45] NWFP Fortnightly Report for the First Half of April 1930, L P&J 12/20.

[46] *Inqilab Zindabad* [Long Love Revolution]: *The Only Communist Weekly Paper of the Frontier Province* (Published by the *Naujawan Sarfarosh*), 25 March 1930, HOME (POL.) F. 11/III/1930. Also see Express Letter from Chief Commissioner, NWFP to Home Department, 12 June 1930.

[47] Unpublished Caroe Memoirs.

[48] NWFP Fortnightly Report for the First Half of April 1930. As usual, Bolton attached a silver lining to this development, writing that despite the "appearance" of the Khudai Khidmatgars in the Charsadda subdivision, Metcalfe's recent tour of this area was "well received."

[49] Bolton to Viceroy, 19 April 1930.

23 April 1930: the British version

By April 1930, the All-India Civil Disobedience movement was in full swing. On 5 April, Gandhi reached the beach at Dandi and began the unlawful production of salt – the centerpiece of his second major challenge to British rule in the subcontinent. Having decided that supporting political reforms in the NWFP would help gain Muslim allies, Congress turned its eyes towards the Frontier. The Congress Working Committee decided to send a committee to enquire into the FCR. Here Bolton drew the line. The administration announced the exclusion of the delegation from the NWFP and physically prevented the Congress committee from entering the province on 22 April.[50] In retaliation, local nationalists announced that they would begin a picket of liquor stores the next morning, 23 April.[51] When announcing this at a public meeting in Peshawar, one orator told the crowd to prepare for the "practical work" of challenging the Government on the morrow.[52] Viewing this as a direct challenge, the Frontier administration acted. On the night of 22 April arrest warrants were issued for 12 nationalist organizers in Peshawar. The police raided the homes of these individuals between 2.30 and 3 am the next morning.[53] Six men were arrested in their homes and three more rounded up over the course of the morning. Of the three remaining, one was in the Punjab.[54] But at 8.30 am, the police learnt that the other two, Ghulam Rabbani and Allah Bakhsh Bijili, were at the local Congress office. Accompanied by two lorries, a Sub-Inspector of Police, Allahuddin Shah, went to arrest them.[55]

Word of the impending arrests spread through the city and the police were confronted by a large crowd when they arrived at the Congress

[50] NWFP Fortnightly Report for the Second Half of April 1930, L P&J 12/20. Uniquely, the Chief Commissioner was given the authority of exile and exclusion – and the ability, essentially, to seal off the NWFP – through the North-West Frontier Province Security Regulation, 1922.
[51] Patel Report, p. 5.
[52] Report by F. Isemonger (Inspector General Police, NWFP), 2 May 1930, HOME (POL.) F. 255/5/1930.
[53] Report by R. H. Fooks (Senior Superintendent of Police, Peshawar), 24 April 1930, HOME (POL.) F. 255/5/1930.
[54] Report by F. Isemonger, 2 May 1930. This man, one Roshan Lal, was later arrested on his return from the Punjab on 30 April.
[55] Report of the Peshawar Disturbances Enquiry Committee, 1930, Government of India, TNA WO 32/3526 (Hereafter "Sulaiman Report"), p. 13.

office shortly after 9 am.[56] Although Rabbani and Bijili were addressing the crowd from a balcony, they quickly wrapped up, telling the police that there was no need to come upstairs as they would willingly go with Shah to the police *thana* or station.[57] The police set off with the prisoners accompanied by a large crowd. As the group travelled to the *thana* at Kabuli Gate, the tires of the lorry holding Rabbani and Bijili were punctured by members of the swollen crowd. The convoy came to a halt and the crowd surrounded the vehicle.[58] While Shah waited for reinforcements, the two prisoners suggested that they make an appeal to try to calm the crowd and present themselves for arrest at the *thana*. Shah agreed and Rabbani and Bijili alighted from the lorry and, garlanded, led the crowd towards the Qissa Khwani Bazaar and the police station at Kabuli Gate. On arrival, Rabbani and Bijili found the gates to the *thana* barred from the inside. The police, seeing the size of the crowd, believed the station might be stormed.[59] After half an hour, the gates were finally opened and Rabbani and Bijili taken into custody. Saadullah Khan, a city magistrate who was inside the *thana*, then telephoned the Deputy Commissioner, Aubrey Metcalfe, and informed him that although some rocks had been thrown, the crowd was essentially non-violent. He added that with the prisoners now in the station, the crowd was dispersing and there was no need for reinforcements.[60]

Although he received Saadullah Khan's phone call, Metcalfe discounted it, believing that his Indian subordinate was underestimating the violent nature of the crowd.[61] Moreover, the Senior Police Superintendent had

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[56] The Congress's report on the events of April 23 states that the crowd was in fact at the offices to cheer on the anti-liquor picketers. While some members of the crowd were probably there for that purpose, it seems likely that the vast majority of the crowd was there as a result of the early morning raids (See Patel Report, p. 5).

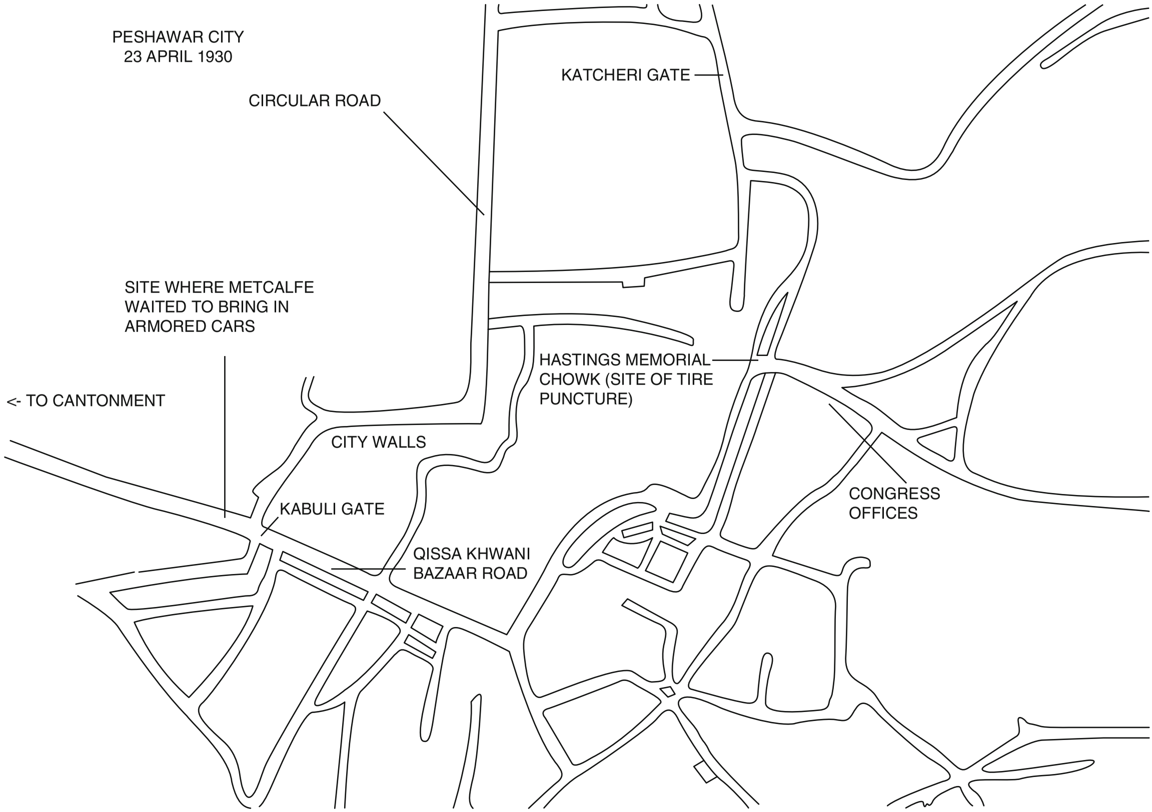
[57] Sulaiman Report, p. 13 and Patel Report, p. 5.

[58] Report by R. H. Fooks, 24 April 1930.

[59] The policemen were likely aware of the Chauri-Chaura incident in February 1922, when a crowd of peasants in the United Provinces attacked and burnt a police station, killing the 23 policemen inside. See Shahid Amin, *Event, Metaphor, Memory: Chauri Chaura, 1922–1992* (Berkeley, California, 1995).

[60] Sulaiman Report, pp. 13–14 and Patel Report, pp. 5–6.

[61] Metcalfe, a product of Charterhouse and Christ Church, Oxford, had served as Sir John Maffey's assistant when Maffey was Private Secretary to Lord Chelmsford. He returned to Frontier service in 1917, but spent most of his time in the provincial secretariat rather than in district or tribal work. Caroe, who worked under Metcalfe when the latter was Indian Foreign Secretary from 1933–1939, believed that Metcalfe remained "more at home as secretary than he was in the field" (Unpublished Caroe Memoir).



Map 2 Peshawar City, 23 April 1930

contacted the local military units. They now waited for permission to move in. Expecting a conflict, Metcalfe had put the troops of the "City Disturbance Column" on alert the previous evening; he now called out the column and requested an armored car.[62] Wanting to "see what was happening," Metcalfe, Assistant Commissioner Evelyn Cobb, and the Police Superintendent set off with an escort in four armored cars – "Bray," "Bullicourt," "Bethune," and "Baupame" – towards Kabuli Gate. En route they encountered two other officers. The first was a local recruiting officer, Captain Hissamuddin, who confirmed Saadullah Khan's earlier reports that the crowd was dispersing. Several hundred yards later, however, Metcalfe encountered John Selwyn, the 22-year-old Assistant Superintendent of Police, who had also recently come from the scene.[63] He shouted to Metcalfe that the he had "been pelted with stones, that the reserve police were unable to deal with the situation and that the crowd was entirely out of hand and very violent." This convinced Metcalfe that he was facing a certain riot. Again, Metcalfe put his trust in the report of a European subordinate rather than an Indian officer and ordered the armored car to proceed up to the Kabuli Gate at the western entrance to the old walled city.[64]

The Government's later investigation made it clear that Selwyn had overreacted. A number of officials who had witnessed the scene challenged the officer's claims that he had been stoned. This was further corroborated by a host of witnesses provided by the Congress and the Khilafat Committee.[65] The Government's report concluded:

> It must be remembered that Mr. Selwyn is a young and inexperienced officer. He felt himself confronted with an unexpected difficulty and his perplexity was probably apparent from his demeanour. Moreover, his horse was giving trouble. A senior officer would probably have handled the situation differently . . .[66]

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[62] Report by R. H. Fooks, 24 April 1930.
[63] This much is corroborated in the Congress account of the events (Patel Report, p. 6).
[64] Sulaiman Report, p. 15.
[65] *Patel Report*, p. 5, and Allah Bukhsh Yusufi, *The Frontier Tragedy: An Account of the Inhuman Acts of Repression and Terrorism, Blockades, Loot, Incendiarism & Massacres – Through Which the People of the North-West Frontier Province Have Had to Go During the Present Disturbance* (Peshawar, 1930), p. 25.
[66] Sulaiman Report, p. 15.

Selwyn's "inexperience" was unfortunate. His exaggerated report to Metcalfe was a crucial link in the tragic chain of events that morning.

The arrival of the armored cars at the Kabuli Gate was pivotal. It is also where the Government and nationalist versions of events part company. Metcalfe told the Government's investigation, chaired by the Allahabad judge, Sir Shah Muhammad Sulaiman, that facing a crowd that still numbered between 3,000 and 7,000, he weighed his options.[67] Although the crowd was mostly unarmed, a man wielding an axe caught Metcalfe's eye. This single "axe-wielder" apparently convinced him that the situation was dire. Metcalfe said he believed he had three choices: ignore the crowd, shoot, or enter the city and reconnoiter the situation. He chose to enter. He failed, however, to communicate to the armored car commander that he alone intended to carry out a reconnaissance in the lead car, "Bray." The armored car commander prepared to escort as if it were a military action. Metcalfe went ahead in "Bray," followed by the other three vehicles.[68]

Both the Congress and the Government agreed that once the armored cars entered the city, chaos ensued. Every British witness, as well as a number of Indians, claimed that the crowd immediately began throwing bricks and stones at the cars, prompting them to close up. With limited visibility, the vehicles accelerated, and the British admitted to running over six Peshawaris and a Private Bryant, a despatch rider who had entered the city on his motorcycle.[69] Still in the lead car, Metcalfe drove east up the Qissa Khwani Bazaar road before turning around and returning to the *thana* at Kabuli Gate. One armored car, "Bullicourt" was able to follow Metcalfe to the steps of the station but the other two cars were stuck in the midst of the crowd.[70]

Metcalfe and his assistant, Cobb, claimed that when the second armored car, "Bullicourt," pulled up at the *thana*, it was immediately set upon by the crowd. Lieutenant Synge, the commander of the armored car, alighted with his pistol drawn. He was then attacked by a member of the crowd who sought to wrest the weapon from his hands. Several officers, including Metcalfe and Cobb, went to his assistance. In the course of the struggle, Synge accidently discharged his pistol, hitting an Indian police inspector in the hand. According the British account, the sound of the shot enraged the crowd further. Metcalfe, who was on the

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[67] This number is supported in the Congress report.
[68] Sulaiman Report, pp. 15–16.
[69] Report by R. H. Fooks, 24 April 1930 and Sulaiman Report, p. 18.
[70] Sulaiman Report, p. 18.

thana's steps, was hit in the face by a flying brick. Knocked unconscious, he was dragged inside. The other officers also moved inside, barring the gate behind them.[71]

According to the evidence submitted to the Sulaiman Committee, Cobb then went up to the roof, where he saw "Bethune," its crew still within, and the body of the dead despatch rider, Private Bryant, being set ablaze by the crowd.[72] All British witnesses, including the correspondent for Lahore's *Civil and Military Gazette*, claimed that the crowd, attempting to collect the bodies of the men run over by "Bethune," attacked the vehicle, and, finding a drum of kerosene, lit both the armored car and Bryant's corpse. Cobb testified that upon seeing "Bethune" on fire – its crew firing their pistols as they sought to escape – he went downstairs and asked a dazed Metcalfe for permission to open fire. Metcalfe quickly agreed and issued the order. Cobb and Synge ran to the roof, shouting "Fire! Fire!" to the commander of "Bray." Believing that the crew could not hear them, Synge ran out of the *thana*, firing his pistol as he made for "Bray." Once Synge reached the armored car, the crew immediately opened fire with the vehicle's mounted machine gun. This was at 10.45 am.[73] Without noting the number of casualties from this first firing, the Government's report stated that "the effect of the firing was to clear the street immediately."[74]

Cobb reported that the crowd soon regrouped, and he requested that more troops be brought to Kabuli Gate. At this point, the Inspector General of Police, Frederick Isemonger, arrived on the scene and took command from Cobb. Isemonger immediately placed a cordon of policemen and Frontier Constabulary around the flaming "Bethune" while the municipal fire engine was brought in to put out the fire. Isemonger claimed that the crowd surged forward and stood on the hose, rendering the engine ineffective.[75] Meanwhile, a detachment of

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[71] Sulaiman Report, p. 21. According to Metcalfe, the crowd was pilfering bricks from a nearby culvert construction site.

[72] Sulaiman Report, p. 21.

[73] The British version of events becomes somewhat confused over the chronology of this first firing. In particular, the Sulaiman Report presents one chronology, while the initial report made on 24 April by the Senior Superintendent of Police, R. H. Fooks, presents another. Fooks, who was in the *thana*, reported that the incident in which a Peshawari attempted to wrest Lieutenant Synge's gun away from him happened not while he was initially going into the *thana*, but later, when he ran into the crowd to instruct the crew of "Bray" to open fire on the crowd (Report by R. H. Fooks, 24 April 1930).

[74] Sulaiman Report, p. 21.

[75] Report by F. Isemonger, 2 May 1930.

King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (KOYLI) arrived at the scene and Isemonger put them on cordon duty. Shortly thereafter a Squadron of Indian cavalry arrived along with two platoons of the 2nd Battalion, 18th Royal Garhwal Rifles regiment. The British claimed that the crowd now numbered between 1,000 and 2,000 and was growing. Isemonger replaced the KOYLI with the Garhwalis, believing that a piquet made up of the Indian Garhwalis would be "less provocative" to the crowd than British troops.[76]

Isemonger claimed that he was concerned that the swelling crowd, shouting, as he put it, "the usual Congress clap trap," would try to set fire to the other armored cars that still occupied the Qissa Khwani road.[77] So he ordered "Bray" forward to knock down the barricades that the crowd had recently constructed out of packing cases and a few bullock carts. Isemonger claimed that as the armored car advanced, he saw several men approaching with straw and kerosene.[78] At this, he ordered the Garhwalis to advance. The Indian troops were apparently hesitant to do this and their British commanding officer had to shout twice at one of the platoons to form up and move forward. They moved forward but kept their rifles at their right side. Their commander, Captain Ricketts, seized the barrel of one of the rifles to place it down, facing the crowd, in the manner he wished his troops to advance. The Garhwalis marched into the crowd so that they were "breast to breast" with them.[79]

The British account states that for the next hour (between 12.30 pm and 1.30 pm) the crowd continued to move forward, pressing against the riflemen and hurling bricks at them. The Garhwali commander, Captain Ricketts, was hit twice in the head, knocking him out. Ten of the 25 riflemen in this forward platoon were also injured and subsequently sent to the hospital. The Garhwalis were packed so tight with the crowd – a decision the Sulaiman Committee later judged "imprudent" – that they could neither raise their rifles nor fix bayonets. Finally, the crowd began snatching at the Garhwalis' rifles and Jemandar Luthi Singh fired three

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[76] Sulaiman Report, p. 23.

[77] Report by F. Isemonger, 24 April 1930, HOME (POL.) F. 255/5/1930.

[78] Sulaiman Report, p. 23. Isemonger was also apparently concerned about a member of the crowd wielding an axe.

[79] Proceedings of a Court of Inquiry into the Mutiny of the 2nd Battalion of the 18th Royal Garhwal Rifles at Peshawar, 23–24 April 1930, held at Abbottabad and Peshawar, 28 April–7 May 1930, IOR L MIL 5/861.

rounds, while a member of the crowd held the barrel of his rifle.[80] At this point Isemonger appears to have been convinced that he was dealing with a "revolutionary" situation on par with the Punjab disturbances in 1919.[81] He withdrew the Garhwalis and ordered the KOYLI to advance and fire at the crowd. He simultaneously ordered the three armored cars to open up on the crowd with their machine guns.[82] The crowd broke and ran. At the same time, around 2pm, the Chief Secretary of the province, Olaf Caroe, who had been in the Cantonment to the west of the walled city, arrived and agreed that the demonstrators should be pursued by the British troops. Demonstrations had now spread throughout the city and the British troops advanced down the lanes and streets to the east of Kabuli Gate and north towards the Katcheri Gate. The British claimed that the troops were bombarded with bricks and stones by people on the rooftops and balconies and they replied with gunfire. The firing continued until 4pm or 5pm, when the city was, for the moment, "pacified." By day's end the Government's official estimate tallied 30 civilians killed and 39 wounded, though they admitted that there were likely more casualties.[83]

23 April 1930: the Congress version

The nationalist account of these events shared the same essential outline and chronology, but the Congress Report, authored by the nationalist leader Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, parted company with the British version on a number of key points. The Congress account agreed with the Government that the situation began to get out of hand when the four armored cars entered the city. Metcalfe himself admitted that it could have been "better handled."[84] The nationalists asserted, however, that at no point did the crowd resort to throwing rocks or bricks at the armored cars, police, or British officials. Instead, the cars came into the city at great speed, immediately running over between 12 and 14 Peshawaris. Unlike the British account – which placed the Peshawari casualties at five or six – Congress's witnesses claimed that no projectiles had been aimed at the cars and so they never closed up. The Peshawaris and Private Bryant died because the cars were travelling at a reckless speed.

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[80] Jemandar was a "Viceroy's Commission" (i.e. an Indian officer without a full "King's Commission"), a rank roughly analogous to a lieutenant in the British Army.

[81] Report by F. Isemonger, 24 April 1930.

[82] Sulaiman Report, p. 25.

[83] Sulaiman Report, p. 27.

[84] Sulaiman Report, p. 16.

Patel's report was especially keen on discounting the accusation that Bryant had been knocked off his motorcycle by the crowd, a charge with which the European community in North-West India was making considerable hay.[85] Bryant, the witnesses said, had been knocked off his motorcycle after colliding with one of the armored cars and was then fatally run over by the same vehicle.[86] Next, Patel's committee found that the fire in "Bethune" was caused not by the crowd as they sought to collect the bodies of the dead and injured, but when "fire was opened by someone from the car" causing "Bethune" to catch fire from the inside. The report reasoned that "it was very difficult to believe that any unarmed men could deliberately go so near an armoured car and also set fire to it knowing full well that other armoured cars which were there would immediately kill them on the spot."[87] The Congress noted that the Government's original communiqués failed to mention the supposed arson.[88]

Although the Patel Report argued that the crowd was in no way violent, it did admit that the crowd *may* have begun throwing pebbles at the armored cars and British officers after the cars ran over members of the crowd. It remained purposefully vague on what had happened to Metcalfe on the *thana* steps, suggesting that the Deputy Commissioner was hit by a pebble and thereafter "fell down unconscious" on the steps.[89] Regarding the first firing, which all parties agreed Metcalfe ordered after regaining consciousness, the Congress charged that the Deputy Commissioner ordered it not to protect the crew of "Bethune," as Cobb testified, but as retribution for being hit with a stone. The

[85] The *Civil and Military Gazette's* reporter painted the scene in particularly lurid colors, charging that the Private was "struck down with a shovel and, while lying unconscious, was stoned to death by frenzied rioters . . . they then poured kerosene oil over his body and saturated the leading car with petrol . . . a match was then applied to the unfortunate victim and the flames from the body ignited the car, which was practically burned out" ("Stoned to Death" in the *Civil and Military Gazette*, 26 April 1930, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML)).

[86] Patel Report, pp. 14–15.

[87] Patel Report, p. 16.

[88] Communiqué by Herbert Emerson, 5 May 1930. This was true, yet the Senior Police Superintendent's initial report from 24 April stated that the fire was started by members of the crowd. It is unclear why this was omitted from the Government's subsequent press reports (Report by R. H. Fooks, 24 April 1930).

[89] Patel Report, p. 17. It should be noted that Metcalfe took a six-month medical leave immediately following this incident. Caroe and Francis Wylie replaced Metcalfe as temporary dual Deputy Commissioners (Unpublished Caroe Memoirs).

report stated "it seems to us clear that the Deputy Commissioner had used this little incident of an injury to him as an occasion for ordering the armoured car to open fire."[90]

The second firing, ordered by Isemonger, was, Congress claimed, based on even flimsier reasoning than the first.[91] As the crowd grew between 11 am and 1.30 pm, both the British and Congress agreed that a local nationalist, Hakim Abdul Jalil Khan, attempted to diffuse the situation. The Hakim, whom Isemonger admittedly did not trust, testified to Patel's committee that he told the Inspector General that crowd control could be carried out with the use of the fire engine's hose.[92] Isemonger, according to the Hakim, replied: "We have decided upon our arrangements, and we must proceed with them." Meanwhile the crowd moved forward, attempting to collect the bodies of the dead. Congress claimed that the Garhwalis refused to fire on the crowd and thereafter Isemonger ordered the British troops to open fire on the crowd, killing old men, women, and children indiscriminately.[93] In this vein, the initial Congress reports on the violence in the Qissa Khwani Bazaar emphasized the brutality of the shootings and personal bravery of the victims. The Congress Bulletin for the week, published by Patel, claimed:

> When those in the front fell down wounded by the shots those behind came forward with their breast bared, and exposed themselves to the fire so much so that some people got as many as twenty six bullet wounds in their body and all the people stood their ground without getting into a panic. A young Sikh boy came and stood in front of a soldier and asked him to fire at him which the soldier unhesitantly did, killing him.[94]

Patel's later report, based on the testimony of 70 witnesses, paints a less heroic picture, emphasizing instead the panic that overcame the crowd as they fled into the alleys and lanes leading from the Qissa Khwani Bazaar.

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[90] Patel Report, p. 19.
[91] The leader of the local Khilafat Committee believed Isemonger to be "a personal enemy of each and every Indian" (Yusufi, *Frontier Tragedy*, p. 27).
[92] Sulaiman Report, p. 22.
[93] Patel Report, p. 21.
[94] The Bombay Congress Bulletin: Peshawar Supplement, 24 April–3 May 1930, HOME (POL.) F 255/5/1930.

Patel's report included photographs taken at various stages during the morning and early afternoon. Congress maintained that Isemonger's decision to fire that afternoon and his subsequent decision, along with Caroe, to pursue the demonstrators, was not based on any actual threat, and that the crowd carried neither *lathis* (quarterstaffs) nor crowbars, as the Inspector General attested. The photographs seem to support this view, though there is no telling when, in the course of events, they were taken.[95] Although the Congress suggested that perhaps 200–300 persons were gunned down that day, their investigation officially placed the death toll at 125 – almost 100 more than the British.[96]

Neither the witnesses for the British investigation nor the Congress investigation produced fully coherent narratives of the day's events. Both versions of the demonstration and subsequent shootings exhibit conjecture and disagreements among those that were there. Moreover, both reports were essentially political documents. The British report was charged with showing that the "mob" that confronted Metcalfe on that Wednesday morning was dangerous and on the verge of real violence. The Congress, on the other hand, needed to show that the nationalist movement on the Frontier was non-violent in character – especially when compared to the heavy hand of British rule in the province. The fact that the nationalists in question were Pathans made it especially important that Patel and his committee paint a picture of Gandhian non-violence.

Despite the strong elements of whitewashing by both parties, a few things stand out. On the British side, Justice Sulaiman's report makes it clear that Aubrey Metcalfe's actions that morning greatly exacerbated the situation. His decision to believe his European subordinates over the Indian ones was the first problem. Secondly, his decision to send in the armored cars, when he himself only saw one man with an axe, was disastrous.[97] It appears that Metcalfe and the British overreacted – with dire consequences. The Congress version of events presented the demonstrators as blameless, yet the British claim that the crowd was throwing bricks and stones at Metcalfe, the armored cars, and the soldiers and police – an accusation which the Congress vehemently denied – appears to have been true. A number of British personnel went to the hospital that day with terrible wounds from being hit by bricks and stones. Some were out of commission for

[95] Patel Report, Exhibits "T" and "U."
[96] Patel Report, p. 28.
[97] Sulaiman Report, p. 16.

months.[98] Finally, there is the discrepancy as to the number of civilian fatalities sustained on 23 April. The Sulaiman Report put the number of civilian dead at 30, although it admitted there were no doubt more of which the Government was unaware.[99] The Congress placed the number at 125 and drew up a detailed list of the deceased.[100] Attaining the actual number would be impossible, yet one thing is clear: the British responded with an unwarranted degree of violence when confronting the crowd in the Qissa Khwani Bazaar. In April and May 1930, local administrations throughout India were beset by large-scale nationalist demonstrations. On several occasions troops were called out and shootings occurred, but nowhere was there close to the number of "official" dead as in Peshawar. Nor were machine guns used.[101] Regardless of which numbers are believed, the Government's or Patel's, the number of civilian dead at Peshawar is exceeded in the twentieth century Raj only by General Dyer's Jallianwalah Bagh massacre at Amritsar in 1919.[102]

The "loss" of Peshawar

As more troops entered Peshawar on the evening of 23 April, the city fell quiet.[103] The next morning the local Congress office reopened, and a general strike was declared.[104] Troops remained in the city and the atmosphere remained tense, and violence threatened to erupt. The correspondent for the *Civil and Military Gazette* reported that a mob shouting "*Inqilab Zindabad*" (long live revolution) had tried to pull him out of his rickshaw, but the arrival of British troops convinced

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[98] See Proceedings of a Court of Inquiry into the Mutiny of the 2nd Battalion of the 18th Royal Garhwal Rifles at Peshawar, 23–24 April 1930, held at Abbottabad and Peshawar, 28 April–7 May 1930, Unpublished Caroe Memoirs, and "Mob Violence in Peshawar" in the *Civil and Military Gazette,* 26 April 1930.

[99] Sulaiman Report, p. 27.

[100] Patel Report, pp. 240–243.

[101] On 8 May, for instance, a demonstration in Delhi was met with gunfire, killing, according to the official count, six and injuring 70 ("Calcutta and Delhi Riot Details" in the *Civil and Military Gazette*, 9 May 1930).

[102] The Government estimated that 379 men, women, and children died in the Amritsar shootings.

[103] Despatch by HE Field Marshal Sir William Birdwood, Commander-in-Chief in India, on the Disturbances on the North West Frontier of India from 23 April to 12 September 1930, 14 November 1930, WO 32/3526.

[104] Report by F. Isemonger, 2 May 1930.

the crowd to move along.[105] More ominously, two platoons of the 2nd Battalion of the 18th Royal Garhwali Rifles – the same troops that had faced the crowd in the Qissa Khwani Bazaar the day before – refused to move back into the city when so ordered that afternoon. This was mutiny. Led by two non-commissioned officers, Havildars Chandar Singh and Naraia Singh, the soldiers refused to embus for the city and demanded that every man in the two platoons be discharged from the service within the next 24 hours.[106] When pressed by their Indian officers, the troops threatened to kill them and said to one, with a clear reference to the mutiny of the Bengal Army in 1857, "Blow me away from the guns, I will not move." Shortly thereafter several British regimental officers arrived on the scene and, although the soldiers continued to insist that they receive immediate discharge from the service, they were easily disarmed and confined to their barracks.[107]

The Garhwal Mutiny plunged the Frontier administration into a panic. Already shaken by the shootings on 23 April, Bolton telegraphed the Viceroy with news of the mutiny. He greatly exaggerated the extent of the soldiers' intransigence, informing Irwin that the two platoons refused to obey orders because "they would not fire on their own people."[108] Alarmed, Irwin telegraphed William Wedgwood Benn, the new Labour Secretary of State for India. The Indian Army was a cornerstone of British rule and the possibility that Indian troops would not "fire on their own people" jeopardized the entire Raj. Irwin wrote:

> [The] Garwhal [sic] incident has set me thinking of possibilities that might arise should the situation seriously deteriorate and should other Indian battalions prove unreliable. In such event we should have to ask for substantial reinforcements of British troops.[109]

Benn consulted with the military staff in the India Office and informed Irwin that British reinforcements would be ready for India at the "word go," adding that he hated contemplating such measures. Yet, "being a

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[105] "More Troops in Peshawar" in the *Civil and Military Gazette*, 27 April 1930.

[106] A Havildar was the equivalent of a sergeant in the British Army.

[107] Proceedings of a Court of Inquiry into the Mutiny of the 2nd Battalion of the 18th Royal Garhwal Rifles at Peshawar, 23–24 April 1930, held at Abbottabad and Peshawar, 28 April–7 May 1930.

[108] NWFP to Viceroy, 26 April 1930, IOR L PO 4/18A.

[109] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 26 April 1930, L PO 4/18A. News of the mutiny alarmed provincial administrations throughout India. See e.g., Sir Stanley Jackson (Governor of Bengal) to Irwin, 28 April 1930, Halifax Papers C152/24.

good pacifist . . . I believe in striving to be efficient if force has to be applied."[110] Ultimately, no British reinforcements were needed. The Garhwal Mutiny proved to be an isolated event.[111] The initial great fear – that the refusal to obey orders was prompted by sympathies for the nationalist movement – was put to rest in the course of an Army investigation in early May. Blame, the court believed, lay at the feet of the treatment the two platoons underwent in Peshawar on 23 April. With fresh memories of the previous day, they had not wanted to go back to city because of the "degrading and demoralizing treatment" they received at "the hands of a savage mob." The previous day had been something "no soldier wearing the King's uniform should be asked to stand." The court claimed that despondent and without the leadership of their British commander, who was in hospital, the Garhwalis, who were "blindly obedient to orders," unwisely followed the incitements of the two Havildars, Singh and Singh. Although these two non-commissioned officers had clearly conspired against the Crown, the court concluded with relief that, rather than having links to the nationalist movement, they were simply two "malcontents." Convinced that the mutiny had no direct connection with nationalism, the court adjourned, convicting the soldiers and sentencing them to various terms of imprisonment.[112]

On the night of 24 April, however, the Frontier administration still believed that the Garhwal Mutiny was hand in glove with the nationalist "agitators." Moreover, the rural areas of the Peshawar District were also in upheaval, and Bolton called an impromptu meeting of his officers and local worthies. The deputation of city fathers persuaded Bolton that unrest would only dissipate if he withdrew all troops from the city.[113] Stunningly, he quickly agreed, and troops began to leave the walled city at 10.30 pm. Writing in retirement, Olaf Caroe recalled:

> I shall never forget my feeling of dismay and despair on hearing of Bolton's action in deciding to withdraw from the City; it seemed to me that the whole border would probably go up in smoke, and I wondered how many of us would be left. And what of the rest of

[110] Benn to Irwin, 1 May 1930, L PO 4/18A.
[111] Irwin to Benn, 1 May 1930, Halifax Papers IOR C152/6.
[112] Proceedings of a Court of Inquiry into the Mutiny of the 2nd Battalion of the 18th Royal Garhwal Rifles at Peshawar, 23–24 April 1930, held at Abbottabad and Peshawar, 28 April–7 May 1930.
[113] Unpublished Caroe Memoirs.

> India, with a Frontier in flames; what of the Afghans; and even the Russians beyond?[114]

Within hours, this vacuum in authority was filled by nationalist organizers. Police barricaded themselves in their *thanas* and the Congress and its allies took over the day-to-day operation of the city.[115] When Bolton realized he had lost control of the city, the 25-year Frontier veteran suffered a mental breakdown. Unable to sleep, Bolton wrote increasingly panicked messages to Simla. Officials within the Government of India itself were appalled by Bolton's decision to "give up" Peshawar to the nationalists. With only sketchy information, the Home Secretary, Herbert Emerson, realized that Bolton's description of the situation "would seem to indicate that the authority of government has been or is being replaced by that of Congress." This abdication was "highly disturbing."[116] At this point, the Viceroy, who was now receiving telegrams from Bolton stating that the province should immediately receive full reforms, decided that the Chief Commissioner was "losing his grip" and sent the Foreign Secretary, Evelyn Howell, to Peshawar.[117]

A long-time Frontier officer and former Resident in Waziristan, Howell was a scholar-administrator with a proven record of grace under pressure.[118] In an emergency, the Foreign Secretary was the man for the job. Interrupting work on his monograph on Waziristan's Mahsuds, *Mizh*, Howell left Simla on the evening of 28 April and flew to Peshawar, arriving there at noon the next day.[119] He was met at the aerodrome by several officials and Bolton's wife, Edith. Lady Bolton took Howell aside, telling him:

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114 Unpublished Caroe Memoirs.

115 Report by F. Isemonger, 2 May 1930; and "An Appreciation of the Situation" by F. C. Isemonger, 26 April 1930, HOME (POL.) F. 255/5/1930.

116 Telegram from Home Department to NWFP, 29 April 1930, HOME (POL.) F. 255/5/1930.

117 Irwin to Benn, 1 May 1930. The new Minister to Kabul, Sir Richard Maconachie, was also in Peshawar at the time, waiting to resume the British Legation in Afghanistan, empty since the 1929 evacuation. Irwin's decision to send Howell was influenced by Maconachie's concerns over Bolton's mental state, which he telegraphed to the Viceroy.

118 See, for instance, Howell's account of his stealthy midnight disarmament of a Mahsud militia as Political Agent, South Waziristan, in 1907, in Evelyn B. Howell, *Mizh: A Monograph of Government's Relations with the Mahsud Tribe* (Simla, 1931).

119 Howell to J. C. Walton (Foreign and Political Secretary to the India Office), 28 May 1930, Walton Papers IOR D545/6.

> If I felt that . . . Bill [Bolton] was still the right man in the right place I'd say 'keep him here', even though I knew that he would be killed. But he's not. His grip has gone completely. He has lost all balance and control . . . For three nights neither he nor I slept at all.[120]

Following this introduction to the situation, Howell drove to Government House and interviewed Bolton himself. Howell was taken aback by the stacks of files, arranged with "no method of finality." Officials told the Foreign Secretary that Bolton was taking whatever opinion the last person to whom he spoke espoused and so Howell effectively took over the administration.[121] Congress had now controlled Peshawar for five days and Howell attempted to rally both the administration and Bolton. He called for the civil surgeon to attend to the Chief Commissioner and played a game of tennis with the Boltons, hoping it would help them sleep. By the end of the evening, the situation within Government House seemed to be under control and Howell believed that Bolton could stay on for another few weeks in order to see the crisis through and train his successor, Steuart Pears. Any thoughts of Bolton marching away "with drums beating and colours flying," however, were dashed at 5.30 am the next day, when Lady Bolton burst into Howell's bedroom, telling him that "It's all up, Bill is off his head . . . He keeps hearing the sound of firing and the shrieks of women and children!" Howell found Bolton twisted up in his bed, but eventually convinced him that the firing he heard was imaginary.[122] It was time for Bolton to leave. Within an hour he and Lady Bolton were en route to Rawalpindi, where they joined the Bombay Mail.[123] A week later, they were on the liner Viceroy of India, bound for England.[124] The British press in India, which, in order to stem any panic about the situation in the NWFP, had refrained from reporting the full extent of Congress' control of Peshawar or the Garhwal Mutiny, followed suit with Bolton's departure. Although rumors swirled that, among other things, Bolton had been murdered, his exit was only reported a week later after

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[120] Howell to George Cunningham (Private Secretary to the Viceroy), 30 April 1930, Halifax Papers C152/6.
[121] Howell to Cunningham, 30 April 1930.
[122] Howell to Cunningham, 30 April 1930.
[123] George Cunningham to his Sister, 10 May 1930, Cunningham Papers IOR D670/39.
[124] "Sir N. Bolton" in the *Civil and Military Gazette*, 4 May 1930.

Peshawar had been retaken.[125] As Congress's Civil Disobedience movement swept India in the spring of 1930, there are few parallels to Bolton's disintegration. Although he was undoubtedly a tired man to begin with, having served as Chief Commissioner for seven years, this alone does not explain his breakdown. Confused by the situation and feeling "betrayed" by "his people," he simply fell apart.[126]

The internal enemy

Indian and British regiments retook Peshawar on the morning of 4 May 1930. Any rejoicing, however, was overshadowed by the fact that the preceding two weeks had witnessed a near total breakdown of the British administration on the Frontier. Moreover, the administration's difficulties vis-à-vis Frontier nationalism had just begun. Over the next two years, the nationalists and the British would be locked in a small-scale war throughout the Frontier, a conflict exacerbated in the summer of 1930 by the introduction of the tribes into the fray. As of early May, however, the abiding question was how did this breakdown – starting with Metcalfe's flawed decision to send the armored cars into Peshawar and ending with Bolton's mental collapse – come to pass?

Howell's verdict, which emphasized the local administration's "supineness" in the face of growing nationalist sentiment, offers the basic answer.[127] But the problem went far deeper than that. The administration's "wishful thinking" about the situation between 1928 and April 1930 lay in its ideological commitment to what many officers believed to be the "true nature" of the Frontier Province and its Pathan inhabitants.[128] Some Frontier officers, such as Charles Bruce and Olaf

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[125] The *Civil and Military Gazette* reported that "a touch of romance has been added to the story by the announcement of the engagement" of Bolton's daughter Iris, who had been in Simla, to Mr. Best, Deputy Commissioner of Kohat ("India Loses a Great Administrator," in the *Civil and Military Gazette*, 5 May 1930).

[126] Three weeks before the "Peshawar Disturbances," Bolton learnt that his tenure on the Frontier would end in the fall of 1930. He wrote to Irwin: "I have lived the best years of my life in this Province and my life's work, such as it is, has been done here, and I have sincere friendship with many of the people" (Bolton to Irwin, 3 April 1930, Halifax Papers C152/24).

[127] Note by Evelyn B. Howell, 24 May 1930.

[128] Andrew Muldoon argues that this "wishful thinking" was endemic throughout the entire British administration in India at this time, and cites ideological rigidity, intelligence failures, remoteness, and unwarranted optimism as the

Caroe, recognized the genuine threat posed to the British administration by nationalism and the discontent that underwrote it, but most, like Bolton and Metcalfe, chose to believe that the oratory of men like Abdul Ghaffar Khan fell on deaf ears; they believed the villagers and even the urban population remained impervious to what was simply "agitation." These officials believed that they, rather than the nationalist leadership, understood the common man and his concerns. Some political activity on the Frontier, such as the Marxist *Anjuman-i-Naujawanan-i-Sarhad*, was watched closely, and even feared. But this was the exception that proved the rule. To the administration, this organization, though minuscule, represented the *external* Marxist threat posed by Soviet Russia and perhaps even Afghanistan. The NWFP government reasoned that since the Pathan, by character and geography, was somehow inoculated to political events taking place "down-country" in India, external threats remained the real problem.

This state of mind contributed to the actual breakdown in British authority in Peshawar city between 23 April and 4 May. Most importantly, the administration's previously blinkered approach to politics in the province meant that few had any understanding of what it was they were dealing with. Having misunderstood the deep well of economic and social discontent in the settled districts, the administration had no idea that the arrest of the 12 nationalist organizers would trigger large demonstrations. Official ignorance of nationalism in Peshawar District meant that there was little understanding of the movement's non-violent principles. Although these were not as pure as the Congress report indicated, they were real enough and it is unlikely that the crowd that accompanied the two Congress organizers to the *thana* on 23 April was inclined towards violence. But Metcalfe, ignorant of this, and assuming that he was dealing with an angry and therefore violent "mob" – despite the evidence to the contrary – sent in armored cars, which provided the catalyst for a tragic chain of events.

The events of 23 April represent a watershed in the history of the Frontier. Prior to that fateful day, the Frontier administration and the Government of India assumed that the region remained outside "political" India. The Frontier was a dangerous region full of threats, yet these had always been external – the trans-border tribes, the

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source of this crisis. Sir Malcom Hailey stands out as a particularly strong example of this problem (See Andrew Muldoon, *Empire, Politics and the Creation of the 1935 India Act: Last Act of the Raj* (Farnham, 2009).

Afghans, or the Russians. From this point on the greatest threat to British rule in the NWFP came from within. In the coming months the administration, civil and military, in Delhi and Peshawar, would begin to take the measure of what it was they faced. Slowly, they began to understand that the decade-long program of sealing off the Frontier from the rest of the subcontinent had collapsed.

5

"These Infernal Khudai Khidmatgaran": Defining and Repressing Frontier Nationalism, 1930–1931

In the spring of 1930, after years of ignoring the growing nationalist movement in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), the local British administration was suddenly confronted with a full-scale rebellion throughout the province. Beginning with a nationalist demonstration and subsequent shooting of Indian civilians by British troops in Peshawar on 23 April, unrest quickly spread throughout the province. Within days the British had evacuated Peshawar city and much of the NWFP was essentially beyond their control. At the beginning of June, the British position was further weakened by an onslaught of Afridi *lashkars* who descended upon the Vale of Peshawar to fight the Government's forces. Taken by surprise, the British, both in Peshawar and in Delhi, struggled to understand the nature of this opposition and how to beat what was now a major challenge to their rule on the Frontier and in India as a whole.[1]

This chapter examines the expansion of the North-West Frontier revolt from May 1930 to the end of 1931, and the British administration's attempt both to define and control the unrest in this period. It argues that although the nationalist uprising on the Frontier coincided with Gandhi's All-India Civil Disobedience movement of 1930–1933, the British administration, which still viewed the trans-Indus territories as separate in culture and mentality from the rest of India, was loath to admit that the local nationalist movement was directly related to the All-India struggle. While officials acknowledged that Abdul Ghaffar Khan's nationalist supporters – "these infernal Khudai Khidmatgaran," as the Indian Foreign Secretary, Evelyn Howell, called them, or, more

[1] See Viceroy (Lord Irwin) to Secretary of State for India (William Wedgwood Benn), 14 May 1930, Halifax Papers, India Office Records (IOR) C152/6.

commonly, the "Red Shirts" – were associated with Congress, they refused to believe that they had the same aims as the national movement.[2] British administrators and officers insisted that the Pathan had no desire for home rule or Indian independence. Rather, they believed that the Red Shirts were either a front for Bolshevism or the product of "wicked rumours" about supposed threats to Islam on the Frontier. They therefore saw the problem as either externally motivated or the product of the Pathans' "deep seated religious fanaticism."

Second, this chapter explores the British administration's range of responses once they finally concluded that they were dealing with an actual nationalist movement allied with the wider All-India Congress party. Despite this realization, many within the administration believed that they had to deal with the nationalist movement on the Frontier in a manner different from that used in the rest of the subcontinent, and pursued a violent rejoinder to the Red Shirt movement. This policy was motivated by the continuing belief that "the Pathan" was violent by nature and would only understand "a firm hand," and that the region was religiously, geographically, and culturally distinct from "the plains."

Peshawar and the spreading revolt

Following the British withdrawal from Peshawar on the evening of 24 April 1930, the city fell into nationalist hands. The police locked themselves in their stations and Congress volunteers took up the fundamental responsibility of the government: maintaining law and order. Despite the removal of Sir Norman Bolton following his mental collapse and the arrival of fresh leadership in the form of Evelyn Howell, the Frontier administration remained paralyzed. For days the British argued over the right response to their "loss" of Peshawar. More aggressive members of the administration, such as Olaf Caroe, who with Aubrey Metcalfe out of action following his injuries in the Peshawar "disturbances," was appointed Joint Deputy Commissioner of Peshawar District, argued that the British had sustained a massive blow to their prestige when they evacuated the city and that this "frontier shield" of the empire must be recovered at all costs.[3] Others, such as the acting

[2] Evelynn Howell (Foreign Secretary, Government of India) to Viceroy, 5 May 1930, Halifax Papers IOR C152/24.
[3] Unpublished Caroe Memoirs, Caroe Papers IOR F203/79.

Chief Commissioner, Charles Latimer, maintained that overly aggressive action would lead to a "bloodbath" on both sides.[4]

After two weeks of argument between and within the separate civil, military, and air authorities, the administration finally decided to retake the city in an early morning surprise attack. British and Indian troops moved into Peshawar at 3am on 4 May.[5] The police took possession of the local Congress offices and arrested a number of "leading agitators." In line with the Frontier nationalists' commitment to Gandhi's principles of non-violence, the arrested offered no resistance and, as the Government's press communiqué proudly trumpeted, not a "single shot was fired" over the course of the day. Afridi *khassadars* – tribal levies from the Khyber Agency – assisted the police, and the Government of India's Home Secretary noted with relief that the trans-border tribesmen who were in the city on personal business took little interest in the events going on around them.[6]

Despite the reoccupation, the Frontier administration and its new Chief Commissioner, Steuart Pears, who arrived in Peshawar on 10 May, continued to be deeply concerned about the state of the city and the province.[7] Peshawar remained tense. Relations between the population and the administration degenerated on 19 May when the British destroyed a "Martyr's Memorial" dedicated to those killed in April, and threatened to collapse on 31 May, when a British soldier accidentally shot and killed a mother and her two children while cleaning his gun

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[4] Telegram from NWFP to Home Department, Government of India, 30 April 1930, National Archives of India (NAI) HOME (POL.) F. 255/5/1930. Prior to Bolton's collapse, Latimer was serving as the Revenue Commissioner for the NWFP, which, in the pre-reformed administration, made him the Chief Commissioner's principal aide.

[5] See Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Bruce (Resident, Waziristan): Answers to Tribal Control and Defence Committee Questionnaire, 1931, Bruce Papers IOR F163/61; and Unpublished Caroe Memoirs.

[6] Communiqué by Herbert Emerson (Home Secretary, Government of India), 5 May 1930, NAI HOME (POL.) F. 11/III/1930.

[7] See "NWF Province Chief Commissioner Arrives" in the *Civil and Military* Gazette (Lahore), 12 May 1930, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML) and Steuart Pears (Chief Commissioner, NWFP) to Viceroy, 12 June 1930, Halifax Papers C152/24. Pears, a long-time Frontier officer who served at Resident in Waziristan in the early 1920s, was employed as the Resident in the princely state of Mysore in April 1930. He had been slated to replace Bolton upon the latter's retirement in late 1930, but began his term early following Bolton's collapse (Viceroy to Sir Norman Bolton, 27 March 1930, Halifax Papers C152/24).

at the Kabuli Gate.[8] A crowd soon gathered and was beaten back with a *lathi* charge by the police and a small contingent of troops.[9] Olaf Caroe, the Joint Deputy Commissioner, arrived on the scene and ordered that a shot be fired, which dispersed the angry crowd.[10] Caroe then asked the military commander to march his detachment to another point in the city. On the way, this force of about 30 men encountered a crowd of some 2,000 in a narrow lane carrying the bodies of the woman and children killed earlier in the day in a funeral procession. The troops and the crowd came to close quarters in the lane and the crowd began "snatching" the rifles of the soldiers. Panicked, the troops fired 17 rounds and killed 10 members of the crowd.[11] Although Caroe was exonerated by the Congress's subsequent investigation, the event, when combined with his generally hostile attitude to Frontier nationalism, made the rising officer a figure of hate among many nationalists, not the least of whom was Jawaharlal Nehru.[12] Caroe's role in the shooting played a prominent role in Nehru's desire to sack Caroe when he was serving as Governor of the NWFP 16 years later. Although Pears was deeply concerned that the shootings had "set matters back very seriously," the city remained remarkably calm in the wake of this second round of killings.[13] Anxious to avoid any further violence, the British circulated notices conveying

[8] *Report [With Evidence] of the Peshawar Enquiry Committee, Appointed by the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress* (Allahabad, 1930), p. 34 (Hereafter "Patel Report").

[9] The accidental shooting took place at the site of the earlier shootings that month. To make matters worse, the soldier was a corporal with the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (KOYLI) the regiment responsible for the second round of shootings within Peshawar on 23 April. The corporal was subsequently court-martialed (Telegram from NWFP to Political Department, Government of India, 31 May 1930, HOME (POL.) F 255/5/1930).

[10] Unlike his predecessor as Deputy Commissioner for Peshawar, Aubrey Metcalfe, there was nothing lackadaisical about Caroe's approach to his job. He regularly put in 16-hour days. As his former subordinate in Peshawar, K. P. S. Menon, wrote: "He was a man with a mission; he would not let sleeping dogs lie. Indeed, he thought that the dogs of the North-West Frontier never slept; they only pretended to sleep; and if the rulers were easy-going and lethargic, the dogs would pounce on them. Eternal vigilance was Caroe's watchword" (Kumara P. S. Menon, *Many Worlds: An Autobiography* (Bombay, 1965), p. 93).

[11] Unpublished Caroe Memoirs. See also Telegram from NWFP to Home Department, Government of India, and Associated Press, undated, HOME (POL.) F 255/5/1930, which puts the initial number of fatalities at three.

[12] Both the Government and Congress put the death toll at ten and 20 wounded (The Statement of Hakim Abdul Jalil Nadwi, son of Mohamed Abdullah, residence Mohalla Kazi-Khelan, Peshawar, in Patel Report, pp. 197–199).

[13] Pears to Viceroy, 12 June 1930, Halifax Papers C152/24.

the Chief Commissioner's "profound regret and sincere sympathy," and promised financial restitution to the victims' families. Shops were closed and there were some minor demonstrations, but perhaps because the woman and children whom the British soldier had shot were Sikh rather than Muslim, there was little more unrest.[14] For the time being, Peshawar city was once again firmly in British hands.

The surrounding countryside was a different matter. The "Red Shirts," as the British now called Abdul Ghaffar Khan's Pathan nationalists, took over large swathes of rural Peshawar District while the British were preoccupied with taking back the city.[15] Nationalist sentiment was strongest in the Mardan and Charsadda subdivisions, the latter being home to Abdul Ghaffar. Bolton had ordered Abdul Ghaffar's arrest on 24 April and the nationalist leader was seized and held in the Assistant Commissioner's bungalow. But since the papers connected with his case were in Peshawar, the administration decided to remove Abdul Ghaffar to Risalpur and try him there.[16] As the hours went by on 24 April, a huge crowd surrounded the bungalow that held him. Sensing the urgency of the situation, Bolton sent the only Political officer not on urgent duty, Captain Leslie Mallam, who was working on the NWFP volume of the 1931 Census of India, to move the prisoner, but warned his subordinate that "this must be effected without firing a shot. Any more shooting will bring the tribes down all along the frontier."[17]

Accompanied by a detachment of Guides Cavalry whose commanding officer offered the opinion that the orders not to shoot the crowd were "ridiculous," Mallam arrived at the scene and encountered the enormous multitude that surrounded the bungalow where Abdul Ghaffar was held. The colonel who commanded the troop escort informed Mallam that he would occupy a nearby hill and train his machine guns on the crowd, but before the colonel could do this, Mallam decided

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[14] Telegram from NWFP to Home Department, Government of India, and Associated Press.

[15] Despatch by HE Field Marshal Sir William Birdwood, Commander-in-Chief in India, on the Disturbances on the North-West Frontier of India from 23 April to 12 September 1930, 14 November 1930, The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA)WO 32/3526.

[16] Report by Assistant Commissioner, Charsadda, to the Deputy Commissioner, Peshawar, 26 April 1930, HOME (POL.) F. 255/5/1930.

[17] G. Leslie Mallam and Diana Day, *A Pair of Chaplis and a Cassock* (London, 1978), p. 47, Mallam Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, Cambridge University (CSAS); see G. Leslie Mallam and Ambrose D. F. Dundas, *Census of India, 1931: Vol. XV, North-West Frontier Province – Part I: Report and Part 2: Tables* (Peshawar, 1933).

to get back into the car and drive directly into the crowd, hoping to reach the building in which Abdul Ghaffar was held. Surrounded by the crowd, the local Red Shirt leadership, including Abdul Ghaffar's brother, Dr. Khan Sahib, spied the British officer and accompanied the car through the crowd to the door of the bungalow.[18] After consulting with the local Assistant Commissioner, Mallam brought up a lorry and asked Abdul Ghaffar to calm the crowd before getting in. The nationalist leader agreed, but only if his handcuffs were removed first. Mallam, reasoning that Abdul Ghaffar could be trusted since he came from "a good Pathan family," acquiesced and shook hands with nationalist leader, reminding him that this was a gentleman's agreement. He would be shot if he tried to escape. Mallam, who took a consistently sympathetic view of Frontier nationalism, recalled that:

> [Abdul Ghaffar] was as good as his word. He stood up, towering above the little forest of rifles, like a Hebrew prophet with his arms in the air. The small cavalcade, led by our car drove slowly through the vast mob, flanked by Red Shirts, while Ghaffar Khan shouted, 'I am being well treated and will soon be back among you. In the meantime there must be no violence, as Mahatma Gandhi has commanded.' He had complete control of the people, who listened to him in silence.[19]

Abdul Ghaffar was duly delivered to Risalpur and, within a day, convicted under the Frontier Crimes Regulation and sentenced to three years' rigorous imprisonment in the Punjab's Gujrat Prison.[20]

Despite Abdul Ghaffar's removal, the Mardan and Charsadda subdivisions remained in a state of upheaval throughout May. At the beginning of the month the NWFP Government reported that the activities of the "ostensibly non-violent but in ultimate intention revolutionary" Red Shirts, such as mass demonstrations and the organization of parallel courts, was going unchecked and police were unable to control these areas of the district. The authorities decided to send in a moveable column of troops to reduce a number of villages "to order."[21]

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[18] See Abdul Ghaffar Khan, *My Life and Struggle: Autobiography of Badshah Khan as Narrated to K. B. Narang* (Delhi, 1969), pp. 103–104.
[19] Mallam, *A Pair of Chaplis*, p. 48.
[20] Report by Assistant Commissioner, Charsadda, to the Deputy Commissioner, Peshawar.
[21] Telegram from NWFP to Foreign Department, Government of India, 8 May 1930, HOME (POL.) F. 255/5/1930.

At the same time as the administration was taking steps to suppress nationalist activity in the rural areas of Peshawar, the movement spread to the districts of Kohat, Bannu, and Dera Ismail Khan. Faced with mounting opposition, the British pursued what they themselves admitted was a "purely repressive" policy of surrounding villages, arresting "agitators," seizing firearms, and consigning these weapons to bonfires.[22] In the process a number of civilians and government officers were killed.[23]

Mallam, an "Army Political" who had earlier served as a Political Agent in the Persian Gulf, was placed in charge of the Charsadda subdivision, where he quickly realized that the opposition to the administration was "complete" with British police, courts, post offices, and taxes going unheeded by the population. He therefore attempted to deal with the uprising through peaceful means, encouraging the support of the "loyal" Khans and holding a *jirga* to discuss the people's grievances. Pears, however, labeled Mallam's decision to invite open criticism of the Government "disgraceful." A "large and burley" old Frontier-hand who had previously served as Resident in Waziristan, Pears was deeply ashamed of the collapse in authority in the NWFP. He believed that while he had been away from the Frontier at Mysore, the local administration had lost their way, becoming feeble and pusillanimous. He openly blamed the Frontier cadre for Bolton's collapse, which he labeled "a disgrace."[24] Pears informed Mallam that inviting grievances against the Government would be interpreted as a sign of weakness and ordered roadblocks to be set up and troops sent into the area.[25] With a policy of repression fully in place, the British had reasserted their authority throughout much of the settled districts by the end of the month. The administration believed that, for the time, Red Shirt activity had diminished.[26]

Defining the "Red Shirts"

Throughout the month of May, the British grappled with the question of who, exactly, the Red Shirts and their allies were. What little

[22] NWFP Fortnightly Report for the First Half of May 1930, IOR L P&J 12/20.
[23] Telegram from Norwef to Home Department, Government of India, 26 May 1930, HOME (POL.) F. 255/5/1930.
[24] Mallam, *A Pair of Chaplis*, pp. 49–53.
[25] Pears to Irwin, 12 June 1930.
[26] Fortnightly Report on the Internal Situation of the NWFP for the First Half of May 1930.

attention the administration paid to nationalism on the Frontier before 23 April had centered on the small but Marxist *Anjuman-i-Naujawanan-i-Sarhad*. Now they were confronted by a widespread rebellion throughout the province, one that appeared to be bent on the elimination of British rule. Having always assumed the real threat to their rule on the Frontier, and possibly over all of India, would come from an external enemy or proxy, such as Russia, Afghanistan, or the trans-border tribes, the British began to realize that they might be faced with a genuine nationalist movement on the Frontier.

Yet old habits were hard to break, and throughout this first phase of the nationalist rebellion on the Frontier the British vacillated between this new reality and their established shibboleths. The "red jackets" of the Khudai Khidmatgars and the hammer and sickle symbols used by the *Anjuman*, combined with a predilection towards viewing the source of all problems as external, led the administration to initially focus on the possibility of communist or Russian influence on the rebellion.[27] Evelyn Howell, who had flown to Peshawar in the midst of Bolton's collapse and then stayed on to assist the administration, had conflicting views on where the true root of the "disturbances" lay. Howell had long worried about a potential Bolshevik invasion through the northern marches of the North-West Frontier. While serving as Resident in Kashmir in 1927, Howell had warned Delhi of the possibility of an imminent Soviet invasion through the small strip of incredibly mountainous and nearly impassable land that separated the USSR from Gilgit in the far North-West and he maintained this suspicion of Soviet infiltration.[28] He originally believed the revolt to be communist-inspired. He wrote to the Viceroy, stating that "'these infernal 'Khudai Khidmatgaran' are now the chief difficulty here. We are trying to get the name 'Balshaveek' – which is really much more appropriate – to stick to them. They will then be easier to tackle."[29] By the end of the month, Howell concluded that "Congress is the villain of the piece," but whether Congress had acted alone, or whether it was connected with the "Bolsheviks," was unclear.[30] Ultimately for Howell, the question

[27] NWFP Fortnightly Report for the First Half of February 1930, L P&J 12/20 and NWFP Fortnightly Report for the First Half of May 1930.
[28] Evelyn Howell to Sir Denys Bray, 27 June 1927, IOR L P&S 10/1152. Earlier, however, William Keen, who was the acting Chief Commissioner of the NWFP at the time, thoroughly discounted the possibility of invasion (W. J. Keen to Foreign Department, Government of India, 12 July 1926, L P&S 10/1152).
[29] Evelyn Howell to Viceroy, 5 May 1930.
[30] Note by Evelyn Howell, 24 May 1930, NAI HOME (POL.) F 206/1930.

of whether the "hand of Congress" acted alone was moot, for the disturbances were "undermining the Frontier bulwark" of the empire and therefore helping Russia regardless of funding or encouragement from Moscow.[31]

Others shared this fear. General Sir Sydney Muspratt, who had served as Rawlinson's "rat" in the India Office during the controversy over Waziristan in the early 1920s, was then serving as Deputy Chief of the Indian General Staff. Muspratt, like most Army officers, believed that upheaval in India and the Frontier could not help but encourage Afghan and Soviet efforts to undermine the British Raj.[32] Although the Viceroy was convinced that the new Afghan ruler, Nadir Shah, who had overthrown the short-lived Tajik "Bandit King," Habibullah Ghazi, in 1929, had disavowed the pro-Russian activities of Amanullah, and "realized that his true interests lay in establishing real friendship with Great Britain and checking the advance of Russia," men like Muspratt still doubted the new king's intentions.[33] Given the situation in the NWFP, Muspratt believed that the British needed to keep a careful watch on the state of feeling in Afghanistan and among the trans-border tribes: "Our prestige is bound to be suffering at the present moment and it is at such times that things happen with startling rapidity." The General maintained that there were a certain number of Afghans "whose profession it is to fish in troubled water . . . behind them will be the Russian Legation."[34]

The Viceroy, Lord Irwin, was also concerned. He told the Secretary of State for India, William Wedgwood Benn, that his anxieties centered on Abdul Ghaffar, whom he described as "a man of considerable wealth and some influence in the province," who was "imbued with socialistic and probably communistic ideas but is respected as he is apparently a genuine enthusiast."[35] Howell echoed this concern, citing unsubstantiated claims that Abdul Ghaffar was related by marriage to the Haji of Turangzai, a local tribal leader who was suspected of

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[31] Evelyn Howell to J. C. Walton (Foreign and Political Secretary, India Office), 28 May 1930, Walton Papers IOR D545/6.
[32] See "North West Frontier of India with Regard to Defence": Typescript of Lecture Delivered by Sir Sydney Muspratt to the Imperial Defence College, 1931, Muspratt Papers IOR F223/82.
[33] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 13 March 1930, Halifax Papers C152/6.
[34] Note by General Sir Sydney Muspratt, 24 April 1930, HOME (POL.) F. 255/5/1930 (Part 2).
[35] Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State, 11 June 1930, HOME (POL.) F. 11/III/1930.

funneling Bolshevik money to the "Hindustani fanatics" in the province.[36] Irwin related to Benn, with whom he enjoyed an unusually close and frank working relationship, that the objective of the Red Shirts was the organization of young laborers and peasants to combat "imperialism and capitalists." The Viceroy believed that the Red Shirts would shed their non-violent principles when the moment arose. Yet despite these fears about Abdul Ghaffar, the red uniform, and the occasional use of the hammer and sickle, Irwin admitted that "present information suggests that it is based on imitation rather than direct Soviet inspiration." There was no proof of financial support from Russia and the use of the symbols probably reflected the "communist tendencies" of Abdul Ghaffar, rather than the formal adoption of the "Communist creed or appreciation of its full aims and principles."[37] The Viceroy, however, would wait until a full report came from the Frontier administration before making conclusions about the nature of the threat.

The Chief Secretary of the NWFP, Lionel Jardine, had spent the month since the initial demonstrations investigating whether or not the Red Shirts were actually receiving aid from the Soviet Union.[38] He concluded that at first sight it could be thought that "signs of Communist instigation were to be discerned in the recent history of the North-West Frontier Province." Pamphlets carrying communist slogans had been published, communist symbols were used, and several of the Red Shirt

[36] Minute by Evelyn Howell, 9 June 1930, HOME (POL.) F. 11/III/1930. The "Hindustani Fanatics" were a small colony of Wahhabis resident in Swat. The British waged a series of small campaigns against them in the mid-nineteenth century. Evidence suggests that Bolshevik money actually was being funneled through the colony in the 1920s (See Magnus Marsden and Benjamin D. Hopkins, *Fragments of the Afghan Frontier* (New York, 2011), Chapter 3).

[37] Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State, 11 June 1930.

[38] A career Frontier officer, Jardine became a convert to the tenets of "Moral Rearmament," while on leave in Britain in the late 1930s. Moral Rearmament was based around what were called "the Four Absolutes" (absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness and absolute love) and encouraged its members to be actively involved in political and social issues. Jardine returned to India and a stint as Deputy Commissioner, Peshawar, intending to "live differently." On his occasional leaves, he lived in an ashram and he later became friends with Gandhi – all the while retaining his official posts in the Political Service. He served in the Princely States throughout the Second World War, returning to the Frontier for the final years of British rule. See Lionel Jardine, *They Called Me An "Impeccable Imperialist": Experiences of British India, 1914–1947* (Bombay, 1979).

leaders had spent time in Tashkent and other Soviet territory following the demise of the *Hijrat* in 1920.[39] Yet:

> At the same time there is no proof of Russian instigation or abetment of the disturbances on the Frontier. The origin of the propaganda appears to be within India . . . It is doubtful whether the communist emblems convey any true meaning to the people. They appear to have been adopted, in a spirit of imitation, as the badge of a nation that has overthrown autocratic rule . . . there is no evidence of Soviet instructions, and no evidence whatever of direct financial support from Bolshevik sources.[40]

These conclusions were quickly communicated to London.[41] Evidence was mounting that the current crisis on the Frontier was home-grown. The administration was slowly coming round to the idea that there was no connection to the Communist International Organization (Comintern). But the fact that the rebellion on the Frontier might be the product of nationalist sentiment did not stop both the administration from continuing to paint the Frontier nationalists with a Bolshevik brush. Howell had urged this from the beginning and throughout 1930 it continued to serve their propaganda purposes.[42] In a revealing exchange with Wedgewood Benn, Irwin admitted:

> The name "Red Shirts" was purposefully introduced by the NWFP administration as a popular substitute for the name "Khudai Khidmatgaran," or "Servants of God." We obviously could not have used the latter phrase in official references, as it would have implied some kind of admission that we were dealing with an association of the pious and godly. Although it may be true that the Red Shirt

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[39] For example: "Long Live Revolution: The Only Communist Weekly Paper of the Frontier Province," 25 March 1930, HOME (POL.) F. 11/III/1930. In his recent study of the 1935 Government of India Act, Andrew Muldoon points out that, by the 1930s, rather than using traditional "native informants," British intelligence in India had become dangerously overreliant on information gleaned from pamphlets and the vernacular press (See Andrew Muldoon, *Empire, Politics and the Creation of the 1935 India Act: Last Act of the Raj* (Farnham, 2009), p. 34).

[40] Express Letter from Chief Commissioner, NWFP to Home Department, Simla, 12 June 1930, HOME (POL.) F. 11/III/1930.

[41] Minutes by Government of India, 12 June 1930, HOME (POL.) F. 11/III/1930.

[42] Evelyn Howell to Viceroy, 5 May 1930.

> movement was not inspired by the Bolsheviks . . . I think it served its practical purposes pretty successfully.[43]

Benn, a member of the Labour party, replied that he was skeptical of this approach and thought it unseemly. He was under the impression that the Red Shirt movement was "rather a rising against the squires and partaking of the character of village uplift." Yet, if the policy of vilifying the nationalists as Bolsheviks worked, then "we must leave it at that." He remained concerned, however, about the effect the Government of India's "aggressive" campaign would have on home opinion, and especially within his own Labour party.[44]

Moreover, although there was no evidence that the Frontier nationalists were in any way affiliated with the Soviet Union or the international communist movement, members of the administration continued to harbor suspicions. Writing at the end of 1932 in the *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society* – which essentially served as the in-house journal of the Political Service – an anonymous Frontier officer wrote that, despite the fact that there was no "direct evidence" of Bolshevik assistance, the fact remained that Lenin had stated that the "road to London lies through Kabul."[45] This, the officer and others argued, had to be borne in mind. Over the coming years, this ongoing belief assisted the administration in their insistence that Frontier nationalism was somehow separate from the All-India nationalist movement.

Concurrent with the administration's anxieties about Abdul Ghaffar's relationship with Bolshevism was the premise that the uprising on

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[43] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 16 August 1930, Halifax Papers C152/6.

[44] Secretary of State to Viceroy, 12 September 1930, Halifax Papers C152/6. In 1931, the journalist and Liberal Member of Parliament, Robert Bernays, compared Abdul Ghaffar Khan to the Labour Party veteran, George Lansbury: "Abdul Ghaffar Khan is a kindly, gentle and rather loveable man. As well think that old George Lansbury is a dangerous revolutionary as imagine that Abdul Ghaffar Khan is the relentless enemy of the Raj" (Robert Bernays, *The Naked Fakir* (London, 1931), p. 328).

[45] H. R. S., "Unrest in the Peshawar District, 1930–1932," in the *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, 19, 4 (1932), p. 641. For a history of the Royal Central Asian Society, see Hugh Leach and Susan Maria Farrington, *Strolling About on the Roof of the World: The First Hundred Years of the Royal Society for Asian Affairs (Formerly Royal Central Asian Society)* (London, 2003). It was in fact Trotsky who made this remark at the 3rd Conference of Communist International in 1920. Trotsky hoped to make this rhetoric a reality, but he was alone among responsible Soviet leaders in the 1920s (see Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed: Trotsky, 1879–1921* (London, 2003), p. 379).

the Frontier was based on solely religious grievances. The problem, many argued, was not the impoverishment of the peasantry, lack of political and civil freedom, or the entire edifice of British rule, but *religious sensibilities*. Senior Political officers, such as the former Resident in Waziristan, Sir William Barton, claimed that the nature of the Frontier's "perfervid Islam" made this the most probable source for unrest. For "nowhere in India is Islam so strong."[46] In particular, blame for the recent course of events on the Frontier was placed on the Sarda Act. In his initial report on the Peshawar "disturbances," the Inspector General of Police in the NWFP, Frederick Isemonger, argued that the unrest was "closely associated" with Congress's All-India Civil Disobedience movement that had commenced with Gandhi's 240-mile-long Salt March to Dandi on the Arabian Sea in April.[47] Isemonger was a policeman rather than a soldier or a "Political," and it is perhaps unsurprising that this man, who had ordered the second shootings on 23 April, would believe that the causes of discontent lay closer to home rather than across the Khyber. Yet reflecting both the communal and sectarian lens through which the British often insisted on viewing Indian matters, and the British insistence that this was *different* from Gandhi's activities "down country," the inspector discounted any economic or political explanations for the unrest. Instead, he placed the onus entirely on the Sarda Act.[48] Howell followed this line of thinking as well, and believed that "agitators" were representing the Sarda Act as an active interference with Islam. He argued that in particular, the rumor that the new law would require brides to undergo a medical inspection by a male physician or policeman caused disquiet

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[46] Sir William Barton, "The Problems of Law and Order under a Responsible Government in the North-West Frontier Province," in the *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, 19, 1 (1932), p. 6.

[47] Following Gandhi's arrival at the sea, the Viceroy commented to Wedgwood Benn that the march must have been a severe physical strain on the nationalist leader: "I was told that his blood pressure is dangerous and his heart is none too good, and I was also told a few days ago that his horoscope predicts that he will die this year, and that this is the explanation of his desperate throw. *It would be a very happy solution*" (Viceroy to Secretary of State, 7 April 1930, Halifax Papers C152/6).

[48] Report by F. Isemonger (Inspector General Police, NWFP), 2 May 1930, NAI HOME (POL.) F. 255/5/1930 (Part 2). Isemonger also had a vast knowledge of actual, as opposed to supposed, international conspiracies to bring down the Raj, and had co-authored the Punjab government's report on the Ghadr movement (Frederick C. Isemonger and James Slattery, *An Account of the Ghadr Conspiracy, 1913–1915* (Lahore, 1919)).

throughout the Frontier.[49] Howell was "almost inclined to believe that [Congress] brought on the Sarda Act to come into operation on the date which it did, deliberately" – to coincided with the launch of the All-India Civil Disobedience Campaign. As far as Howell was concerned, the decision to allow the Act on the Statute Books without the input from local communities was a monumental blunder.[50]

The British placed further blame on Muslim fears about the Sarda Act following the second phase of the "disturbances" of 1930: the Afridi invasion of the Peshawar District on the night of 4 June. Quickly overrunning the western portions of the district, the Afridi invasion, which coincided with simultaneous unrest in other tribal areas, including Waziristan and the Mohmand areas of Bajaur, was a nightmarish scenario for the British.[51] Just when they were beginning to believe that there were "clear signs" that the people are becoming tired of "agitation and that the peace loving majority are beginning to pick up the courage to resist the agitators," the pot was stirred once again by a tribal incursion.[52] Although many within the administration believed the tribes' actions stemmed from grievances over recent government interference in a dispute between Sunni and Shia factions among the neighboring Orakzai tribe, they also placed the blame on the Sarda Act. Predicting trouble at the end of May, the Viceroy noted that the trans-border tribes had been fed with "every form of lie about the Sarda Act, in regard to which they apt to view themselves as the protectors of their subjected brethren under British law."[53] The Indian General Staff concurred with this assessment, noting that the only reason that this "religious appeal" did not turn into a "true preaching of *Jehad*" [sic] was due to the fact that no Muslim monarch, such as Afghanistan's Nadir Shah, was willing to declare a holy war. The Army leadership insisted also that, like 1919

[49] Although this rumor appeared to be common currency throughout the Frontier, it bore no resemblance to the actual Sarda Act, which contained no provisions for personal inspections – medical or otherwise. For an investigation into the actual provisions of the Act see Sumita Mukherjee, "Using the Legislative Assembly for Social Reform: the Sarda Act of 1929," in *South Asia Research*, 26, 3 (2006), pp. 219–233.

[50] Howell to Walton, 28 May 1930.

[51] See, for instance, General Staff Report by General Sir Sydney Muspratt, 27 May 1930, HOME (POL.) F 255/5/1930.

[52] NWFP Fortnightly Report for the First Half of June 1930, IOR L P&J 12/20.

[53] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 19 May 1930, Halifax Papers C152/6. See also Note by J. Walton to Findlater Stewart (Under Secretary of State for India) on the Afridi Situation and the Frontier Generally, 8 September 1930, IOR L P&S 12/3162.

and every other conflagration on the Frontier since 1849, the unrest was spawned by the tribesmen's belief that Britain was weak, and this could only be dealt with by enhancing the Raj's prestige with a firm military response.[54]

Religious sentiment and concerns over the Sarda Act played an undoubted role in the growth of anti-British sentiment in 1929 and 1930, but by arguing that this was a *primary cause* of the unrest that swept the province, the British were once again ignoring the fact that this was a legitimate nationalist movement. The memoirs and reminisces of former nationalist volunteers make this clear.[55] Initially, from the Viceroy on down, the British administration clung to the belief that the grievances that motivated the Red Shirts and other protestors lay in mere rumors about a specific policy, which could, perhaps, be altered to ameliorate public opinion, rather than in the entire apparatus of British rule. The administration never entirely jettisoned the view that rumors about the Sarda Act lay behind the upheaval, but as the situation continued to deteriorate throughout the summer, the British became increasingly aware of the fact that they were dealing with a fully fledged nationalist movement.

The British response

As the crisis continued on the Frontier, the incoming Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes, Hamidullah, Nawab of Bhopal, proffered his advice to the Viceroy. A proponent of Muslim solidarity in order to combat Congress, the Nawab suggested that "wicked rumours" about the Sarda Act were clearly a source of the disturbances on the Frontier. The Viceroy should immediately remove the application of the Act from the province. But the Nawab insisted that the problem went beyond this. The *root* of the trouble lay in the lack of reforms on the Frontier. As long as the British denied the NWFP the same form of government allowed in the rest of the subcontinent, they would fall victim to "Congress propaganda." The Nawab suggested that the Viceroy announce the extension of reforms to the province at the earliest possible opportunity.

[54] Confidential General Staff Summary of Events in North-West Frontier Tribal Territory, 1 January 1930–1931 December 1930, IOR L P&S 12/3170.

[55] See Mukulika Banerjee, *The Pathan Unarmed: Opposition & Memory in the North-West Frontier* (Delhi, 2001) for interviews with former Khudai Khidmatgar ('Red Shirt') volunteers.

The effect would be "electrical." Only this would pacify the Frontier and effectively "checkmate" Congress.[56]

Senior Politicals like Barton still insisted that "the Frontier is not India," but as it dawned on both the central and local administrations that their attempts to keep the NWFP in perpetual *purdah* – separated from the rest of India – had failed, and that an actual nationalist sentiment had taken hold in the province, the big question was, as the Nawab put it: how to checkmate the nationalists? As they often did when confronting Congress, the British responded with a combination of "carrot and stick." Regarding the carrot, the first order of business was internal reforms within the administration. Howell acknowledged that the civil administration had failed many people and that it was now time for real "generosity" over taxation and crop failures.[57] Yet Howell, the lifelong Frontier officer, could not contemplate the extension of full political reforms to the province.

Revealingly, the first high-ranking member of the Government of India to suggest the expansion of reforms to the NWFP was the Indian Home Secretary, Herbert Emerson, a veteran not of the Frontier, but the Punjab, which had enjoyed the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms since 1921. Emerson agreed that a constructive program should be prepared to assist education, medical services, scientific agriculture, and veterinary dispensaries. The Government of India would have to foot the bill but he believed that the investment would be "an excellent one." Emerson thought that the introduction of elected municipal boards, as Howell suggested, were but half measures. The people of the Frontier believed that there was "insufficient reason" for withholding reforms. Unsurprisingly for an official who had spent his career in the multi-communal Punjab, the Indian Home Secretary tied his argument for full political reforms to the wider All-India question of communal relations, reasoning that as soon as it is known that "reforms will be given to the province not only will internal influences favourable to Government come into operation but Muhammadan influence outside the province will be exerted in favour of constitutional methods."[58] The Viceroy agreed with Emerson, and advised the India Office that an announcement should be made that "the natural claims of the province in the constitutional field" would be viewed with sympathy and included in

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[56] The Nawab of Bhopal to the Viceroy, 30 May 1930, Halifax Papers C152/24.
[57] Note by Evelyn Howell, 24 May 1930.
[58] Note by Herbert Emerson (Home Secretary, Government of India), 26 May 1930, HOME (POL.) F 206/1930.

discussions at the forthcoming Round Table Conference in London.[59] Thus, in a sign of the times, in which the British reasoned that all future reforms must fall in line with the "protection" of India's minorities, reforms should be extended to the NWFP, which would be viewed as a gesture towards "Muslim India."[60]

Confronted by both these arguments and the fact that the Peshawar District was still overrun by Afridi tribesmen, the Frontier administration began to come around to the belief that the upheaval on the Frontier was neither fleeting nor the sentiments behind it shallow. They now faced the problem of creating an atmosphere in which the peasantry accepted the "administration as before."[61] Pears, the Chief Commissioner, was particularly worried about the aid and comfort locals peasants were providing Afridi *lashkars*.[62] Moreover, they seemed to be doing it out of real affection rather than compulsion or fear of reprisals. Irwin found this development "most disturbing."[63] In order to combat what had become a small-scale war, Pears, though a reactionary at heart, called for the extension of reforms to the NWFP. He argued that the Pathan's "natural arrogance" made reform necessary, as he would compare his lot to the reforms already enjoyed by the "less competent" inhabitants of other provinces. Pears even admitted that Abdul Ghaffar's movement encapsulated legitimate grievances against the large landowning Khans, especially in the Charsadda subdivision. Pears pointed out, however, that the nationalists lacked the courage to tackle the worst social evil among the local population: their "addiction to sodomy"![64]

Slowly, over the course of 1930 and 1931, the local administration and the Government of India developed a program for political reforms on the Frontier.[65] Yet throughout this period the carrot of constitutional advancement for the NWFP was more than balanced by the stick of

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[59] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 31 May 1930, NAI HOME (POL.) F. 275/30 KW.

[60] The Liberal/Labour Secretary of State for India, William Wedgwood Benn, believed – presumably in all sincerity – at this point that Britain must stay in India as long as possible to protect the Muslim population from a "Hindu Raj" (Secretary of State to Viceroy, 5 June 1930, Halifax Papers C152/6).

[61] Pears to Viceroy, 12 June 1930.

[62] Howell to Walton (Enclosed Telephone Conversation with Mr. Pears, 14 August 1930), 16 August 1930, Walton Papers D545/6.

[63] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 16 August 1930, Halifax Papers C152/6.

[64] Confidential Letter from The Chief Commissioner, NWFP to the Foreign Secretary, Government of India, 13 February 1931, NAI HOME (POL.) F 45/V/31.

[65] See Government of India Statement, 30 December 1931, NAI HOME (POL.) F 123/32.

the Government's use of brute force to suppress the rebellion on the Frontier. As Howell put it to the Viceroy the day after British forces retook Peshawar: "I think the *lathi* is the real remedy."[66] This remained the fundamental British view over the coming years. The Frontier was a violent place and force spoke louder than words or policy gestures. The Frontier, with its unique circumstances, was where the British met the nationalist challenge with visceral force. The policy of violent repression began in May 1930 with the introduction of military units throughout the settled districts and the indiscriminate aerial bombing of any tribesmen thought to be menacing the Peshawar District.[67] Although most areas were "pacified" by early June, the influx of Afridi tribesmen led to major military operations taking place throughout the settled districts. The ordinary administration of the province once again came to a standstill and all low-level officials in the police and revenue departments fled to Peshawar. The Red Shirts began demonstrating once more in the Charsadda subdivision and the picketing of liquor shops recommenced. There were massive arrests.[68] In August, the administration declared martial law and began encircling villages and seizing suspected "agitators" and firearms.[69] Later that month, police reportedly fired upon a demonstration in Bannu District, killing over 70 protestors.[70]

By the beginning of autumn, the Army and Royal Air Force drove the Afridi and other tribal *lashkars* back into the hills.[71] Martial law remained in effect, however, and the civil administration remained holed up in the large towns.[72] The Charsadda subdivision was still the epicenter of the revolt, and thus the focus of retaliatory measures by the British. It is crucial to note that throughout this period, the Red Shirt volunteers remained overwhelmingly non-violent and stuck to their Gandhian principles.[73] A major exception occurred in February 1931, however, when two attempts were made on life of the Assistant

[66] Evelyn B. Howell to Viceroy, 5 May 1930.
[67] Telegram from NWFP to Foreign Department, Government of India, 6 June 1930, HOME (POL.) F 255/5/1930.
[68] NWFP Fortnightly Report for the First Half of August 1930, L P&J 12/20.
[69] Secretary of State to Viceroy, 14 August 1930, Halifax Papers C 152/6.
[70] See Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam, and Nationalism: Muslim Politics in the North-West Frontier Movement, 1937–1947* (Karachi, 1999), p. 33.
[71] See Despatch by HE Field Marshal Sir William Birdwood, Commander-in-Chief in India, on the Disturbances on the North West Frontier of India from 23 April to 12 September 1930.
[72] NWFP Fortnightly Report for the Second Half of December 1930, L P&J 12/20.
[73] See Banerjee, *The Pathan Unarmed*.

Commissioner for Charsadda, Captain Humphrey Barnes.[74] Likely motivated by the policy of violent suppression carried out by the administration, the would-be assassin was tried under the Murderous Outrages Regulation, and sentenced to death despite the fact that his intended victim survived. Relations deteriorated further in the wake of this execution.[75]

As the Frontier situation worsened, the All-India political situation intervened in March 1931. Exhausted, Congress and the Government called for a truce in the Civil Disobedience program, and, following the terms of the Delhi Pact negotiated by Gandhi and Lord Irwin, Abdul Ghaffar and most of the other political prisoners in NWFP were released from prison. The British lifted martial law and the ban on the Khudai Khidmatgars. The nationalist movement gained wind in its sails with the return of Abdul Ghaffar, now known as the "Frontier Gandhi." He attracted crowds numbering in the thousands everywhere he went. By the end of March 1931 the number of volunteers enlisted in his Red Shirt organization far exceeded the members in the summer of 1930.[76] Both the civil and military authorities on the Frontier believed that the Red Shirts remained a distinctly dangerous organization. But Abdul Ghaffar was now federating with Congress and the administration's hands were tied by the truce agreed to in New Delhi.[77]

During this interregnum, British control over the rural areas of the province collapsed, to be replaced by Abdul Ghaffar's Red Shirts, their numbers now swollen to over 30,000.[78] Caroe, the Joint Deputy Commissioner for Peshawar District, warned that the vast bulk of the peasantry was simply ignoring their taxes and that the Government faced revenue arrears in the neighborhood of Rs. 10/- or 12/- lakhs (£666,000 to £800,000). Moreover, there was a total breakdown in law and order, or as Caroe put it, an "irrecoverable, and a permanent increase in heinous crime." The nationalists were calling the tune and "nothing

[74] See Unpublished Memoirs of Mrs. H. A. Barnes, Collected Indian Political Service Memoirs IOR F 226/1; and Charles Chevenix Trench, *Viceroy's Agent* (London, 1987), p. 53.

[75] Fortnightly Report on the Internal Situation in the NWFP for the Second Half of February 1931, IOR L P&J 12/32 and Unpublished Memoirs of Sir John Dring, Indian Political Service Memoirs IOR F 226/8.

[76] See NWFP Fortnightly Report for the Second Half of March 1931, L P&J 12/32.

[77] Letter from Headquarters (Northern Command) to Headquarters (Peshawar District), 23 June 1931, HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part I).

[78] NWFP Fortnightly Report for the First Half of June 1931, L P&J 12/32 and Record of Conference held at Gorton Castle (Secretariat Building, Simla) on 22 June 1931, HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part I).

short of the removal of some of the leading agitators will enable the District authorities to begin to cope with the situation." Caroe, whose aggressive stance towards the nationalists went hand-in-hand with his paternalistic instincts towards the Pathans, urged immediate action against Abdul Ghaffar, who should, he argued, be dealt with not by the Indian Penal Code, which would lead to a "lengthy trial" and be "difficult to control," but the Frontier Crimes Regulation: the set of laws which had helped set the stage for the revolt in the first place.[79] Caroe was told to wait. Abdul Ghaffar was watching his words and giving the Government little fodder for charges of sedition.[80]

Incredulous at being held hostage to All-India politics, other members of the Frontier administration pleaded with the Government of India to give them a free hand with the "Red Shirt revolutionaries."[81] But, encouraged by the new Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, Pears cooperated with the Government, deciding to stand pat until Abdul Ghaffar provoked him into action, something the nationalist leader was keen to avoid.[82] Howell thought the whole situation was absurd, telling his opposite number in the India Office:

> As regards Abdul Ghaffar you know of course that what has happened in the North West Frontier Province has been allowed to happen solely on account of all-India considerations. The latest accounts show that the Red Shirt movement has attained to very dangerous dimensions, and there seems to be some reason to think that Abdul Ghaffar is going off his head.[83]

Yet the alliance between Congress and Abdul Ghaffar's movement grew stronger over the course of the summer, despite a number of reports that the union was on the cusp of breaking apart.[84] Numerous Congress

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[79] Copy of Memorandum from the Deputy Commissioner, Peshawar (Caroe) to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, NWFP, 5 May 1931, HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part I).
[80] Telegram from Viceroy (Lord Willingdon) to Secretary of State (William Wedgwood Benn), 29 June 1931, HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part I).
[81] Telegram from Norwef to Foreign Department, 10 July 1931, HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part I).
[82] Record of Conference held at Gorton Castle on 22 June 1931.
[83] Howell to Walton, 16 July 1931, Walton Papers D545/6.
[84] See, for example, NWFP Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 25, for the Period Ending 25 June 1931, IOR L P&S 12/3141.

leaders visited the Frontier, including Gandhi's son, Devadas.[85] The local Frontier intelligence bureau noted that as long as the Red Shirts enjoyed the freedom and power afforded them by the Delhi Pact, there was little hope of British law being restored and the high possibility of a "widespread conflagration."[86]

Their hands tied, the central and NWFP governments worked on a reforms program throughout the spring and summer of 1931. Based on proposals hammered out at the London Round Table Conference the previous winter, a committee, chaired by the Home Member of the Viceroy's Council, Sir Harry Haig, concluded that the NWFP should become a full governor's province, with exact equality with the other provinces of India. In the settled districts, law and order would be a provincial subject, while "watch and ward" over the tribal areas would remain under the auspices of the central government, with the Governor (formerly Chief Commissioner) of the province supervising the trans-border tracts in his role as Agent to the Governor-General.[87] The Haig Committee's report was released at the end of June 1931, but there was a deep suspicion that this was too little, too late. In a sense, the Frontier administration had come full circle. Although the publication of the report might "cut the ground from under the feet" of the Frontier nationalists, the administration now worried that social and economic grievances rather than political reform, were the real problem. It was therefore too optimistic to think that the promise of reforms would have any real effect on the Red Shirt "agitation." The intelligence services in Peshawar reported that they would have a much better idea of the nature of Frontier grievances following Pears's meeting with Abdul Ghaffar, which was scheduled for 30 July.[88] The Chief Commissioner's meeting with Abdul Ghaffar proved the administration's prediction correct. Although it was a friendly meeting, the nationalist leader was true to his overall program of expelling the British from the Frontier. Abdul Ghaffar informed Pears that he regarded the Haig Committee's proposals to be only "paper reforms" that did little to address the economic

[85] NWFP Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 30, for the Period Ending 30 July 1931, L P&S 12/3141.

[86] NWFP Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 32, for the Period Ending 12 August 1931, L P&S 12/3141.

[87] *Report of the North-West Frontier Subjects Committee, 1931* (Calcutta, 1931), NMML.

[88] NWFP Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 30, for the Period Ending 30 July 1931.

and social grievances inspired by British rule on the Frontier.[89] The tenor of this meeting did much to convince the already persuadable administration that they were dealing with a revolutionary organization. Abdul Ghaffar might not be supported by the Comintern, but this, they reasoned, did not make his program any less revolutionary or "socialistic."

Those who wished to deal a harsh blow to the Red Shirt movement moved a step further to their goal on 9 September, when Pears died in a bizarre fall from a cliff while taking his evening stroll near the NWFP's summer capital at Nathiagali.[90] A month before, Willingdon had observed that the Red Shirt movement was becoming a "serious danger." Willingdon had little faith in Abdul Ghaffar, who he believed was interested in neither reforms nor societal uplift, but "personal notoriety."[91] He doubted that Pears, who due to his taciturn manner and preference for personal isolation, was now known by "all and sundry" as the "Chief Commissioner in *purdah*," was up to the task of dealing with them. The NWFP was India's "danger point" and Willingdon, along with Howell, believed that Pears had lacked the capacity to roll out the new reforms and fully undermine the nationalists.[92] These concerns now moot, Pears was succeeded as Chief Commissioner by an Army Political, Lieutenant-Colonel Ralph Griffith. A "small, active wiry man, fine horseman, athlete, very good shot and tennis player," Griffith was then serving as Resident in Waziristan.[93] Unlike the distant Pears, Griffith was universally popular among the Frontier cadre. From his perch in Simla, Howell believed that the situation in the NWFP would "no doubt improve" under Griffith's watch.[94]

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[89] NWFP Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 31, for the Period Ending 6 August 1931, L P&S 12/3141.
[90] NWFP Fortnightly Report for the First Half of September 1931, L P&J 12/32. Pears, who had been recently knighted, was alone when he fell off the precipice, and the circumstances of his demise remain somewhat of a mystery. In their memoirs, neither Mallam nor Caroe believed the death was a result of violence or suicide. Caroe, however, believed that, like Bolton, the strain had been too much for Pears, "and that he had had a sudden seizure while out for a walk on a precipitous path" (Mallam, *A Pair of Chaplis*, p. 53 and Unpublished Caroe Memoirs).
[91] Private Letter from Willingdon to Wedgwood Benn, 6 July 1931, L PO 5/23.
[92] Private Letter from Viceroy to Secretary of State, 10 August 1931, L PO 5/23. Willingdon initially suggested that Sir Francis Humphrys, a veteran of Baluchistan and the former Minister to Kabul, be recalled from his position as British High Commissioner in Iraq.
[93] Unpublished Caroe Memoirs.
[94] Howell to Walton, 17 December 1931, Walton Papers D545/6.

For many officers on the Frontier, "improvement" meant suppressing the Red Shirt movement with force and then introducing reforms in the wake of this action. Few now believed that reforms alone could counter Abdul Ghaffar's movement. Barry Lawther, the intelligence chief on the Frontier, noted that:

> The basic reason why the Red Shirt Movement will not die out but will have to be repressed is that it is founded on the natural desire of the lower classes to obtain power over the upper classes . . . The real backers of the movement have gained too much in prestige and more material ways to be willing voluntarily to retire again into obscurity.[95]

Lawther concluded that the movement was revolutionary and must be stamped out. It was clear that Griffith was inclined towards this approach. Moreover, Delhi and London agreed that the only way to preserve British rule on the Frontier would be violent repression and mass arrests, followed by the introduction of wide-ranging reforms.[96] The British hand was stayed, however, by the still-intact terms of the Delhi pact. But, this tentative truce was breaking down and before the year was out the Frontier administration, with the blessings of the Government of India, would move against the nationalists.

Staying the administration's hand

As the dust settled from the Peshawar "disturbances" on 23 April 1930, the Frontier administration, which was run by men who had spent their entire careers in either Baluchistan or the NWFP, was shaken to its core. But rather than assume that the region was in fact similar to the rest of India and that the province-wide revolt was the product of legitimate political and socio-economic concerns, the Frontier administration as a whole returned to their well-worn ideological paths: the problem lay not with the common cultivator or even small urban merchant. Rather, the source of the disturbances lay outside the province and over the Khyber, in Soviet propaganda and communist perversions. Although this view rapidly fell apart when confronted by numerous contrary

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[95] NWFP Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 40, for the Period Ending 14 October 1931, L P&S 12/3141.

[96] Private Letter from Secretary of State (Sir Samuel Hoare) to Viceroy, 2 November 1931, L PO 5/23.

facts, the administration still denied that the situation on the Frontier bore a resemblance to the nationalist movement elsewhere in India. Instead, they argued that the Pathan's religious sentiments and even fanaticism stood as the root of the rebellion. The Sarda Act, conceived in the Central Legislature and supported by Congress, was therefore blamed.

Although most officers concluded that this was a legitimate nationalist movement by the summer of 1930, they continued to cling to the ideas that underwrote their earlier assumptions. Veteran Frontier hands like Howell argued that the Pathans would only understand violence. Although some officers, like Pears, realized that violence need not be the only answer, the fact remained that the first calls for a non-violent response to the people's grievances came not from members of the Frontier cadre, but from those outside the Political Service, like the Punjab ICS veteran, Herbert Emerson.

The Frontier cadres' long-standing inclinations towards violent repression were held in check by wider All-India concerns throughout 1931, but with the collapse of the Delhi Pact at the end of the year, the NWFP administration returned to form and struck at the Red Shirts. As Gandhi's Civil Disobedience campaign rocked India, the years 1932 and 1933 witnessed a level of Government-sponsored violence and retribution not witnessed in the rest of the subcontinent. Assuming that the Frontier was different and still sealed off from events "down country" in the rest of India, the military and police conducted an exceedingly brutal campaign on the Frontier. Ironically, this policy, premised on the separateness of the Frontier, would be instrumental in bringing British policy in the NWFP to the attention of Indian nationalists.

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"The Forbidden Land": The British, Frontier Nationalism, and Congress, 1931–1934

On Christmas Eve 1931, Indian Police battalions, accompanied by units of the Indian Army and the Royal Air Force, entered Peshawar and all other urban centers of the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) in order to arrest the leadership of the regional nationalist movement. By Christmas morning the leader of the Khudai Khidmatgars, or the "Red Shirts" as the British referred to them, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, his brother, Dr. Khan Sahib, and a number of other nationalist leaders had been detained and deported from the province on a special train. Meanwhile, military columns spread throughout the NWFP, marching at night, and rounding up entire villages in dawn raids.[1] These raids, carried out on a day which, as the then Deputy Commissioner for Peshawar, Olaf Caroe, put it, "nobody, however suspicious, would expect a British authority to proceed to stringent action," constituted the first salvo in a two-year campaign of attrition against the nationalist movement in the province.[2]

Over the course of 1932 and 1933, the British authorities on the North-West Frontier attempted to smash the nationalist movement with a level of state-supported violence not witnessed in the rest of India. These "excesses," as the British euphemistically called them, exceeded those in other areas of India as a result of the British belief that the NWFP constituted an area separate from the rest of India.[3] The Frontier was, as

[1] NWFP Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 1, for the Period Ending 7 January 1932, India Office Records (IOR) L P&S 12/3141.
[2] Unpublished Caroe Memoirs, Caroe Papers IOR F203/79.
[3] Letter from H. W. Emerson (Secretary, Home Department, Government of India) to W. R. Hay (Chief Secretary, NWFP), 27 April 1932, National Archives of India (NAI) HOME (POL.) F. 40/5/1932. For state sanctioned violence in India during this period see Taylor C. Sherman, *State Violence and Punishment in India* (Abingdon, 2010).

one senior Political officer put it: "not India, whether you look at it from the geographical, ethnographic, or historical standpoint."[4] They argued that Pathan culture and religion, combined with the peculiar strategic importance of this gateway to India, set the region apart. An example of this line of thinking may be found in Olaf Caroe's memoirs. When describing the general uprising that swept the Frontier in the spring of 1930, he recalled that "European women and children were sent down to India."[5] This led the British to act with a level of impunity on the Frontier, believing that their actions took place outside the limelight.

Yet the attempt to cordon off the region was falling apart. Following discussions at the First Round Table Conference in December 1930, a committee drew up a reforms scheme for the NWFP and it became a full governor's province in 1932 with Indian ministers and a Legislative Council.[6] The province was also included in the All-India constitutional reforms that were being hammered out in advance of what would become the 1935 Government of India Act. Beyond these concessions, the Frontier nationalist movement, though it had grown up independently of the All-India Congress Civil Disobedience campaign, was included in the truce negotiated between Gandhi and the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, in March 1931. Thereafter, Abdul Ghaffar officially federated his Red Shirt organization with the Congress party in the fall of 1931.

In this period, nationalists were increasingly aware of the British effort to cut off the province from the rest of India. The nationalist leader and president of the Peshawar Khilafat Committee, Allah Bukhsh Yusufi, catalogued the British attempt to turn the Frontier into a "forbidden land" in his 1930 polemic, *The Frontier Tragedy*, a publication quickly proscribed by the authorities.[7] Yusufi pointed out that in many ways the British treated the NWFP like the rest of India:

> A Chief Commissioner acts as agent to the Governor-General at Peshawar. The Indian Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Code

[4] Sir William Barton, KCIE, CSI, "The Problems of Law and Order Under a Responsible Government in the North-West Frontier Province," in the *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, 19, 1 (1932), pp. 5–21.
[5] Unpublished Caroe Memoirs.
[6] *See Indian Round Table Conference: 12 November 1930–19 January 1931, Proceedings of Sub-Committees* (London, 1931), pp. 179–220, and *Report of the North-West Frontier Subjects Committee, 1931* (Calcutta, 1931), Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML).
[7] Viceroy (Irwin) to Secretary of State (Benn), 19 January 1931, Halifax Papers IOR C152/6.

> are also common between the Frontier and the rest of India. When there is an appeal for war loans or recruits for the army, then too the Government is pleased to treat [the] Frontier as part and parcel of India. In all these maters the Frontier is done the honor of being an integral part of the Indian Empire.

On matters less advantageous to the Government of India, however, the authorities acted as if India and the Frontier were "two separate countries." This went beyond the decision to withhold constitutional reforms throughout the 1920s:

> Nowhere in India is a passport required if you want to travel from one province to another . . . The moment, however, you happen to cross the Attock bridge, you find, if you happen to be connected with the political movement that you are in a different land altogether, with different rules and different laws.[8]

The Chief Commissioner's decision to ban the entry of a Congress delegation coming to investigate the Frontier Crimes Regulation had served as the catalyst for Frontier revolt of spring 1930.[9] The Congress leader, Vallabhbhai Patel, had been banned from entering the province when he chaired the nationalist enquiry into the events of 23 April 1930.[10] The reason for this closing off of the region, Yusufi claimed, was to hide "all the dirty and heinous things" done there.[11]

Despite the policy of cutting off the Frontier from "political India," Congress and other nationalist organizations managed to ascertain the nature of the British response to the local nationalism and use the details of British "excesses" on the Frontier as a major rhetorical

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[8] Allah Bukhsh Yusufi, *The Frontier Tragedy: An Account of the Inhuman Acts of Repression and Terrorism, Blockades, Loot, Incendiarism & Massacres – Through which the People of the North-West Frontier Province have had to Go During the Present Disturbance* (Peshawar, 1930), pp. 10–11.

[9] See Report of the Peshawar Disturbances Enquiry Committee, 1930, Government of India, The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA) WO 32/3526.

[10] See *Report [With Evidence] of the Peshawar Enquiry Committee, Appointed by the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress* (Allahabad, 1930), NMML. The results of Patel's enquiry were also deemed illegal and suppressed by the Government of India (see Proscription under Press Ordinance of the Report of Congress into Peshawar Disturbances of April 1930, NAI HOME (POL.) F. 30/3/1931).

[11] Yusufi, *The Frontier Tragedy*, p. 11.

weapon against imperial rule. This disregard for publicity, and bad publicity in particular, cost the British dearly. Treating the Frontier as if it were an entity separate from the rest of the Indian Empire led to the region – and British policies there – becoming a central issue in the ensuing debate over India's future. Rather than the Frontier being peripheral to the All-India political struggle, Britain's violent suppression of local nationalism guaranteed that the Frontier now lay near its center.

Ending the Delhi pact

The early 1930s was a period of turmoil throughout India, as Gandhi's Civil Disobedience movement, initiated in May 1930, swept the subcontinent. Throughout these years of upheaval the British Government of India responded with both the whip-hand and attempts at conciliation.[12] On the one side, Gandhi was invited to the Viceroy's House in Lutyens' Delhi to, as Churchill bitterly declared, "parley on equal terms with the representative of the King-Emperor."[13] Three "Round Table" conferences were held in London to forge a path forward on Indian constitutional reform, and the first steps were taken towards the 1935 Government of India Act, which would grant sweeping new powers to Indians at a provincial level.[14] These aspects of appeasement were counterbalanced, however, by the arrests of nationalist politicians such as Gandhi and Nehru, the brutal suppression of political parties, numerous shootings, and other acts of state violence throughout British India.

Despite constitutional "concessions," violence lay at the core of the Government's strategy in the NWFP. The Frontier Revolt of 1930 had been sparked by the local administration's decision to use a disproportionate level of force against several thousand unarmed protestors in Peshawar on 23 April 1930. This decision to respond with violence at the earliest opportunity typified British dealings with Abdul Ghaffar

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[12] On Gandhi's Civil Disobedience campaign of 1930–1934 see e.g., Judith M. Brown, *Gandhi and Civil Disobedience: The Mahatma in Indian Politics, 1928–1934* (Cambridge, 1977) and Donald Anthony Low, *Britain and Indian Nationalism: The Imprint of Ambiguity, 1929–1942* (Cambridge, 1997), Chapters 2 through 5.

[13] Quoted in Carl Bridge, *Holding India to the Empire: The British Conservative Party and the 1935 Constitution* (New Delhi, 1986), p. 63.

[14] See *Indian Round Table Conference: 12 November 1930–19 January 1931, Proceedings* (Calcutta, 1931) and Robin J. Moore's *The Crisis of Indian Unity, 1917–1940* (Oxford, 1974).

and his allies for the next four years. In the months that followed the initial uprising in April, the British proceeded to deal with the nationalist movement with the arrests of countless nationalists, and firm, often violent, responses to any form of protest, held sway throughout the summer and fall of 1930. By November 1930, almost 30,000 Red Shirt volunteers languished in British prisons.[15]

In March 1931, Gandhi met with the outgoing Viceroy, Lord Irwin, and agreed to the Delhi Pact, stipulating that the Frontier nationalists be included in the general amnesty guaranteed by the agreement, despite the fact that they were not officially part of the Congress organization. The fact that the Frontier was included in the terms of the Delhi Pact was proof that the nationalists, at the very least, viewed the NWFP as part of India. Despite British resistance, the first step towards the Frontier's integration into the wider political struggle had taken place. As the British position in the region deteriorated in the fall of 1931, the administration champed at the bit to take action. Tensions between nationalists and the Government were increasing both in the province and in India as a whole. In the NWFP, numerous demonstrations took place in Peshawar city and Abdul Ghaffar, who had been careful in his wording all through the spring and summer, grew increasingly militant in his speeches.[16]

The Government of India still encouraged the Frontier authorities to refrain from acting against the Red Shirts, but the All-India situation was helping to push matters to an impasse. The Delhi Pact was beginning to unravel. The new Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, a former Governor of Bombay and Madras and Governor-General of Canada, had replaced the conciliatory Irwin in April 1931. With a Conservative-dominated government backing him at home, Willingdon, who took a jaundiced view of Indian nationalism, assumed a far more aggressive stance towards Congress. Willingdon also disliked Gandhi personally.[17] While the deeply religious Irwin was impressed by Gandhi's saintly demeanor, Willingdon, who had sparred with the Mahatma as a provincial Governor in the early 1920s, saw Gandhi as, in Churchill's phrasing, "a seditious middle temple lawyer" who could not be trusted.[18] Like many

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[15] Judith M. Brown, *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy*, 2nd Edition (Oxford, 1994), p. 281.

[16] NWFP Fortnightly Report for the First Half of November 1931, IOR L P&J 12/32.

[17] Halifax (Irwin) to Templewood (Sir Samuel Hoare), 13 July 1953, Templewood Papers IOR E240/76.

[18] Bridge, *Holding India*, p. 63.

Conservatives, Willingdon had been uncomfortable with the Delhi Pact, believing that "in the minds of the people" Gandhi had seemed a plenipotentiary, and that there therefore appeared to be "two Kings" in India. Willingdon saw his responsibility as "reasserting the authority of the administration."[19]

Other issues were also lapping away at the foundations of the Delhi Pact. In the early summer of 1931, Gandhi informed the Indian Home Secretary, Sir Herbert Emerson, that he was unhappy about the Government's behavior in the NWFP, where he charged that a number of political prisoners, especially in the tribal agencies, had yet to be released.[20] But by mid-summer, Gandhi's major concern was agricultural unrest in the United Provinces, where Sir Malcolm Hailey now presided as Governor.[21] The global collapse of agricultural prices hit the Gangetic plain hard and many cultivators were unable to pay their rents; tenant-landlord relations deteriorated and evictions ensued.[22] Rent strikes in the United Provinces combined with rent disputes in the Bombay Presidency, led Gandhi, after a fruitless negotiation with Willingdon, to declare that he would not attend the second Round Table Conference in the fall – a key provision of the Delhi Pact. A second settlement was eventually agreed to in August, and Gandhi renewed his pledge to travel to London.[23]

Although the Pact was renewed, both sides, having gained breathing space, were now preparing for the end of the truce. In the autumn, Gandhi attended the Round Table Conference, which would fail and ultimately break up over his refusal to agree to communal electorates. In October, Jawaharlal Nehru, who had assumed his father Motilal's mantle

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[19] Viceroy to Secretary of State (Sir Samuel Hoare), 28 August 1931, Templewood Papers E240/5. Unlike other inter-war Viceroys who have large private paper collections residing in the British Library, Willingdon's collection is decidedly slim. Unfortunately, Lady Willingdon – by all accounts a charming if somewhat overbearing woman with a penchant for mauve – burnt most of her late husband's personal papers following his death in 1941 (Discussion with Richard Bingle and David Blake (India Office Library) June 2007).

[20] Letter from M. K. Gandhi to Herbert Emerson, 13 June 1931, NAI HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part I). For more on Emerson's correspondence with Gandhi in this period see Low, *Britain and Indian Nationalism*, Chapter 4.

[21] Gandhi to Hailey, 5 August 1931, in Ministry of Information and Broadcasting: Government of India, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 47 (Delhi, 1958), p. 250.

[22] See John W. Cell, *Hailey: A Study in British Imperialism, 1872–1969* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 182–183.

[23] See Low, *Britain and Indian Nationalism*, Chapter 4.

as a major Congress leader following the latter's death in February, cabled Gandhi for his agreement to commence a no-rent campaign in the United Provinces. As the All-India Congress organization mobilized for the no-rent strike in the United Provinces, Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his followers on the Frontier were growing increasingly militant in their tone.[24]

In October, Abdul Ghaffar officially merged his organization with the local Congress party to form the "Provincial Frontier *Jirga*." This move was supported by Nehru, who was taking an increasing interest in the Frontier after talking to Gandhi's son Devadas, who had recently returned from a fact-finding mission to the province.[25] Meanwhile Abdul Ghaffar continued to tour the NWFP telling crowds that their goal was to "oust" the British from India.[26] The British administration was growing increasingly restless as Red Shirt activity grew in the Peshawar District in particular. With the harvest, large numbers of trans-border Afridi tribesmen would be in the district. The intelligence services worried that:

> Ignorant and unsophisticated tribesmen, to whom the "Delhi Pact," "Reforms," and the "Round Table Conference" are nothing but high sounding names, are apt to take things at their face value. To them the Red Shirts are the open enemies of Government and the only construction they can put on the fact that Red Shirts can carry on their noisy meetings and demonstrations unhindered is that Government is powerless to deal with them.

The administration believed that as in 1919 and 1897, this sign of weakness and, they argued, the resulting inability to maintain Britain's prestige, would lead the young tribal "hotheads" – who had only recently been brought to heel – to once again take up arms and descend onto the plains.[27]

Willingdon took a low view of the Frontier nationalists, believing, like many other officials, that the Red Shirts were completely revolutionary

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[24] Moore, *The Crisis of Indian Unity*, p. 243.

[25] See Report of Devadas Gandhi on the NWF Province, 1931, P. 16/32 All-India Congress Committee Papers, NMML.

[26] NWFP Fortnightly Report for the Second Half of October 1931, IOR L P&J 12/32.

[27] NWFP Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 41, for the Period Ending 21 October 1931, IOR L P&S 12/3141.

and would have to be "squashed."[28] As Congress prepared for their rent strike in mid-October, Willingdon also girded his loins, requesting permission for a massive retaliation in event of a no-rent campaign or unrest on the Frontier.[29] After gaining approval from London, the Government drew up a number of repressive measures to be enacted the moment the Delhi Pact fell apart, including ordinances on Emergency Powers, Unlawful Instigation, Unlawful Association, and the Prevention of Molestation and Boycott.[30]

The Frontier administration also geared up for a "decisive blow" against the Red Shirts. Rumors, which were a plentiful currency on the Frontier, indicated that Abdul Ghaffar was going to recommence Civil Disobedience in the NWFP.[31] On 28 October, Olaf Caroe, now the sole Deputy Commissioner for Peshawar, summoned a number of nationalist leaders, including Abdul Ghaffar's brother, Dr. Khan Sahib, to Peshawar. Caroe was one of the most aggressive supporters of a violent suppression of the nationalist movement. A scholar who had attended Winchester and Magdalen College, Oxford, before beginning service on the Frontier in 1917, he was also a highly combative and, some said, emotional, personality who often had trouble getting along with many Englishmen, let alone Indian nationalists.[32] The leader of the nationalists at this meeting, Khan Sahib, was of a very different temperament. Having gained a medical degree in England, he had married an Englishwoman, served in the Indian Medical Service, and was known for his charm and good humor. Unlike Caroe, whom he would tangle with when he was Chief Minister of the province and Caroe was Governor, he was a natural politician. At the meeting, Caroe, who had been pleading with the Government to crush the Red Shirts since May, insisted that the nationalists call off all processions, demonstrations, and meetings in Peshawar.[33] The meeting ended in a deadlock, and

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[28] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 28 September 1931, Templewood Papers E240/5.
[29] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 13 October 1931, Templewood Papers E240/5.
[30] See Moore, *The Crisis of Indian Unity*, p. 245.
[31] NWFP Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 46, for the Period Ending 25 November 1931, L P&S 12/3141.
[32] Caroe was quite honest about his combativeness in his unpublished memoirs. See also comments by Fraser Noble in Parshotam Mehra, *The North-West Frontier Drama, 1945–1947: A Reassessment* (New Delhi, 1998), p. 59, and Minute to Sir Saville Garner (Permanent Under-Secretary, Commonwealth Relations Office) from Algeron Rumbold (Commonwealth Relations Office), 19 July 1949, IOR L P&S 12/1417.
[33] Copy of Memorandum from the Deputy Commissioner, Peshawar to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, NWFP, 5 May 1931, HOME (POL.) F.

on 4 November the administration declared all meetings and processions in the city illegal for a period of two months.[34]

At the end of November, Nehru wrote to Khan Sahib about the prospects of renewing Civil Disobedience. With the second Round Table Conference on the verge of collapse, Nehru informed Khan Sahib that the Congress organization in the United Provinces was preparing for a no-rent campaign and that they may all soon be in jail.[35] Events were moving rapidly in the NWFP as well, with the Red Shirts ignoring the new restrictions on processions and demonstrations. The Chief Commissioner of the province, Sir Ralph Griffith, journeyed to Delhi on 22 November to apprise his colleagues of the situation on the Frontier. At a meeting held in Evelyn Howell's office, he informed his colleagues that: "A new danger also was that Abdul Ghaffar Khan had definitely broached the question of non-payment of land revenue and water rates." Moreover, crime had reached high levels and the collection of land revenue had become nearly impossible.[36] Griffith emphasized that this all threatened to spill over into the tribal areas, including the Sam Ranizai area of the Malakand agency – the epicenter of the 1897–1898 revolt.[37] Though alarmed, the assembled officials and officers agreed that, if action was taken in the near future, it was highly desirable that this should happen in the United Provinces rather than in the NWFP.

This policy arose from concerted efforts by the administration to push a wedge between Hindu and Muslims within the nationalist movement. The Round Table conference, for instance, was breaking down over the question of minority electorates and the British were keen to show themselves as conciliatory towards Islam.[38] The NWFP was Muslim majority, and the benefit of the Delhi Pact falling apart in the United Provinces was, Emerson pointed out, that the opposition there was "mainly Hindu." The "tactical advantage to [the] Government would be very great."[39] This strategy also extended to the nationalist

33/8/31 (Part I).

[34] NWFP Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 43, for the Period Ending 4 November 1931, L P&S 12/3141.

[35] NWFP Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 47, for the Period Ending 2 December 1931, L P&S 12/3141.

[36] Notes on the Conference on the General Situation in NWFP, 24 November 1931, NAI HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part I and II).

[37] Memorandum from Political Agent, Malakand (William Hay) to the Chief Commissioner, NWFP, 13 November 1931, NAI HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part III).

[38] See David Page, *Prelude to Partition: The Indian Muslims and the Imperial System of Control, 1920–1932* (New York, 1982), pp. 252–258.

[39] Notes on the Conference on the General Situation in NWFP.

movement on the Frontier. Throughout this period, the intelligence bureau was hoping against hope that the local nationalist movement would split over the fact that Abdul Ghaffar had allied himself with the "Hindu" Congress party, something for which old Frontier hands believed the Pathans would never stand. Frontier intelligence reports are littered with dead-end reports of supposed nationalist schisms over religion. The appearance of a "religious tinge" for instance, in several of Abdul Ghaffar's speeches in early November prompted the conclusion that "feeling in the province is gradually, and perhaps unconsciously, drifting towards a Khilafat movement and consequently away from the Hindu-controlled Congress."[40] They therefore decided that Griffith should proceed with the "steady administration of the ordinary law," arresting and trying local leaders eligible for prosecution under the new restrictions.

While Griffith was in Delhi he also discussed the extension of reforms to the Frontier. The British reasoned that any "firm" action taken against the nationalists in the NWFP would have to be accompanied by an announcement stating the date for the inauguration of full reforms. Final decisions about the nature of the reforms were hammered out in Delhi and planning began for the announcement.[41] Returning to Peshawar, Griffith found that nationalist activity had grown. The administration extended the two-month prohibition on all meetings, demonstrations, and processions to the whole of the Peshawar District, and declared that all Europeans wishing to drive through the Charsadda Subdivision must be accompanied by an escort of two armed persons. Furthermore, Peshawar City was placed out of bounds for all European officers, their families, and nursing sisters not on duty there.[42] Abdul Ghaffar now publicly called on the people to prepare for a resumption of Civil Disobedience.[43] Meanwhile, the British Prime Minister's recent announcement that the NWFP "should be constituted a Governor's province" was denounced as a useless reform by the Peshawar Congress

[40] NWFP Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 43, for the Period Ending 4 November 1931.

[41] Proceedings of a Conference held at Delhi, on 23 November 1931, to Discuss Questions Relating to the Future Administration of the North-West Frontier Province, NAI REFORMS OFFICE F. 43/32-R/1932.

[42] "Charsadda Declared Disaffected: Europeans Not to Enter Without Armed Escort," in the *Civil and Military Gazette*, 3 December 1931, NMML.

[43] NWFP Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 48, for the Period Ending 9 December 1931, L P&S 12/3141.

Committee, which stated that "not a single well-wisher of the soil would ever be content with anything less than complete independence."[44]

On 10 December, Griffith informed the Viceroy and Howell that large gatherings were being held throughout the province and that Red Shirt leaders were making "dangerously inflammatory" speeches and inciting people to "active violence." The Chief Commissioner warned his superiors that he might at any moment request permission to strike at the Red Shirt organization throughout the NWFP. The current cold weather favored the administration, since it would be more difficult to operate with British troops once the high springtime temperatures began. Moreover, Griffith believed that it was essential that the province be pacified in advance of the political reforms he was planning to enact.[45] Willingdon shared these concerns. After he received Griffith's cable, he informed the Secretary of State, Sir Samuel Hoare, that there was "no doubt that Ghaffar and Jawaharlal [Nehru] are running in couples and the only thing to do I hope you will agree is to get hold of them as soon as possible." He added that one of his great regrets was that the Government of India lacked the power to deport prisoners, for he would like to send Abdul Ghaffar to the West Indies.[46]

For his part, Howell informed Griffith that it was only a matter of time until the truce with Congress collapsed. While the Government would prefer that nothing be done in the NWFP until the no-rent campaign commenced in the United Provinces, they recognized that the NWFP situation was "exceedingly dangerous." If he requested extraordinary powers to deal with the Red Shirts, the Government would, Howell assured Griffith, feel compelled to grant them.[47] A few days later, Howell told Griffith that the Provincial Congress Committee in the United Provinces had given permission for the no-rent campaigns in five districts.[48] Gandhi was en route from England and the Working

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[44] See statement by Prime Minister Ramsay McDonald, 1 December 1931, in *Proceedings of the Indian Round Table Conference, IInd Session* (London, 1932), p. 416, and Resolution of City Congress Committee, Peshawar, 4 December 1931, All-India Congress Committee Papers, P-17/1931, NMML.

[45] Chief Commissioner, NWFP to Foreign Department, Government of India, 10 December 1931, NAI HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part III).

[46] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 13 December 1931, IOR L PO 5/23.

[47] Letter from Evelyn B. Howell to the Viceroy, 12 December 1931, HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part I and II).

[48] Howell to Sir R. E. H. Griffith (Chief Commissioner, NWFP), 14 December 1931, HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part I and II).

Committee of the Congress would likely endorse this campaign upon the Mahatma's arrival on 28 December.

On 15 December, the Frontier administration decided to move. They cabled Delhi with their intentions, which included the arrest and deportation of all the major Red Shirt leaders and the enactment of the "Emergency Powers and Unlawful Association Ordinance," which would give the administration sweeping extra-legal powers to crush Frontier nationalism.[49] As a public relations cover, the Chief Commissioner would invite Abdul Ghaffar and Sahib to Peshawar on 22 December and call on them to join in the "constructive work" of political reforms in the province – something the administration knew the nationalist leaders would never do.[50] The Viceroy and Secretary of State still hoped that the administration would "hold its hand" until after the All-India Congress meeting scheduled in Bombay on 29 December, where it was likely to call off the truce with the Government, but gave its approval all the same.[51] Having received the Chief Commissioner's invitation to the *durbar* (court) announcing the new reforms, the Frontier Congress resolved that neither Abdul Ghaffar nor Khan Sahib should attend.[52] On 22 December, the nationalists lined the roads between Charsadda and Peshawar and demonstrated against the *durbar* as the Chief Commissioner disingenuously declared that "we must sink our differences."[53] Armed with the Red Shirt leaders' refusal to attend the *durbar*, and believing the situation "critical," Griffith went forward with his plans.[54] On Christmas Eve, in part because it was the most "unexpected" date and "therefore the most suitable for surprise," but also

[49] Chief Commissioner, NWFP to Foreign Department, Government of India, 15 December 1931, HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part III).

[50] Telegram from Foreign Department, Government of India to Chief Commissioner, NWFP, 21 December 1931, HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part III).

[51] Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State, 18 December 1931, HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part III) and Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, 19 December 1931, HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part III).

[52] NWFP Fortnightly Report for the Second Half of December 1931, IOR L P&J 12/32.

[53] North-West Frontier Province Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 50, for the Period Ending 23 December 1931, L P&S 12/3141; and "NWFP Commissioner Appeals for Support," in the *Civil and Military Gazette*, 24 December 1931.

[54] Telegram from Chief Commissioner, NWFP to Foreign Department, Government of India, 22 December 1931, HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part III).

to forestall Abdul Ghaffar leaving the province to meet Gandhi on his return to Bombay, police and troops moved against the nationalists.[55]

The Frontier campaign

By the next morning, Abdul Ghaffar, Khan Sahib, and several other leaders had been arrested and placed on a special train bound for a prison in Bihar. In the following hours, the City Disturbance Column occupied Peshawar, and five separate columns spread out throughout the district. In Peshawar city alone, over 2,000 people were arrested.[56] By the end of the day, troops, accompanied by the RAF, which focused on reconnaissance, had spread out through the province. These columns were charged with breaking up nationalist meetings and, more ominously, "rounding up the worst villages." This involved a night march to surround a village, a pre-dawn raid, mass arrests, and seizure of firearms and any nationalist literature.[57] These raids were possible under the sweeping powers Willingdon bestowed on Griffith on 24 December. The Emergency Powers, Unlawful Association, and Unlawful Instigation Ordinances permitted the administration to arrest and bar persons from a specific area (i.e. the entire province) if the Government believed that any person "has acted, is acting, or is about to act in a manner prejudicial to public safety." The penalty for disobeying this order was two years' imprisonment. The Ordinances empowered officers to take possession of buildings and prohibit or limit access to certain places. The punishment for dissuasion from enlistment in the Army as well as for the dissemination of "false rumours" was one year's imprisonment.[58]

These actions were accompanied by a propaganda campaign within the province. Leaflets were dropped from the air throughout the Peshawar District, and Griffith issued a statement justifying the

[55] NWFP Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 1, for the Period Ending 7 January 1932, L P&S 12/3141.

[56] NWFP Fortnightly Report for the Second Half of December 1931. See also Abdul Ghaffar Khan, *My Life and Struggle: Autobiography of Badshah Khan as Narrated to K. B. Narang* (Delhi, 1969), pp. 146–148. The arrests were made under Regulation III of 1818, which allowed the Government to deport the accused to prisons in India without trial (Rittenberg, *Ethnicity*, p. 118).

[57] NWFP Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 1, for the Period Ending 7 January 1932.

[58] "Special Powers for Frontier Authorities," in the *Civil and Military Gazette*, 26 December 1931.

administration's actions.[59] The Chief Commissioner claimed that British efforts to extend full reforms to the NWFP had been consistently thwarted by the Red Shirts, who refused to see the Delhi Pact as a means towards a permanent solution to "constitutional problems." Although the Government had sought to secure "peaceful conditions" through constitutional reforms, these hopes "were not realized." Abdul Ghaffar's speeches, Griffith stated, had grown increasingly "inflammatory, seditious, and racial" in tone. He noted the following excerpt from a speech delivered by Abdul Ghaffar on 12 December:

> We have two purposes; firstly to free our country and secondly to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. Do not rest until freedom is won. It does not matter if you are blown up with guns, bombs, etc. If you are brave come out and into the battle field and fight the English who are the cause of all our troubles.

This, Griffith claimed, was an incitement to violent revolution. The Chief Commissioner argued that this menace, when combined with calls for non-payment of rents and Congress activities in the tribal areas, had forced the Government to act.[60] This communiqué and a larger annotated list of the Red Shirts' subversive activity released at the end of the year were drawn up for public relations purposes, but they also represented the genuine beliefs of many within the administration.[61] Writing to Hoare on Boxing Day, Willingdon confided that "the Delhi Pact at all events is dead and gone, murdered by Jawaharlal Nehru and Abdul Ghaffar."[62]

Although the occupation of Peshawar city had been relatively uneventful, operations in other parts of the province led to a number of violent incidents. In the first couple of days the worst outburst was in Kohat. Over 700 Red Shirt volunteers, protesting their leaders' arrests, were encountered by the Deputy Commissioner, Archie Best, several police officers, and a cavalry squadron. When the crowd refused to disperse, the squadron advanced on them and, as on 23 April 1930, the crowd resorted to brick throwing. As in that earlier situation, a high-ranking officer (the Police Superintendent this time) was hit in

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[59] NWFP Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 1, for the Period Ending 7 January 1932.
[60] Statement Issued by the Chief Commissioner, North-West Frontier Province on 24 December 1931, NAI HOME (POL.) F. 123/32.
[61] Statement by the Chief Commissioner, North-West Frontier Province, 30 December 1931, HOME (POL.) F. 123/32.
[62] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 26 December 1931, Templewood Papers E240/5.

the face and panicked, ordering the troops to open fire. Over 60 rounds were fired and, the British estimated, at least 13 were killed.[63] News of the shooting reverberated through "political India." On 28 December, the evening of his return to India, Gandhi gave a speech about the Frontier. He attacked the carrot-and-stick approach that the Frontier administration was using:

> Side by side with the declaration that the Frontier Province is about to be placed on the same footing as the other provinces, you find in that Province today an ordinance for which I cannot find a parallel whatsoever . . . I cannot tell myself that this is a human piece of legislation. The ordinance gives no protection for life or property.

Gandhi rhetorically asked: What was the Red Shirt leadership's crime? Because they failed to attend the *durbar*? On top of this seeming withdrawal of the rule of law, he brought up the reports of the recent shooting in Kohat. Gandhi affirmed that civil disobedience should be punished because that is the essence of civil disobedience. But he had not witnessed nor heard anywhere that the penalty for defying the law, apart from violence done by the courts, was to be met "with bullets." With the recent reports of at least 14 killed at Kohat, the Mahatma wondered how many more would be shot down on the Frontier.[64] Beginning with this speech and going on into 1932 and 1933, the Congress would seek to ascertain the nature of the Government's actions on the Frontier and publicize their findings as much as possible.

With All-India Civil Disobedience now on the brink of resuming, Willingdon promulgated the Emergency Powers Ordinance for all of India at 12 pm on 4 January 1932 – the first time the British had ever done this.[65] Gandhi and most of the other Congress leaders were arrested by the end of the day. By the end of the month, over 14,000 had been arrested in connection with Civil Disobedience throughout

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[63] See Viceroy to Secretary of State, 27 December 1931, and Memorandum by L. W. H. D. Best (Deputy Commissioner, Kohat), 28 December 1931, HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part III). Best was Sir Norman Bolton's son-in-law. He was killed fighting the Mohmands in 1935 (Aubrey Metcalfe (Foreign Secretary, Government of India) to J. C. Walton (Foreign and Political Secretary, India Office), 13 May 1935, Walton Papers IOR D545/9).

[64] Speech at the Welfare of India League by M. K. Gandhi, at the Hotel Majestic, Bombay, 28 December 1931, Templewood Papers E240/75.

[65] Low, *Congress and the Raj*, p. 174.

India – nearly half (6,000) of these were in the NWFP alone.[66] By mid-month the administration's internal reports could unequivocally state that "all things considered the situation in the province generally is very satisfactory."[67] Although this period can be described, in the words of one author, as "the resurgence of reaction," throughout India, the number of arrests in the NWFP and the speed at which the authorities could claim "a steady improvement in the political situation" speaks to a stronger form of reaction than that found elsewhere in the subcontinent.[68]

This fact led nationalists of all stripes to attempt to bring attention to the abuses that they believed were going on in the NWFP. Some, such as the Muslim Conference in Delhi, declared a "Frontier Day" in protest against Government excesses on the Frontier.[69] The Congress in Bombay followed suit and organized their own "Frontier Day" procession at the end of the month. The police met the demonstration with revolvers and *lathis* and over 160 people were injured.[70] These protests and the amount of Congress propaganda that featured stories about the Frontier alarmed the Viceroy, who asked Howell to ask Griffith whether he could categorically deny that certain excesses were taking place. Griffith informed Howell that "I would point out that while some incidents of an undesirable nature referred to in your telegram have undoubtedly occurred, I and my officers are fully alive to the necessity of their discontinuance and special measures."[71] This was not terribly reassuring. Howell noted, however, that it had to be remembered "in extenuation of the conduct of the police, that they have had to endure 18 months' very severe provocation." Howell reported that the Frontier administration trusted that any calls for an enquiry into

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[66] See Moore, *The Crisis of Indian Unity*, p. 250, for All-India figures. For NWFP, figures see NWFP Fortnightly Report for the Second Half of December 1931 and NWFP Fortnightly Report for the Second Half of January 1932, IOR L P&J 12/43.
[67] NWFP Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 2, for the Period Ending 14 January 1932, L P&S 12/3141.
[68] Moore, *The Crisis of Indian Unity*, p. 250 and NWFP Fortnightly Report for the Second Half of January 1932.
[69] See Resolution by the Working Committee of the Muslim Conference held at Delhi on 31 January 1932 Condemning the Action of Government in NWFP, NAI HOME (POL.) F. 14/9/1932 and Low, *Congress and the Raj*, p. 175.
[70] "Police Fire on Bombay Mob," in the *Civil and Military Gazette*, 31 January 1932.
[71] Telegram from Chief Commissioner, NWFP to Foreign Department, Government of India, 31 January 1932 HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part III).

"excesses" on the Frontier would be vigorously opposed.[72] In short, the Frontier administration admitted that excesses were taking place with no repercussions.

Demonstrations were one way to bring attention to what nationalists suspected was going on in the NWFP, but the best way was to travel to the province itself, a near impossibility given the fact that the NWFP was sealed off from the rest of Indian by virtue of the Emergency Powers Ordinances. Several nationalists and nationalist sympathizers were able to break this cordon, however. One was the English missionary-turned-Indian-nationalist, Verrier Elwin.[73] On the eve of his arrest Gandhi had sent for Elwin and requested that, as an Englishman, he travel to the Frontier, to see "what was really happening there." Elwin did so, exchanging his *dhoti* for European dress and travelling to the province under his own name. He checked into Deane's Hotel in the Peshawar Cantonment and then set out to collect information.[74]

Elwin reported that when he arrived in Peshawar on 11 January, "there was not a Red Shirt to be seen in the whole district, and the movement had practically been driven underground." After speaking to both Indians and Europeans throughout the province, he reported on the nature of the column marches into the villages. Elwin stated that the column usually arrived at about three in the morning and surrounded a particular village. The leading men were ordered to produce any Red Shirt volunteers. If they refused, they were severely beaten. If any Red Shirts were found, they were arrested, beaten, their uniforms removed and burnt. If, as was common, their land revenue was outstanding, the police raided the houses, including the *zenana* (women's quarters), roughed up the women and took their jewelry.[75]

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[72] Note by Sir Evelyn Howell, 31 January 1932, HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part III). Howell received his Knighthood (KCSI) in the New Year's Honours List, 1932 (Walton to Howell, 1 January 1932, Walton Papers D545/6).

[73] The son of the Anglican Bishop of Sierra Leone, Elwin began his career as Oxford, where he was appointed Vice-Principal of Wycliffe Hall in 1926 and lecturer at Merton the following year. He then set out for India as a missionary. He soon became a follower of Gandhi and a self-taught anthropologist, studying India's tribal populations. At independence Nehru asked him to stay on and advise the Government of India on Tribal policies – especially in the North-East. See Verrier Elwin, *The Tribal World of Verrier Elwin: An Autobiography* (New York, 1964) and Ramachandra Guha's excellent *Savaging the Civilized: Verrier Elwin, His Tribals, and India* (Chicago, 1999).

[74] *What is Happening in the North-West Frontier Province*? by Father Verrier Elwin, P. 16/32 All-India Congress Committee Papers, NMML.

[75] Elwin, *What is Happening in the North-West Frontier Province*?

The worst treatment was, of course, reserved for active Red Shirt volunteers. Batches of volunteers, stripped of turban, shirt and shoes, clad only in pyjamas, were marched through Peshawar by the military. In a disturbing echo of Dyer's infamous 1919 "crawling order," the inhabitants of Utmanzai (Abdul Ghaffar's home village) were ordered to salute any European who passed by; if they failed to do so, they were beaten. Elwin wrote that:

> On January 13th there was a meeting of Red Shirts and citizens in . . . Peshawar City. Many women watched the scene from the balconies of houses that overlooked the market. The police and the military arrived and ordered the meeting to disperse. The people refused and there was a heavy *lathi* charge. This was followed by some stone throwing from the balconies and a police officer had his cheek cut open. Then the military went into the houses, climbed upstairs and not only beat the women but actually threw two of them down from the balcony to the ground. One of these had her leg broken and the other's arm was broken in three places.

Elwin believed that the problem was not the regular police. These, he argued were "far more enlightened than those of any other branch of the administration." The problem was with the "additional police" and the military. Similar to the "Black and Tans" used by the British in Ireland, these "additional police" were usually military reservists, "undisciplined, untrained, accustomed to loot and plunder." Elwin claimed that the bulk of the "excesses" were due to them, with the rest residing with the military who urged the police on to more violent measures and used the "butt-ends of their rifles with deadly effect." Although he did not want to "blackguard" fellow Englishmen, the ordinary Briton on the Frontier was "callous and without imagination . . . the old India at its worst." There may have been "peace" in the NWFP, but it was the peace of the desert.[76]

Elwin's trip to the Frontier lasted five days. On the fifth day he traveled up to the Khyber Pass, but before going he dispatched a letter to Olaf Caroe, informing him of his presence and requesting an interview. Upon his return that evening, Elwin was met by Caroe who placed him under arrest and ordered him and his belongings searched. As the officers approached his hotel room, Elwin stuffed his notes into a box of "Force" cereal, where they escaped detection. Satisfied that

[76] Elwin, *What is Happening in the North-West Frontier Province*?

Elwin possessed no incriminating documentation, Caroe banned him from the province and put him in a sealed compartment on the next train out of Peshawar.[77] Upon returning "down country," Elwin held a press conference and published his report in a pamphlet entitled *What is Happening in the North-West Frontier Province?*[78] It was immediately banned and all known copies were seized.[79]

Whereas Elwin's report was intended for public consumption, other Congress reports about the Frontier were meant to be read by those members of the Congress leadership not currently residing in a British jail. Among these were the reports brought to the Working Committee by Jivatram Kripalani, General Secretary of the Congress in 1928–1929, who had managed to visit the Frontier undetected in February 1932. Kripalani painted a horrific picture of the Government's actions in the NWFP. He reported that the key Congress tactic of picketing liquor shops and brothels had been discontinued due to the "shameless methods" of Government officials in humiliating the Pathan. The picketers were stripped naked, their faces blackened by coal tar, and sticks inserted in their "private parts."[80] Kripalani stated that "the Pathan was prepared for the prison, the lathi and the bullet; but his imagination did not count upon the various methods of humiliation employed by the Government." As far as the military's village raids were concerned, he stated that these were becoming less common, but remained instruments of terror:

> In the case of a raid on one village the majority of the male members were absent, the women were severely beaten and their upper garments torn off their bodies. The person giving this report would not say any more. It was obvious that he did not wish to mention

[77] See Elwin, *The Tribal World of Verrier Elwin*, pp. 164–166. Thereafter the Government considered banning Elwin altogether from India (Proposal for the Cancelation of the Endorsement for India on the Passport of Father Elwin as to Prevent his Return to India, NAI HOME (POL.) F. 25/36/1932).

[78] See "Impressions of Frontier Tour: Father Elwin's Statement to the Press," *Hindustan Times*, 27 January 1932, HOME (POL.) F. 123/32.

[79] Proscription of Father Verrier Elwin's book entitled "What is Happening in the NWFP?," NAI HOME (POL.) F. 29/9/1932.

[80] Given the British predilection towards dividing their subjects into "feminine" and "masculine" categories, the apparent use of sexual humiliation against Pathan men in striking. For more on gender and state sanctioned violence in colonial India, see Robert McLain, *Gender and Violence in British India: The Road to Amritsar, 1914–1919* (Basingstoke, 2014).

> the worst that happened to these women left entirely at the mercy of the tommies.[81]

Kripalani also contended that the Government's reports on the fatalities sustained at Kohat in December were wildly understated. Elwin's estimation of near 50 deaths was also too low. Kripalani pegged the number instead at 200.[82]

By the end of February, the British had smashed resistance in every district but Peshawar and even there progress against the Khudai Khidmatgars had "exceeded the most sanguine expectations."[83] Believing the situation to be under control, the administration scheduled Legislative Assembly elections for 1 April 1932 – Griffith was to stay on as the NWFP's first Governor.[84] This, however, led to another upswing in nationalist activity in Peshawar by mid-March.[85] There were mass protests, some including upwards of 30,000 demonstrators.[86] With the elections drawing near and the Viceroy scheduled to visit the province and inaugurate the reforms on 18 April, the administration once again resorted to a heavy hand. Kripalani made further reports to Congress in March and April. He confirmed that outrages on the women had occurred during the village raids and that Red Shirt volunteers had been sodomized with sticks by the "additional police." In some cases, the victims were taken to rooftops and exposed to public gaze. In still other cases, their "women folk" were forced to witness these demonstrations.[87] Charges of this nature are notable, as the

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[81] Report from North-West Frontier Province by Jivatram Bhagwandas Kripalani, 13 February 1932, P. 16/32 All-India Congress Committee Papers, NMML. The decrease in column marches is corroborated by the Government of India's internal records, which state that by the end of January two columns had been removed from Peshawar District (NWFP Fortnightly Report for the Second Half of January 1932).

[82] Kripalani Report from North-West Frontier Province.

[83] NWFP Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 8, for the Period Ending 25 February 1932, L P&S 12/3141.

[84] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 29 February 1932, Templewood Papers E240/5.

[85] NWFP Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 11, for the Period Ending 16 March 1932, L P&S 12/3141.

[86] India Office to General Sir Clive Wigram (ADC to the King), 14 April 1932, L PO 5/23.

[87] Note by Jivatram Bhagwandas Kripalani, April 1932, P. 16/32 All-India Congress Committee Papers, NMML.

British on the Frontier had a longstanding fascination with incidences of sodomy among Pathan men.[88]

In April, as the administration attempted to hold elections on the Frontier, the Congress began a concerted propaganda campaign using the reports that were coming back from the NWFP.[89] Congress bulletins trumpeted the continuation of Civil Disobedience on the Frontier despite the Government's repeated humiliations of Pathans. The Congress charged that in one instance, two Red Shirts were beaten till they fell unconscious. "No sooner did they gain consciousness than they were asked to apologize. On their refusal, a bed of thorns was made out of two babul trees and the two men were rolled over that bed several times." Villages were still being surrounded, their men beaten and their women threatened with rape unless they paid a fine of Rs. 1,800/- for the villagers' adherence to the nationalist cause.[90] Subsequent bulletins added to these charges. In the wake of the NWFP elections, which featured a very low turnout after Congress decided to boycott them – thus revealing the depth of nationalist support – the Congress claimed that the world was witnessing the "end of an Empire."[91] "Having raped and outraged the honour of Pathan women, having massacred hundreds and perhaps thousands of brave Red Shirts sworn to non-violence, having made thousands of Frontier Mussalmans homeless and destitute," the British, Congress claimed, were being defeated by non-violence.[92]

The Government of India, unlike the Frontier administration, was sensitive to these charges. Willingdon and officials in the Home Department were especially concerned with how charges of this nature would play among India's Muslims, whom the Government was attempting to separate from Congress. When the Frontier campaign began, Delhi instructed all local administrations to emphasize that the Red Shirts were affiliated with Congress and therefore worked for "Hindu interests."[93] In this vein, Delhi had allowed the old Khilafat

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[88] Confidential Letter from The Chief Commissioner, NWFP to the Foreign Secretary, Government of India, 13 February 1931, NAI HOME (POL.) F 45/V/31.

[89] See Bulletins issued by the Congress Alleging Excesses in the NWFP and Other Provinces, NAI HOME (POL.) F. 5/60/1932.

[90] Extract from the Bombay Congress Bulletin of 8 April 1932, NAI HOME (POL.) F. 40/5/1932.

[91] See Amit Kumar Gupta, *North-West Frontier Province Legislature and Freedom Struggle, 1932–1947* (New Delhi, 1976), pp. 27–32.

[92] Extract from Bombay Congress Bulletin dated 15 April 1932, HOME (POL.) F. 40/5/1932.

[93] Home Department, Government of India to All Local Governments, 16 January 1932, HOME (POL.) F. 123/1932.

leader, Shaukat Ali, who had broken with Gandhi, to visit the Frontier in February.[94] Moderate Muslim papers like Karachi's *Al-Wahid* were already publishing stories about the Government's "brutal" suppression of the Red Shirts.[95] This concern led the Government to once again ask the Frontier administration whether the nationalist claims held water. The resulting correspondence sheds further light on the nature of the British response to the Red Shirts. Sir Herbert Emerson informed the NWFP administration that, even if they thought it unnecessary, the Government wanted the "actual facts" on record. This would be useful for the India Office and the Government's Bureau of Public Information.[96] The initial response from the Inspector General of Police on the Frontier began with the assertion that everything the Congress said was a lie. He stated that no picketers were stripped naked, nor were any beaten unconscious. But then he relented on some of the Congress's claims. While no village had been fined Rs. 1,800/-, one had been fined Rs. 2,000/-. More importantly, he had "heard" that one Red Shirt had been beaten in Caroe's presence, and that Red Shirts had been thrown into beds of thorns. He had received no official reports of these activities, however. Nor, apparently, had he asked Caroe if the claims were true.[97]

A further communication from the Chief Secretary of the NWFP admitted that "irregular practices" had taken place. They were not exactly as the Congress bulletins had described them, however. It was true, for instance, that "on certain occasions," Red Shirts had been stripped and "made to sit on thorns," but these victims were "not rolled on them."[98] Thus, despite these caveats, the Frontier administration fully admitted to these "excesses." Although these had been stopped, the Chief Secretary insisted once again "that such excesses were chiefly due to the extreme provocation under which all officers have been laboring for many months."[99] Moreover, the impression among the

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[94] NWFP Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 9, for the Period Ending 2 March 1932, L P&S 12/3141.
[95] "Painful Situation on the Frontier," *Al-Wahid*, 30 January 1932, HOME (POL.) F. 123/1932.
[96] Letter from H. W. Emerson to W. R. Hay (Chief Secretary, NWFP), 27 April 1932, HOME (POL.) F. 40/5/1932.
[97] Copy of UO No. 272-C from the Inspector General of Police, North West Frontier Province, 8 June 1932, HOME (POL.) F. 40/5/1932.
[98] Underlining in original document.
[99] For Griffith's earlier conversation with Howell see Note by Sir Evelyn Howell, 31 January 1932, HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part III).

police had been that they were operating under martial law and they had acted accordingly. Nothing should be done, the administration argued, to undermine the police and military's morale.[100]

Furthermore, not only had the Frontier government been engaged in "excesses," but they felt no need to counter the nationalists' charges. Griffith thought it was best to ignore the Congress bulletins, leaving it to the local governments, in whose area the bulletins were issued, to "track down and deal with the offenders."[101] The Frontier administration clearly still saw itself as a separate entity from the rest of India. The Home Department noted that the normal procedure was for local administrations to contradict charges in communiqués, and that it was desirable that the NWFP Government should be in accordance with the general procedure.[102] Surveying the nature of the allegations and Peshawar's predisposition to ignore any criticisms emanating from "down country," one Home Department official, C. M. Trivedi, noted that "It would appear as if the NWFP Govt. underrated the importance of publicity." It was, he believed, unnecessary to contradict general allegations or falsehoods, but, when specific allegations were made, something needed to be done. This was especially important as stories of Government outrages in the "NWFP often obtain a wide currency in the Indian press."[103] Yet, despite these remonstrations, the Frontier administration continued to refuse to publish targeted responses to the nationalist charges.

The Frontier and "Political India"

Civil Disobedience continued for another year-and-half. By April 1932, the Government of India had incarcerated over 32,500 people.[104] With Conservative support at home, Willingdon squeezed Congress throughout this period of confrontation, keeping many of its leaders in jail and cracking down on demonstrations. At the same time, the Government

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[100] Letter from C. H. Gidney (Chief Secretary, NWFP) to H. W. Emerson, 25 June 1932, HOME (POL.) F. 40/5/1932.

[101] Letter from C. H. Gidney (Chief Secretary, NWFP) to H. W. Emerson, 25 June 1932.

[102] Note by Home Department, Government of India, undated, HOME (POL.) F. 40/5/1932.

[103] Note by C. M. Trivedi, 6 July 1932, HOME (POL.) F. 40/5/1932. Trivedi went on to serve as the British Governor of Orissa (1945–1947), and the first Indian Governor of Punjab (1947–1953).

[104] Moore, *The Crisis of Indian Unity*, p. 292.

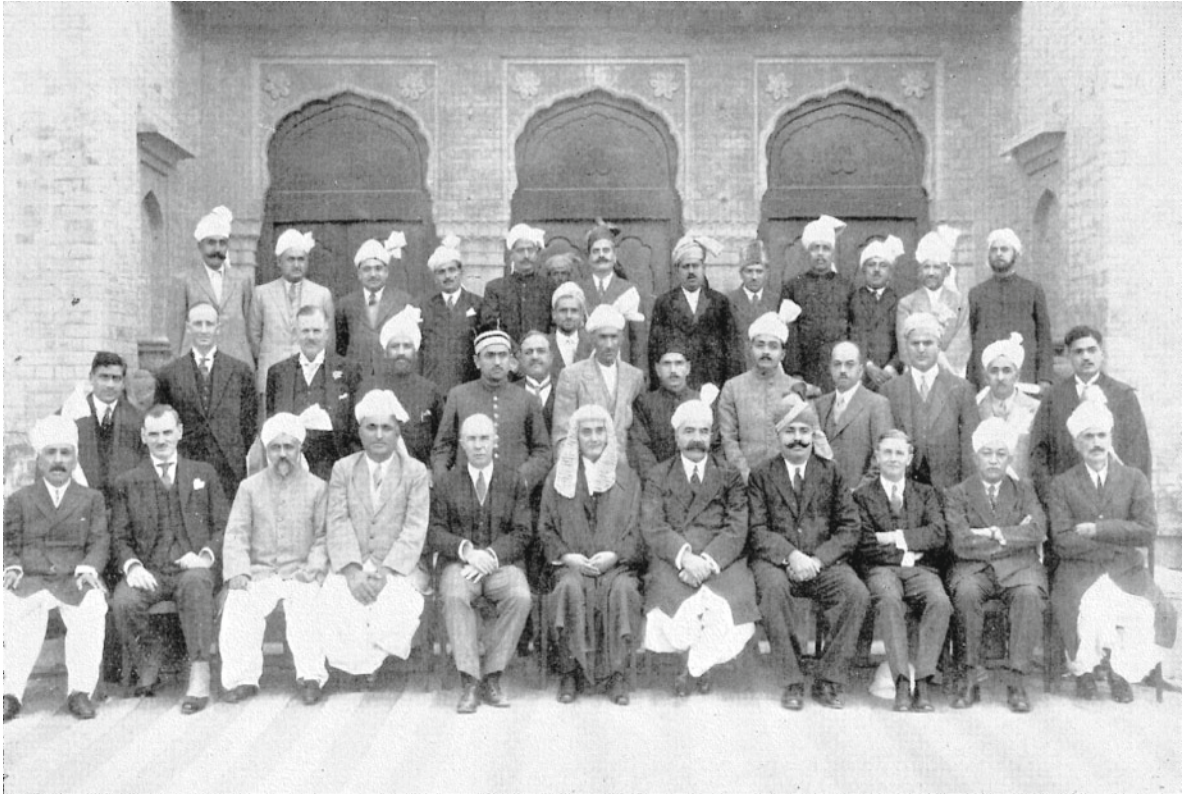

Image 5 The North-West Frontier Province Legislative Council, c. 1935. Sir George Cunningham, then member of the Executive Council, sits in front row, fifth from left. Nawab Sahibzada Sir Adbul Quaiyum, future first Chief Minister of the NWFP, sits fifth from left

of India went forward on a program for Indian constitutional reforms and "constructive" work. Finally, in May 1934, Congress declared that they would contest the upcoming elections for the Central Legislative Assembly. For the time being, this was a British victory, and a vindication of the "dual policy" of constitutional advance coupled with "firm action" that had characterized the British approach since the collapse of the Delhi Pact.[105] As the Secretary of State for India had stated at the beginning of the second phase of Civil Disobedience: "Our policy . . . is a policy of progress combined with firmness . . . [t]he dogs bark, the caravan passes on."[106]

The conflict on the Frontier continued throughout this period as well. The Viceroy inaugurated the province's Legislative Assembly, and the new members took their seats, but since they lacked any real mandate from the people of the Frontier, the body remained, in one author's words, something of a "mockery."[107] By 1933, with the Khan brothers and other leaders still in jail, the nationalist movement had lost much of its strength, although sporadic outbursts still occurred in the Peshawar District.[108] The administration continued to rule the NWFP with an iron fist, however. Following the cessation of Civil Disobedience in spring 1934, local administrations throughout India lifted the ban that had been placed on Congress under the Criminal Law Amendment Act. The Frontier administration, however, refused to lift the ban on the "North West Frontier Provincial *Jirga* (Frontier Provincial Congress Committee), all district and local *Jirgas* or Congress Committees subordinate thereto, and all volunteer organizations connected with the above whether known as Red Shirt or otherwise."[109] Congress and the Red Shirts were still illegal. When pressed on this issue by officials in the Government of India, the new Home Secretary, Sir Maurice Hallett, replied that "the Red Shirt movement was unconstitutional and inclined to violence from the start, alliance

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[105] Low, *Congress and the Raj*, p. 190.

[106] Speech by Sir Samuel Hoare, 28 January 1932, quoted in Nripendra Nath Mitra (ed.), *The Indian Annual Register, January–June 1932: An Annual Digest of Public Affairs of India Recording the Nation's Activities Each Year in Matters Political, Economic, Industrial, Educational, Social, Etc.* (Calcutta, 1932), p. 414.

[107] Gupta, *North-West Frontier Province Legislature*, p. 31.

[108] NWFP Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 7, for the Period Ending 25 February 1933, L P&S 12/3141.

[109] Letter from Sir Fazl-i-Husain (Member, Viceroy's Council, for Education, Health and Lands) to Sir Harry Haig (Home Member, Viceroy's Council), 24 May 1934, NAI HOME (POL.) F. 11/1/1934.

with Congress was only a tactical one."[110] In this, the Home Secretary echoed the views of the Frontier administration. Ambrose Dundas, Caroe's replacement as Deputy Commissioner for Peshawar following Caroe's promotion to the Foreign Department, spoke for many Frontier officers when he wrote:

> The ban on the Red Shirt Organization, so far from hindering political advance, has in fact facilitated it. When all was turmoil, fever and excitement there could be no political advance. Government could not even allow political meetings they were far too dangerous. But once the Red Shirt movement had been banned, everything began gradually to return to normal.[111]

The Government of India also acquiesced to the Frontier administrations demand that Abdul Ghaffar and Khan Sahib be barred from the province following their release from prison in August 1934.[112]

The administration therefore won this round against the Red Shirts. Yet, overall, the Frontier government had lost in its wider policy of sealing off the province from "India." The belief that the Frontier was different and had to be "handled" differently than the rest of the subcontinent had been the guiding principle of the Frontier administration since its inception. This had begun to slip away in the late 1920s and gone into terminal decline with the Frontier revolt of 1930. Now, not only was the NWFP integrated into the wider Indian constitutional system with the extension of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, but, more ominously, the Frontier had become a key issue for Indian nationalists – Gandhi and Nehru chief among them. From this point onwards, the Frontier and British actions on the Frontier would be under the nationalist microscope. Increasingly in the 1930s and into the 1940s, it would be British policy not just in the administered districts that was roundly criticized by Congress, but in the tribal areas as well.

In large part this change came not from men like Nehru suddenly deciding that the Frontier was worthy of their attention, but from the reaction to Britain's heavy handed approach to the Frontier nationalist movement. Officials like Caroe continued to view the Frontier as a place apart, as a place where the gloves could come off when faced

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110 Note by Maurice Hallett, 27 May 1934, HOME (POL.) F. 11/1/1934.

111 Extract from Letter from Deputy Commissioner, Peshawar, 3 July 1934, HOME (POL.) F. 11/1/1934.

112 See Khan, *My Life and Struggle*, p. 151.

with an uprising – which was how the administration viewed the Red Shirt movement. The response to Civil Disobedience could be sharp throughout India, and Willingdon complained of feeling like a "sort of Mussolini," but the level of Government-sponsored violence on the Frontier was unique.[113] In the coming years, the Frontier administration and those who harbored the traditional British beliefs about the Frontier would fight against nationalist plans for future policy on the North-West Frontier. But it would be a rearguard action. The Frontier was now firmly enmeshed within "political India."

[113] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 20 December 1931, Templewood Papers E240/5.

Part III
The North-West Frontier and the End of Empire

7

"If the Ramparts Fall, the City Must Fall Also": The Frontier and Indian Constitutional Reform, 1930–1939

Ever since Lord Curzon carved the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) out of the Punjab in 1901, the British Government of India had actively sought to seal off the Indian Empire's Afghan borderlands from the rest of the subcontinent. The province was exempted from both the Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909 and the wider-ranging Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919. For the first three decades of the twentieth century the official political life of the province remained in a late Victorian form of suspended animation. In the Central Legislature, the NWFP was allowed only two representatives who served entirely at the pleasure of the province's Chief Commissioner, and the province was administered by a separate cadre from the rest of British India. Travel between the rest of India and the Frontier was monitored by the authorities, and the Chief Commissioner enjoyed wide powers of exclusion. Moreover, the Frontier was not even entitled to the same legal rights as the rest of British India, but was subject to a draconian set of penalties and procedures known as the Frontier Crimes Regulation. The British enforced this division between the NWFP and the rest of India for two reasons in particular. The first concern, over the strategic position of the region, was summed up in the often-quoted analogy of a cigarette in a powder magazine: in a region as dangerous as the Frontier, the spark of political activity would blow the rest of India sky high. The second rationale for this "perpetual *purdah*" concerned the closely held belief among Frontier Political officers in particular that the Pathan had no interest in a "Hindu dominated" Indian nationalism.[1] This static vision

[1] See Allah Bukhsh Yusufi, *The Frontier Tragedy: An Account of the Inhuman Acts of Repression and Terrorism, Blockades, Loot, Incendiarism & Massacres – Through which*

of the Frontier was challenged, however, with the rapid rise of Abdul Ghaffar Khan's nationalist movement in the spring of 1930.

Once the Frontier became part of the All-India debate on the subcontinent's political future, the British wasted little time in using the security of the Frontier as a key weapon in their attempts to stall greater Indian constitutional reform. This chapter examines the efforts by members of the Indian Government, the Indian Army, and civilian pressure groups, to use the argument that the Frontier was strategically vulnerable and under constant threat of external attack as a primary weapon against the extension of greater constitutional freedoms to India in the "critical decade" of the 1930s. Opponents of the 1935 Government of India Bill argued that Indian nationalists possessed a "disturbingly shallow" understanding of the threats to India's North-West Frontier and could not be trusted with its defence.[2] Since, as one prominent critic insisted, the Frontier was "the very ramparts of the city of India," when these ramparts fell then the "city must fall also."[3] Nationalist control of India's defence not only imperiled the subcontinent, but the future of the British Empire as well. Few, if any, in the 1930s could imagine an India – even an independent India – not intimately linked to Britain

the People of the North-West Frontier Province Have Had to Go during the Present Disturbance (Peshawar, 1930), pp. 7 and 11.

[2] Report of the Expert Committee on the Defence of India, 1938–1939 (Chatfield Committee), 30 January 1939, India Office Records (IOR) L MIL 5/886. The Government of India Act, 1935 was designed to set India on the path of some form of Dominion status. While it provided a number of reforms both at the central and provincial level, it was designed to, as Lord Linlithgow noted, "hold India to the Empire." The act included continued British control of defence, finance, and foreign policy, while devolving greater power to the provinces, thus robbing Congress of effective control at the center. The Act's main provisions came into effect on 1 April 1937. They included virtual provincial autonomy from Delhi, the abolition of dyarchy at the provincial level, with Indian ministers, who were responsible to the electorate, in charge of all branches of provincial governments. Ministers' authority was subject to certain safeguards by the Governor, including reserve powers, for use in such cases as the protection of minorities and the rights of civil servants, or the breakdown of the constitution (Article 93). The franchise was enlarged to include one-sixth of all adult Indians. The federal aspects of the Act remained unrealized (See Carl Bridge, *Holding India to the Empire: The British Conservative Party and the 1935 Constitution* (New Delhi, 1986) and Andrew Muldoon, *Empire, Politics and the Creation of the 1935 India Act: Last Act of the Raj* (Farnham, 2009).

[3] Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Bruce, CSI, CIE, CBE, "Memorandum" in *Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform [Session 1932–1933], Volume 2C: Minutes of Evidence* (London, 1934), p. 1689, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML).

in matters of imperial defence. As Sir George Dunbar, a former Frontier officer who was then serving as the councilor to the Indian princes during the second Round Table Conference, observed:

> Congress may sow dragon's teeth, but it cannot make an All-Indian Army rise miraculously at its command, capable of holding the Frontiers. Failure to hold them, and this not an alarmist view, would mean invasion, chaos, and anarchy throughout India . . . Nor are the Frontiers a matter for India alone. What happens upon them is of Imperial interest, and might at any time affect the entire fabric of the British Commonwealth of Nations.[4]

Thus, the future defence of the North-West Frontier became a primary argument against the extension of greater constitutional freedom to the entire subcontinent.

At the most extreme, those who made this argument called for a moratorium on any further reform and even a roll-back of the earlier Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. This effort eventually met with failure. At the more moderate end, these administrators, soldiers, and retired India hands argued with greater success that the external threat to the Frontier meant that Britain, while devolving a number of other powers, must retain India's defence portfolio for the foreseeable future. As such, the 1935 Act retained Britain's control over the Indian Army and the Frontier's defence establishment. Since "nothing short of complete independence, carrying full control of defence," would be satisfactory to the Congress party, this development became a major point of contention between Congress and the Raj.[5]

The defence of India and the North-West Frontier

Throughout the 1920s, the security of the Frontier, which was inextricably linked to the control of the Indian Army, was often cited as a key reason for denying further constitutional reforms to India.[6] Emphasizing the external menace to the Frontier guaranteed that the British, rather than the Indian nationalists, would have the final say on imperial rule

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[4] Sir George Dunbar, *Frontiers* (London, 1932), p. 315.

[5] Indian National Congress, *Report of the 45th Indian National Congress* (Karachi, 1932).

[6] Report of the Sub-Committee on the Defence Problems of India and the Composition and Organization of the Army and Royal Air Force in India (Pownall Sub-Committee), 12 May 1938, L MIL 5/886.

in India. As Lord Rawlinson, the Indian Commander-in-Chief, privately noted in 1923: "Here in India we can always play off the Afghan menace against the Indian agitator when he squeals for complete Indianization and pure Self-Government."[7] This cynicism aside, the Indian Army was transfixed in the late 1920s by the possibility of an Afghan-Bolshevik alliance on their North-West Frontier.[8] Concerns about a possible pact between Afghanistan's Amir, Amanullah, and the Soviet Union were paramount in the Army's testimony to the Simon Commission in 1928–1929. Witnesses emphasized the probable Soviet and Afghan threat to the North-West Frontier. The former Chief of the Indian General Staff, Major General Ronald Charles, and the current Deputy Chief, Major General Walter Kirke, testified that India's defence was of a "special character," and that the only real danger they had to fear was "from the North-West Frontier, whether that be from the tribes . . . or from peoples beyond it, or from a greater power behind them." By this they meant the Soviet Union. For most officers, the "defence of India" continued to be, for all practical purposes, analogous to the "the defence of the North-West Frontier."[9]

Simon's commission took this evidence to heart.[10] Their final report emphasized Frontier defence as the primary purpose of the Army in India. Furthermore, the constant "menace" to the Frontier was "without parallel in any other part of the Empire." The pressing danger convinced the committee that for decades to come it would be impossible for the Indian Army to dispense with "a very considerable British element."[11] The nature of this external menace to the gates of India

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[7] Rawlinson to Lieutenant-General Sir Walter Congreve, 3 April 1923, in Mark Jacobsen (ed.), *Rawlinson in India* (Stroud, 2002), p. 152.

[8] See Committee of Imperial Defence: First Report of the Defence of India Sub-Committee, 2 December 1927, National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA) CAB 16/83. For more detail see Chapter 3.

[9] Indian Statutory Commission Interview with Major-General J. R. E. Charles, CB, CMG, DSO, Director of Military Operations and Intelligence, War Office, 26 June 1929, Simon Papers IOR F77/56 and Joint Conference Interview with Major-General W. M. St. George Kirke, CB, DSO, Deputy Chief of the Indian General Staff, 22 March 1929, Kirke Papers IOR E396/18.

[10] Simon's draft recommendations were vetted by the General Staff before publication (Notes for Sir John Simon on a Draft "The Army in India," by Major-General Walter St. George Kirke, 5 April 1929, Simon Papers IOR F77/55).

[11] Indian Statutory Commission, *Report of the Indian Statutory Commission*, Vol. II (London, 1930), p. 167. Thus, the Frontier threat helped the British ward off calls for a rapid Indianization of the Army's officer corps – something most serving British officers viewed as an unmitigated disaster. See Pradeep P. Barua,

meant that the subcontinent's defence *must* reside in British hands. The Committee observed:

> If the defence of India were to fail, it is not only India that would suffer. Indian lives and Indian property would be the first to bear the brunt of a hostile invasion, but they would not be alone . . . the whole Empire would be involved.

It was for this precise reason that Britain could not renounce its role in India's land security:

> The North-West Frontier is not only the frontier of India: it is an international frontier of the first importance from the military point of view for the whole Empire. On India's frontier alone is the Empire open to any serious threat of attack by land, and it must be remembered that such an attack might be delivered not on account of any quarrel with India, but because of a dispute between the Empire and a foreign power . . .[12]

If the gates of India fell, then the entire subcontinent would follow. If India fell then the whole position of "Britain in the East" would be destroyed. Based on this scenario, the defence of the North-West Frontier and India were "inseparable" from Britain.[13] Therefore, while new reforms might be possible, anything that dealt with defence, foreign policy, or finance, would be strictly off limits.

This argument had been anticipated by the Indian National Congress, which was taking an increasing interest in defence and the Indian Army. The 1928 Nehru Report, which was designed as an alternative to the Simon Commission, argued that safeguards on defence made any claims to home rule meaningless. Citing the views of the British constitutional scholar and Sanskritist, Arthur Berriedale Keith, who argued that "self-government without an effective Indian Army is an impossibility and no amount of protests or demonstrations, or denunciations of the Imperial Government can avail to alter that fact," the Nehru report called for true cabinet control of India's defences with genuine Indian

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Gentlemen of the Raj: The Indian Army Officer Corps, 1817–1949 (Westport, Connecticut, 2003), Chapter 4.

[12] Report of the Indian Statutory Commission, Vol. II, pp. 173–174.

[13] India Office Note on the Army in India, 15 September 1929, Simon Papers F77/55.

input. The defence reservations stipulated in the Simon Report came nowhere near satisfying these demands.[14]

By the time the recommendations of the Simon Commission were released in 1930, events in India had rendered it obsolete. Yet the views expressed by Simon continued to hem in the discussions in the next round of Indian constitutional negotiations: the Indian Round Table Conferences. During the initial Round Table Conference in January 1931, the subcommittee charged with the role of the Indian Army in the proposed Indian federation was prohibited from discussing the issue of control over India's defence. Instead, the subcommittee, which included the future Secretary of State for India, Samuel Hoare and the future founder of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, was charged with discussing the speed of Indianization among the Indian Army's officer corps and the foundation of an Indian military academy.[15] The British still hoped that if they appeared to concede on these smaller issues it would deflect attention from the larger question of control over the Army in India. [16]

Changing conceptions of the Frontier threat, 1930–1934

In the opening years of the 1930s, the British continued to believe that the defence of India from tribal, Afghan, and Soviet incursions remained the premier responsibility of the Indian Army. Moreover, these old threats were now joined by the new specter of Indian nationalism. The Red Shirts and Frontier nationalism certainly posed a risk to the British regime on the Frontier, but questions remained as to whether it was on the same level as the external threats that preoccupied the British. Moreover, there was the additional question of whether the old fears of Russia, Afghanistan, and the tribes were still legitimate in a time of immense change. Although the Government of India and the Frontier administration had initially believed that Abdul Ghaffar Khan's nationalist movement on the Frontier was affiliated with or bankrolled

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[14] *All Parties Conference, Report of the Committee appointed by the Conference to Determine the Principles of the Constitution for India: Together with a Summary of the Proceedings of the Conference Held at Lucknow* (Allahabad, 1928), pp. 12–13 and pp. 120–121.

[15] *Indian Round Table Conference: 12 November 1930–19 January 1931, Proceedings of Sub-Committees* (London, 1931), p. 291.

[16] Indian Round Table Conference: Draft Statement by His Majesty's Government (Circulated by Direction of the Prime Minister), 13 January 1931, TNA CAB 24/219.

by Moscow, by June 1930 the authorities in both Peshawar and Simla had concluded that the Red Shirts were in fact home-grown and, in July, London confirmed the speculation, concluding that it was "most unlikely that any successful charge can be brought against the Soviet Government, or even against the Comintern."[17]

Many in the Political Service and the Army, however, continued to harbor fears about a potential fantastic mix of nationalism, Bolshevik propaganda, Afghan influence, and Islamic fanaticism in the tribal areas. Yet by 1931, Afghanistan, the central pivot of potential unrest on the Frontier and the preeminent threat to stability of the trans-border region had ceased to be a legitimate problem. After the overthrow of the Afghan King, Amanullah, in October 1928, an ethnic Tajik, Habibullah Ghazi, known as the "Bandit King," seized power and held much of the country by June 1929. The Pathan-dominated eastern and southern portions of Afghanistan remained outside his control, however, and by late summer numerous Pathan tribes had rallied to General Nadir Khan, a cousin of the deposed Amanullah. After a large contingent of Wazir tribesmen from the British side of the Durand Line joined his forces, Nadir successfully attacked the capital. Habibullah Ghazi fled, and on 16 October Nadir was proclaimed King of Afghanistan.[18] After the difficult ten-year reign of Amanullah and the chaotic ten-month reign of Habibullah, the British hoped that Nadir Shah (as Nadir Khan became upon his accession) would bring stability to Afghanistan. In tandem with this hope was the desire that Nadir would set himself up as a friendly power – someone with whom the British could do business. The new King quickly sought to fulfill these expectations, assuring the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, that he had no intention of continuing the pro-Soviet and anti-British policies of Amanullah.[19]

The British had evacuated their legation in Kabul in February 1929 at the height of the Afghan Civil War, but in May 1930 British and Indian personnel returned under the leadership of the new British Minister, the Indian Political officer (and noted ornithologist), Richard Maconachie. Maconachie, who had recently witnessed the collapse of the Frontier administration while waiting to take up his new post, took an immediate liking to Nadir Shah.[20] The conspicuous absence

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[17] Extract from Moscow Despatch No. 374, 1 July 1930, IOR L P&S 12/3122.
[18] Note of the Rebellion on Afghanistan from 1 July 1929 to the Accession of Nadir Shah, 16 November 1929, TNA FO 371/13992.
[19] Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, 13 March 1930, Halifax Papers C152/6.
[20] Richard Maconachie (HMG Minister, Kabul) to Arthur Henderson (Foreign Secretary, HMG), 23 May 1930, TNA FO 402/12.

of Afghan involvement in the tribal "disturbances" that accompanied the nationalist rising in the NWFP fortified these impressions. Based on Maconachie's assessment, both the British Foreign Office and the India Office came to see Nadir as an ally. Officials in the India Office noted that it seemed certain that the friendly attitude of the Afghan government was by no means a "blind," but dictated by "a keen appreciation of their own interests and also by a genuine dislike and distrust of the Soviet." Moreover, they believed that Nadir took the long view that the continuation of the "British Raj in India is in the interests of Afghanistan," as they surmised by comments the King had made to Maconachie about the Civil Disobedience movement in India.[21] Nadir stated:

> That it was only the support of HMG [His Majesty's Government] through a British Government of India which enabled Afghanistan to resist political or military penetration from Bolshevik Russia. The inevitable result of self-government for India, if granted while the policy of Russia remained what it now was, would be that first Afghanistan, and then India herself, would be dismembered by the Soviets, and ultimately absorbed by Russia.[22]

Maconachie reported in 1931 that despite Abdul Ghaffar's attempts to gain support among the trans-border tribesmen, Nadir's lieutenants were doing everything in their power to keep Red Shirt emissaries away from the Afghan tribes.[23]

Nadir's actions as he consolidated his power over Afghanistan in 1930 and 1931 suggest that Maconachie's optimistic view was correct. In the wake of Amanullah's attempts at modernization with limited Bolshevik support in the 1920s, Nadir saw the Soviet Union as a potentially destabilizing force. The King was concerned about Indian nationalism for two reasons in particular: the Frontier nationalist decision to support the claims of the ex-King Amanullah, and the belief that a weak "Congress Raj" would be unable to prevent their own tribesmen from crossing the Durand Line and undermining the regime in Kabul.[24] The last point was particularly salient since Nadir owed his throne to

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[21] India Office Note on Relations with Afghanistan, 1931 IOR PO 5/23.

[22] Despatch from HMG Minister, Kabul, to Foreign Secretary, HMG, London, 6 March 1930, IOR L P&S 12/3155.

[23] Telegram from Maconachie to Foreign Department, Government of India, 25 June 1931, L P&S 12/3155.

[24] Viceroy to Secretary of State (Viscount Peel), 14 February 1929, FO 371/13992.

the Wazir tribesmen that had joined his forces in September 1929.[25] Nadir wanted an alliance with the British and both his actions and his interests supported the notion that his regime would remain stable and friendly.

This conclusion was difficult for many in the Political Service to accept. Most Frontier officers believed they had spent their careers foiling Afghan perfidy, and the idea that Afghanistan was now a friendly power above Russian/Soviet influence was almost unfathomable. Sir Evelyn Howell, the Government of India's Foreign Secretary, and John Walton, the Political Secretary in the India Office, both believed that a "pro-Amanullah rebellion was likely to break out." In this event, "Russia's support would either be secret or open." Since the "line between aggression by an invading force and aggression by open and unconcealed support of a rebel army seems to be a thin one," this would put Britain in the position of going to war with the Soviet Union.[26] With this sort of scenario in mind, men like Howell saw any form of alliance with Afghanistan as folly due to the general unreliability and dishonesty of the Afghans.

Maconachie saw no reason to withhold full support from the new Afghan regime, and many were prepared to follow the lead of the man on the spot. Howell, more inclined towards generalization and possessing the Frontier officer's natural distrust of Kabul, fought Maconachie vigorously.[27] A bitter dispute over Britain's approach to Afghanistan arose between the two men, both of whom were ill for months at a time in 1931–1932, Howell from exhaustion and Maconachie with dysentery.[28] In London, Walton chalked this dispute up to the Government of India's (and the Political Service's) resistance to recognizing new factors in Afghanistan. Walton believed that the new Afghan regime was a radical departure from Amanullah's, and cited "the present Afghan Govt.'s anti-Russian complex (it is hardly too strong a word), which must inevitably incline them to a policy of friendship with H.M.G." For his part, Maconachie believed that Howell and other Political officers were tied to the past. He thought that most of his fellow Politicals "always regard the Afghan factor in their Frontier problem as the same

[25] Extract from Annual Report on Afghanistan, 1931, L P&S 12/3155.
[26] J. C. Walton to Sir Evelyn Howell, 7 April 1932, Walton Papers IOR D545/6.
[27] Private Letter from General Sir Sydney Muspratt to Sir Malcolm Seton (Deputy Undersecretary of State for India), 6 May 1932, L PO 5/23.
[28] Letter from Eric Mieville (Private Secretary to the Viceroy) to W. D. Croft (Deputy Undersecretary of State for India), 25 April 1932, L PO 5/23, and Howell to Walton, 10 September 1931, Walton Papers D545/6.

as it always has been," and, as a result, their policy prescriptions were insufficiently adaptable.[29] Maconachie was therefore asking not only for a reassessment of the Afghan question, but a whole new approach to the nature of the Frontier problem.

Ultimately, the entire question of how the new Afghan regime should be handled rested on the "Soviet threat" to Afghanistan and the Indian Frontier. Maconachie argued that while the Soviet Union remained a major threat to Afghan stability, the fact that the Soviet Union had done nothing to spread revolution during the upheavals of 1928–1929 meant that perhaps the Russians were, as Indian nationalists incessantly claimed, something of a phantasm.[30] Support for Nadir would therefore encourage the integrity of Afghanistan without unduly provoking the Soviets.[31] Officials in India, however, continued to suspect that despite all evidence to the contrary, "Red-Shirt agitators," Congress sympathizers, and Bolshevik intriguers were "closely connected with one another."[32] These suspicions were accompanied by a genuine fear of growing Russian influence in the tribal areas.

As early as July 1930, the Resident in Waziristan, Ralph Griffith, noted the large number of gold Russian Rubles in circulation on the Frontier. Rubles were not in public circulation in Afghanistan, he argued, and could have only come from Bolshevik agents.[33] These reports were followed by flimsy claims of "Bolshevik intrigue" by the intelligence services on the Frontier in 1931 and 1932.[34] Based on rumors, officials continually reported that "Soviet agents" were combing the North-West Frontier, searching for "soft-spots" where they could "engender and propagate their principles of revolt" among the trans-border tribes. Since the "fanatical" Pathan had a natural antipathy to Bolshevism, the solution to this threat, many argued, was a propaganda campaign stressing the fact that these inducements to revolt were orchestrated

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[29] Confidential Note by J. C. Walton, 5 May 1932, L PO 5/23.
[30] Yusufi, *The Frontier Tragedy*, p. 11.
[31] Despatch from Maconachie to His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Sir John Simon), 20 March 1933, L PO 5/23.
[32] A Summary of Bolshevik Intrigue in Dir, Swat, and Bajaur from the 1 November 1931 to the 31 December 1932, IOR L P&S 12/3186.
[33] Secret Memorandum from Political Agent, South Waziristan (Major C. E. U. Bremner) to the Resident in Waziristan (Griffith), 14 June 1930, L P&S 12/3122.
[34] On the Soviet side there is little to support these contentions. See, for example, Milan Hauner, *What is Asia to Us?: Russia's Asian Heartland Yesterday and Today* (Boston, 1990).

by the "oppressors of Islam beyond the Oxus," and one was launched in 1932.[35]

The principal force behind the anti-Bolshevik propaganda campaign in the tribal tracts was Sir Ralph Griffith, now Governor of the NWFP. Writing in the spring of 1932, Griffith informed Aubrey Metcalfe, who was serving as Indian Foreign Secretary while Howell was on leave, that Bolshevik agents had recently been intercepted carrying Rs. 4,000/- (£270) across the border and that there were "innumerable reports" of secret meetings between tribesmen and Communist agents. In the midst of his campaign to destroy the Red Shirts in the administered districts on the Frontier, the Governor suggested a wide-scale propaganda campaign premised on the plight of the Bokharan refugees from the Soviet Union who had immigrated to the tribal belt. Griffith noted that, along with the dissemination of poetry describing Bolshevik atrocities against Muslims in Central Asia, "money speaks" and asked Metcalfe if the Government of India would be willing to pay for such a campaign.[36]

Metcalfe liked the idea, as did the Indian General Staff. The plan, which was estimated to cost Rs. 20,000/- (£1,333) a year, was forwarded for approval from London.[37] The Secretary of State, Sir Samuel Hoare, cabled his permission in October, and the scheme commenced.[38] Within the year, however, officials in London were beginning to harbor doubts about the efficacy of Griffith's propaganda campaign. Walton, in the India Office, had originally supported the plan, but he now believed that there was little evidence of Bolshevik activity on the Frontier.[39] Walton's new skepticism was shared by Metcalfe, who, upon Howell's retirement on grounds of ill health in January 1933, took the reins as Foreign Secretary in Simla.[40] Metcalfe was less dogmatic than Howell,

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[35] A Summary of Bolshevik Intrigue in Dir, Swat, and Bajaur.

[36] Sir Ralph Griffith (Governor, NWFP) to Aubrey Metcalfe (Foreign Secretary, Government of India), 27 May 1932, IOR L P&S 12/3169.

[37] Metcalfe to Griffith, 18 June 1932, L P&S 12/3169 and Government of India, Foreign and Political Department, to Secretary of State for India, 15 September 1932, L P&S 12/3169.

[38] Hoare to the Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, 13 October 1932, L P&S 12/3169.

[39] Walton to Metcalfe, 27 August 1932, Walton Papers D545/9 and Note by J. C. Walton, 22 October 1933, L P&S 12/3169.

[40] Metcalfe to Walton, 30 January 1933, Walton Papers D545/9. Howell, though past the age of retirement in 1933, enjoyed another 35 years of health, living to the age of 94, comfortable in the sinecure of a fellowship at Emanuel College, Cambridge. Howell eventually concluded that the Afghan regime was friendly, but still doubted whether it had staying power (Sir Evelyn Howell, KCSI, CSI,

who tended towards paranoia when it came to the Soviet Union, and had begun to have doubts about the actual Bolshevik threat to the Frontier.[41] He believed that the Government of India was far too much under the influence of the General Staff, which, he argued, tended to exaggerate the dangers of both Afghanistan and the Soviet Union.[42] Although the scheme was implemented for over a year, the Government of India ended the campaign in March 1934, amid fears that the funds were being secretly pocketed by Griffith's Indian staff.[43]

That the Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, agreed to end Griffith's program was indicative of a wider change within the Government of India at the time. Unlike previous Viceroys, such as Irwin, who accepted the prevailing attitudes about the Frontier threat as a truism, Willingdon harbored misgivings about the Frontier mindset of both the Army and the Political Service. Writing to Hoare, the Viceroy noted:

> It is so difficult to make the political people, who have been in control for so long, feel that conditions have altered up there very much during the last 20 years and that, from an international point of view, with regard to Afghanistan and Russia, they must take a wider outlook than they have in the past. But that is the real problem: they try and carry on just the same as in the days of George Roos-Keppel.[44]

Willingdon believed – like Maconachie – that the nature of the threat on the Frontier had changed, especially since Amanullah's ousting in 1928. Yet the Viceroy was a conservative. He had no patience for Congress and was convinced that nationalist control of India's foreign and military policy would be catastrophic. In discussing India's future he fell back on the Soviet threat:

"Some Problems of the Indian Frontier," in the *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, 22, 3 (1934), pp. 181–198.

[41] See Evelyn B. Howell to Sir Denys Bray, 27 June 1927, IOR L P&S 10/1152. For an idea of Metcalfe's geopolitical thinking, see Sir Aubrey Metcalfe, "India's Foreign Relations Now and in the Future," in *International Affairs*, 21, 4 (1945), pp. 485–496.

[42] Metcalfe to Walton, 25 December 1933, Walton Papers D545/9; and Metcalfe to Walton, 20 March 1934, Walton Papers D545/9.

[43] See Memorandum from the Chief Secretary, Government of North-West Frontier Province (Olaf K. Caroe), 4 October 1933, L P&S 12/3169; Metcalfe to Griffith, 30 March 1934, L P&S 12/3169; and Metcalfe to Walton, 25 June 1934, Walton Papers D545/9.

[44] Willingdon to Hoare, 26 June 1933, Templewood Papers IOR E240/5.

> We do, however, feel that any slackening of control by the Central Government over the Frontier administration of India, which may result from the impending constitutional changes, will afford additional opportunities to the Soviet Government for introducing hostile propaganda into this country. The Soviet will not be slow to take advantage of such opportunities.[45]

This point was complemented by dire warnings about possible tribal combinations descending onto the Indian plains.

The White Paper, Indian Empire Society, and the 1935 India Act

The "constitutional changes" the Viceroy spoke of were the ongoing negotiations over what would become the Government of India Act, 1935. The attempt to find a federal settlement for India at the three Round Table Conferences of 1930–1932 had ended in failure and by the close of the final conference on Christmas Eve, 1932, the Conservative-dominated British Cabinet had hammered out their own federal scheme for India.[46] Spearheaded by the Secretary of State for India, Sir Samuel Hoare, this plan, which became a White Paper entitled *Proposals for Indian Constitutional Reform* in March 1933, called for greater Indian control over the provinces and a federal government at the center. Foreign and defence policies would remain a reserved subject under the Viceroy, and finances would be rigorously policed by Indian Civil Service mandarins. With the White Paper in hand, Hoare appointed a Joint Parliamentary Select Committee in the spring of 1933 to begin the parliamentary phase of what would become the Government of India Act.[47]

Despite the many safeguards included in any scheme for a federal India, there were many, especially retired Indian Army and Political Service personnel, who were strongly opposed to any further constitutional reform in India. These concessions were viewed as total surrender to Congress "tyranny." The opposition to Indian reform began in 1930 after the outbreak of Civil Disobedience and the realization

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[45] Government of India Despatch No. 1 to the Secretary of State for India: Re-Examination of the Conclusions Contained in the Report of the Defence of India Subcommittee of 19 December 1927, 5 June 1933, L PO 5/23.

[46] Bridge, *Holding India to the Empire*, p. 86.

[47] See *Proposals for Indian Constitutional Reform (Cmd. 4268)* (London, 1933).

that the Simon recommendations were a dead letter. From the beginning, resistance to reform was influenced by long-standing beliefs about the Congress's inability to manage the Empire's most vital land Frontier. The chief vehicle for the anti-reform agitation was the Indian Empire Society (IES), founded in 1930 by the former Frontier officer and Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, Sir Michael O'Dwyer. The IES was a die-hard organization of retired soldiers and Indian Civil Servants, churchmen, and Rudyard Kipling, that viewed the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms as folly and advocated direct British rule over India, preferably with an iron fist. While this antediluvian aspect of the society was, as one historian dubbed it, an exercise in "imperial quixotry," the IES also fought any further attempt at Indian reform.[48] The society gained a staunch ally and parliamentary leadership when Winston Churchill who, having shed his earlier liberal views on British rule in India which were characterized by his assault on General Dyer in 1920, and decided to nail his colors to the mast of diehard opposition to Indian reform, joined in October 1930. Over the next five years, a period subsequently referred to as Churchill's "wilderness years," the future prime minister became the principal opponent of the Indian reform bill.[49]

Churchill's personal experience of India consisted of a short stint in, as he described it, this "land of bores and snobs," as a 22-year-old subaltern in 1896–1897.[50] Most of Churchill's time in India was spent within the confines of an officers' mess in Bangalore, but in August 1897 he was invited to visit the Frontier as a press correspondent. There he was to report on the major revolt that had broken out in the Malakand tribal agency. At last the young Churchill, like countless British officers before and after him, had the opportunity to "see a bit of action" in the form of Frontier warfare. The uprising was put down by the fall of 1897 and Churchill left the Frontier at the end of October, but his time there had made a lasting impression. Churchill wrote his first of many books, *The Story of the Malakand Field Force*, about his experiences on the Frontier and came away with clear ideas about the nature of the Pathan, whom he viewed as bloodthirsty and uncivilized. It is telling that he opened his book with a quote by Lord Salisbury stating that Frontier wars were "but the surf that marks the edge and the advance of the wave of

[48] Bridge, *Holding India*, pp. 48–49.
[49] See Martin Gilbert, *Winston Churchill: The Wilderness Years* (London, 1981).
[50] Churchill to his mother, quoted in Martin Gilbert, *Churchill: A Life* (New York, 1991), p. 65.

civilization."[51] Churchill, who had experienced very little of India, save the North-West Frontier, was to extend this idea of civilization to the whole of British rule over India, as he battled against Indian constitutional reform alongside the "bores and snobs."

Churchill and his colleagues in the IES fought the process of Indian reform throughout the Round Table conferences. But it was only after the publication of the White Paper and the announcement of the Joint Parliamentary Committee that the IES and its parliamentary sister organization, the Indian Defence League (IDL), swung into ardent action. Assisted by the timely appearance of Katherine Mayo's *Mother India*, which portrayed India in a scandalous and "uncivilized" light, the IES, IDL, and their allies in the press began a concerted propaganda campaign designed to portray India as backward, uncivilized, and thoroughly unprepared to take up the reins of its own governance.[52] Much of this propaganda was boilerplate, focusing on the most salacious and "effeminate" aspects of Hindu or Indian society. In his *The Underworld of India*, one of the most prolific authors in this vein, the former Quartermaster General of the Indian Army, Lieutenant-General Sir George Fletcher MacMunn, argued that in India "anything and everything that deals with sex, procreation, union and human passion is worshipped and glorified."[53] Yet much of the material also emphasized the threat posed to this weak and effeminate India by the Frontier and its "lawless" Pathan population. A striking example of this was in the Rothermere press's *Daily Mail 1934 India Blue Book*, which featured a photograph of a Pathan with the caption "Ever ready to plunder the Indian plains – a North-West frontier mountaineer."[54] True to his status as a soldier, MacMunn, who as a retiree wrote an astonishing 35 books between 1925 and 1940, tended to focus on the relationship between the Frontier, India, and the survival of the British Empire. In volumes such as *Turmoil and Tragedy in India* (1935) and *The Romance of the Indian Frontiers* (1931), he posited that the trans-border tribesmen dreamt of descending upon the Indian plains to rape and pillage the populace. The only thing that prevented them from attaining this goal was the knowledge that they would have to confront a British-led Indian Army.

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[51] Winston S. Churchill, *The Story of the Malakand Field Force* (London, 1898), Front Matter and pp. 17–19.
[52] See Katherine Mayo, *Mother India* (New York, 1927) and Mrinali Sinha, *Specters of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of India* (Durham, North Carolina, 2006).
[53] Lieutenant-General Sir George Fletcher MacMunn, *The Underworld of India* (London, 1933), p. 272.
[54] Daily Mail, *The Daily Mail 1934 India Blue Book* (London, 1934), p. 40.

MacMunn argued that there was a clear lesson from the tribal uprising of 1919: the evacuation of posts in Waziristan had led to a full-scale war. Now the British appeared to be surrendering to the Congress "revolutionaries" over the whole of India. MacMunn argued that the floodgates of anarchy would open and give the tribesmen *carte blanche* to invade India.[55]

The IES chose MacMunn to provide expert testimony before the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform in October 1933. Here the retired General repeated his charges about the Frontier and India, arguing that the Red Shirt movement in the NWFP resulted from the removal of a strong hand. Rumors that the British were leaving, MacMunn claimed, not only led to tribal incursions into Peshawar, but also resulted in "rebellion" throughout the settled districts. The introduction of greater democracy in India would remove this deterrent to chaos altogether.[56]

The Frontier was in fact a principal concern of the IES delegation to the Joint Parliamentary Committee. The delegation was led by Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Bruce, a veteran Frontier officer who had served as Resident in Waziristan and ended his Indian career in 1931 as Chief Commissioner of Baluchistan. The IES comprised several thousand members, including dozens of members of parliament, peers of the realm, and high-ranking retired military officers. That a Frontier veteran was given center stage in this testimony speaks to the importance that many of these staunch opponents to Indian reform placed on the effect constitutional change would have on Frontier defence.[57]

Bruce's Frontier roots went deep. His father, Richard Bruce, had served under the legendary Robert Sandeman in Baluchistan in the 1870s and had become one of the first disciples of the "Sandeman system." In the 1890s, Richard Bruce served as Commissioner for Derajat (in charge of Waziristan), and attempted to apply the Sandeman system to Waziristan, but the *malik*s that Bruce created among the Wazirs and Mahsuds were unable

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[55] Lieutenant-General Sir George MacMunn, *Turmoil and Tragedy in India: 1914 and After* (London, 1935), Chapters 12 through 15 and Lieutenant-General Sir George MacMunn, *The Romance of the Indian Frontiers* (London, 1931), Chapter 10.

[56] *Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform [Session 1932–1933], Volume 2C: Minutes of Evidence* (London, 1934), p. 1737, NMML.

[57] For the Indian Empire Society, see Bridge, *Holding India*, Muldoon, *Empire,* and Philip Williamson, *National Crisis and National Government: British Politics, the Economy and Empire, 1926–1932* (Cambridge, 1992).

to exercise control over their tribal sections.[58] Charles Bruce followed in his father's footsteps and throughout his career continually urged the Government of India to adhere to a Sandeman system in Waziristan.[59] Bruce's pervasive conviction about the need for the Sandeman system in Waziristan translated into a strong belief in the need for force and a strong British presence on the Frontier in general. As such, he could not countenance any devolution of British power in India. Bruce's unrelenting support for Sandemanization made him something of a crank, but he was an influential crank, as witnessed by the IES's decision to have him lead the delegation to the Joint Committee on Indian Reform.[60] Bruce had been one of the few Frontier officers to have anticipated the Red Shirt movement as early as 1929. Like Disraeli, Bruce believed that "in politics experiments mean revolution." But, "experiments, which, in India proper may be merely dangerous, on the frontier are more than likely to lead to disaster, for this has lately been described as 'one of the few places on the earth's surface where we British can take a knockout blow.'"[61] The Frontier was the one area of India where a "firm administration" was most important. The proposed reforms threatened to undermine British authority and expose India to tribal assault and Bolshevik propaganda.

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[58] See Richard I. Bruce, CIE, *The Forward Policy and Its Results or Thirty-Five Years' Work Amongst the Tribes on Our North-Western Frontier of India* (London, 1900), p. 325 and Sir Olaf Caroe, *The Pathans, 550BC–AD1957* (London, 1958), p. 399.
[59] See, for instance, Charles E. Bruce, Answers to Tribal Control and Defence (Howell) Committee Questionnaire, 1931, Bruce Papers IOR F163/61.
[60] See Lieutenant-Colonel Charles E. Bruce, CSI, CIE, CBE, OBE (Late AGG Baluchistan), "The Sandeman Policy as Applied to Tribal Problems of To-Day," in the *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, 19, 1 (1932), pp. 45–67; Lieutenant-Colonel Charles E. Bruce, *Waziristan, 1936–1937: The Problems of the North-West Frontiers of India and Their Solutions* (Aldershot, 1938); and Charles E. Bruce, "Speech to the East India Association: The Indian Frontier Problem," *The Asiatic Review*, 35 (1939), pp. 492–515. Bruce was extremely doctrinaire – to the point of making Sandeman's policy into a sort of personal golden calf. He was a gifted Frontier officer, but this ideological rigidity, combined with an inclination towards complaining about his position and pay, seems to have hurt his career. He was one of the few Residents in Waziristan to receive neither a Knight Commander of the Star of India (KCSI) nor a Knight Commander of the Indian Empire (KCIE) and his final appointment, as Chief Commissioner in Baluchistan, was an officiating, rather than permanent, position. He got under people's skin (see Irwin to Wedgwood Benn, 30 June 1930, Halifax Papers C152/6; and Letter from Sir Philip Chetwode to Bruce, 4 January 1938, Bruce Papers IOR F163/65).
[61] Two Typescript copies of "India's Ramparts" by Lieutenant-Colonel Charles E. Bruce, CSI, CIE, OBE, Late AGG Baluchistan and sometime Resident in Waziristan, no date, Bruce Papers IOR F163/66.

Bruce, who also wrote a number of articles on the Frontier and All-India reform for the IES's in-house journal, the *Indian Empire Review*, brought these views to his testimony before Parliament.[62] In a memorandum to the committee he wrote:

> I think it will be admitted that the most vulnerable portion of the great Indian Empire is its north-west frontiers, for these are the very ramparts of the City of India, and if the ramparts fall, the City must fall also. If that be true, then it may equally well be so that on the true solution of the frontier problem in its relationship with India proper, may rest the fate of this great subcontinent.

Bruce queried, however, whether the Frontier had been taken into sufficient consideration. He maintained that Frontier defence had been ignored, and that political considerations were being taken in spite of what Indian control of the Frontier would mean to the security of the people of India. For Bruce, the extension of reforms as laid out in the White Paper was simply a version of the close border policy writ large. Just as the tribesmen in the hills saw any sign of weakness as tantamount to a British surrender, so the Congressmen in the plains would view the passing of new constitutional reforms as a massive capitulation, inviting further upheaval and the destruction of Britain's interests in the east. This catastrophe, Bruce warned, would fall most harshly on India's "silent millions" who had labored under ever-widening Congress "tyranny" since the introduction of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms in 1919.[63]

The former Frontier officer wrapped up his memorandum with the ominous warning that the tribesmen on the Frontier were waiting and watching, as they had always done, for the slightest signs of weakness

[62] Lieutenant-Colonel Charles E. Bruce, CSI, CIE, OBE, "Frontier Conditions," in *The Indian Empire Review*, 1 (1932), pp. 24–28; Lieutenant-Colonel Charles E. Bruce, CSI, CIE, OBE, "The Ramparts of the City of India: It's North-West Frontiers, Parts1 & 2," in *The Indian Empire Review*, 4 (1935), pp. 141–148 and pp. 186–192; and Lieutenant-Colonel Charles E. Bruce, CSI, CIE, OBE, "The Mohmands, Parts 1 & 2," in *The Indian Empire Review*, 5 (1936), pp. 16–26, and pp. 53–62. Similar arguments about the peril of All-India reforms on the Frontier were being made at this time by another former Resident in Waziristan, Sir William Barton, in the *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*.

[63] Lieutenant-Colonel Charles E. Bruce, CSI, CIE, OBE, "Memorandum" in *Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform [Session 1932–1933], Volume 2C: Minutes of Evidence* (London, 1934), pp. 1688–1696.

on the part of the authorities. As another Political officer, whom Bruce quoted, had observed about Arabia:

> Let the central authority for whatever cause become weak and the fringe celebrates it with an orgy of self will, for the tribesman, with his rifle at his side, is governable only so long as he is convinced of his ruler's power and will to govern, as well as that ruler's desire for his welfare.[64]

Bruce faced a skeptical audience of Lords and MPs, many of whom, like the former and future Viceroys, Lords Irwin and Linlithgow, were decidedly in favor of reforms on the subcontinent. Under questioning, neither Bruce nor his colleagues, such as MacMunn, performed well. Bruce admitted that, although he was charged with addressing the All-India ramifications of adoption of the White Paper, the Frontier was the only element he truly knew.[65] On numerous questions, his first response was to ask "On the Frontier?" Even when it came to the Frontier, however, Bruce's reasoning, premised on the theory that the 1919 reforms had led to chaos, ran into trouble. Earl Winterton, whom Bruce had escorted throughout the Frontier in 1927, asked him if he was happy with the present state of tribal relations in Waziristan and elsewhere. Bruce replied in the affirmative. Winterton countered that this happy state of affairs was taking place since the 1919 reforms. Beaten, Bruce could only reply that his inquisitor was correct.[66] Ultimately the IES witnesses turned in a poor performance before a committee that had little patience for many of their arguments.[67] The faulty logic of many of their claims and the wholly unrealistic goal of turning back the clock on Montagu-Chelmsford doomed their enterprise. Churchill, Bruce, and

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[64] Bruce Memorandum in *Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform*, p. 1696. Bruce was quoting the Political Officer Bertram Thomas in Thomas's *Alarms and Excursions in Arabia* (London, 1931), p. 216.

[65] *Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform [Session 1932–1933], Volume 2C: Minutes of Evidence*, p. 1705.

[66] *Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform [Session 1932–1933], Volume 2C: Minutes of Evidence*, pp. 1713–1714.

[67] For a discussion of the composition of the Joint Committee and the different members' views on Indian reform, see Bridge, *Holding India*, p. 97. See also Arthur Berriedale Keith, *A Constitutional History of India, 1600–1935* (London, 1936), p. 308.

other diehards on India went down to defeat, and the Joint Committee signed their report in favor of the White Paper in October 1934.[68]

In the course of coming to their conclusions, however, the Joint Committee also heard from other diehard voices, and some of these enjoyed far greater success in their testimony. Among these other witnesses was Field Marshal Sir Claud Jacob, one-time Commander-in-Chief in India, and former Military Secretary to the India Office. Born in India and a veteran of many Frontier wars, Jacob was a reactionary of the first order who served on the executive committee of the IES. Both physically and in attitude, Jacob bore a striking resemblance to cartoonist David Low's "Colonel Blimp." It was Jacob who had informed the Simon Commission in 1929 that the moment an Indian learned to read, he became "effeminate."[69] He was the sort of Englishman who saw the storm of another Indian Mutiny gathering on every horizon, and believed that Indian reform meant that the British had lost confidence in themselves, which would have catastrophic implications on the Frontier, where the tribes would "lose faith" in the British as well.[70] Although the unorthodox Indian Commander-in-Chief, Sir Philip Chetwode, thought Jacob talked "a great deal of nonsense," Hoare invited the Field Marshal to give the sole expert testimony on the defence of India before the Committee.[71]

During his *in camera* testimony in February 1934, Jacob railed against the Indianization of the armed forces, stating that the Indian Army was incapable of producing Indian leaders.[72] One of his reasons for this supposed incapability was striking in view of his earlier testimony to the Simon Commission about Indians and the relationship between reading and "effeminancy." He argued that "they [Indians] are so illiterate that they cannot study the art of war."[73] Jacob was sufficiently opposed to

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[68] *Report and Proceedings of the Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform* [Session 1933–1934] (London, 1934), NMML.
[69] Field Marshal Sir Claud Jacob, Testimony to the Indian Statutory Commission, 20 June 1929, Simon Papers F77/56.
[70] See Forward by Sir Michael O'Dwyer and Sir Claud Jacob to Bruce, *Waziristan 1936–1937*, p. v. Citing the experience of the Indian Mutiny, Jacob opposed any suggestion that Indian Army units be allowed to possess artillery (Note by Field Marshal Sir Claud Jacob, 26 November 1929, L PO 4/17).
[71] Letter from Sir Philip Chetwode to Sir Findlater Stewart (Permanent Undersecretary of State for India), 7 September 1933, Permanent Under-Secretaries of State for India Papers IOR D714/17.
[72] Memorandum by S. K. Brown (Military Secretary to the India Office) on Testimony of Sir Claud Jacob, February 1934, IOR L MIL 5/886.
[73] Notes by Sir Samuel Hoare on Testimony by Sir Claud Jacob.

the future constitution as well. He claimed that the proposed reforms could lead to an armed Muslim combination against the new "Hindu Raj" at the center. The Muslims could no longer be trusted. His primary evidence for all these predictions were the events that had taken place on the North-West Frontier since 1930, including the fraternization between villagers and Afridi *lashkars*. Under questioning, however, Jacob had to acquiesce, admitting that a Muslim confederation constituting a serious threat to India from the North West could only arise if the administration of India "failed signally" in the duties imposed on it by the new constitution.[74]

Jacob did make good headway when it came to another aspect of his testimony: the external threats to India and the need to maintain firm British control over the Indian Army. The Field Marshal asserted that Afghanistan was very likely to disintegrate at any moment and that a war with a Soviet-allied Afghanistan was also a distinct possibility.[75] No matter what, the new constitution would have to reserve defence for the Crown. Neither Hoare nor other members of the Joint Committee challenged these conclusions.[76] The fact of the matter was that Hoare and the Conservative-dominated British Cabinet were willing to insist on the reservation of defence, because they, like some leftist critics such as George Orwell, knew that the Indian Army was "the ultimate instrument of control" in India and therefore needed to remain "completely in [British] hands."[77] For the British, the key to this argument was neither internal "aid to civil" nor the use of Indian forces overseas, both of which could be torn apart quickly by Indian politicians of all stripes, but Frontier defence. On this key point, Jacob was preaching to the choir.

What is interesting, however, is that, like Willingdon, Hoare seriously doubted whether the Afghan/Soviet threat was still a genuine menace to Afghanistan or the Indian Empire. Nor was Afghanistan likely to turn on India. He told Sir Findlater Stewart, the India Office's Permanent Undersecretary of State, that he could "never understand why the land forces on the frontier should be greater today [1932] than they were

[74] Memorandum by S. K. Brown on Testimony of Sir Claud Jacob.
[75] Maconachie in Kabul and the Foreign Office in London shared the fear that constitutional changes in India would somehow destabilize the Afghan regime (see Draft Telegram from Sir John Simon (Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs) to Sir Richard Maconachie, 31 May 1934, L P&S 12/3155).
[76] Notes by Sir Samuel Hoare on Testimony by Sir Claud Jacob.
[77] Memorandum on Conservative Policy at the Round Table Conference by Sir Samuel Hoare, December 1930, Templewood Papers E240/52.

in 1914." Soviet Russia was "much weaker militarily than Imperial Russia." Moreover, there was a friendly regime in Afghanistan.[78] In late 1934, as the Government of India Bill was winding its way through parliament, Hoare assured his Cabinet colleagues that:

> The policy of the Afghan Government continues to be one of sincere friendship and cooperation with His Majesty's Government, and it is clear that there is no present danger of their adopting a pro-Russian policy or entering into any unwise commitment to Russia as a result of Soviet threats or cajolery.[79]

Thus, the Secretary of State, like Willingdon, who lamented that he could convince neither soldiers nor Political officers that the international situation had changed in the last 20 years, believed that the various threats to India's North-West Frontier had substantially decreased.[80] It seemed that even the tribal threat was receding due to the continued application of the modified forward policy in Waziristan.[81]

Yet the protection of the Frontier still lay at the center of Britain's rationale for maintaining "reserved powers" over India's defence. In the Government of India's memorandum on the reservation of defence and reforms in India, prepared for use in the White Paper, Willingdon and his council argued that previous discussions had focused far too much on the "abstract constitutional aspect" of defence and not taken into account the specific peculiar conditions of the defence of India. These, the Government of India claimed, were found on the Frontier: "the lack of any direct control over our Frontier tribes, of their affinity" for Afghanistan, and the influence of "subversive organizations." War was a constant threat on the Frontier, and had to be dealt with by a

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[78] Note by Sir Samuel Hoare to Sir Findlater Stewart, 25 January 1932, IOR L P&S 12/3143. Sir John Simon, who was then serving as Foreign Secretary in London, agreed with this analysis. Simon wrote to Maconachie, informing him that the Soviet Union was impoverished, weak, and far more concerned about their far-eastern Frontiers with Japan and China than with fomenting revolution in Afghanistan and India (see Sir John Simon to Sir Richard Maconachie, 17 October 1932, L PO 5/23).

[79] Cabinet Memorandum by the Secretary of State for India on Afghanistan, 30 November 1934, IOR L P&S 12/1683. See also Cabinet Memorandum by the Secretary of State for India on Afghanistan, March 1934, L P&S 12/3155.

[80] Willingdon to Hoare, 26 June 1933.

[81] Note by Sir Samuel Hoare to Sir Findlater Stewart, 25 January 1932. See Chapter 1 for description of the modified forward policy in Waziristan.

strong British executive.[82] Despite the fact that the Viceroy and others had doubts about the real threat posed to the Frontier, the majority of officials in India still sincerely believed that the local and international dimensions of the Frontier problem dictated that the British maintain a strong grip on India's defence policies.[83] These opinions, when combined with Britain's long-term strategic concerns East of Suez, meant that when the Government of India Bill was granted the Royal Assent on 2 August 1935, defence remained firmly in British hands.[84]

The Frontier and strategic thinking in the 1930s

Concerns about the Frontier remained crucial to the British retention of the defence portfolio throughout the rest of the 1930s. Chetwode, the Indian Commander-in-Chief from 1930 to 1935, grew increasingly concerned towards the end of his tenure that Indians would, at some point in the future, have control of their own defence establishment. In a secret memorandum to Willingdon, he wrote:

> England cannot afford to let her only land frontier be in any danger whatever of invasion, nor can she afford to see India threatened with chaos for want of an Army and Air Force she can rely on.

These were both imperial necessities and should remain imperial responsibilities. Chetwode continued:

> I suggest that England should declare, when the right time comes and the ground has been carefully prepared, that the 600 miles of frontier from the Malakand to Quetta are an imperial responsibility, and that she will hold this frontier with covering troops . . . constituted as they are now, and not Indianized.

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[82] Government of India Despatch on the Reservation of Defence, 11 July 1932, L MIL 5/886.

[83] For instance, Griffith, in the NWFP, reported in 1934 (after his propaganda campaign had been shuttered) that there was a Soviet "cell" in Chamarkand. Yet even Griffith was increasingly coming to the conclusion that the "tribal problem" on the Frontier was simply a tribal problem, rather than an outgrowth of Soviet influences (See Sir Ralph Griffith to Olaf Caroe (Deputy Foreign Secretary, Government of India), 26 July 1934, L P&S 12/3186).

[84] *A Bill (As Amended in Committee) to Make Further Provision for the Government of India* (London, 1935).

The Commander-in-Chief was suggesting the old strategy of delinking the Frontier from an increasingly political and democratic India, run not by martial races or "the ruling or upper classes" of Indians, but by India's middle classes who, Chetwode argued, were woefully underprepared.[85]

A further outcome of this emphasis on the Frontier in this period was the blinding of the Indian Army leadership to other possible threats: namely the Japanese Empire. Writing in 1936, Lord Linlithgow, the combative peer who had replaced Willingdon as Viceroy, complained that it would not be easy for him to "persuade the soldiers here who have been scanning the North-West Frontier for signs of Russians for so many generations to turn and face S[outh] E[ast]."[86] Although the Indian General Staff did begin discussing the problems of India's Eastern Frontiers, most of their attention remained on the North-West Frontier.[87] London assisted in supporting this approach. Both the Subcommittee (Pownall Subcommittee) charged with examining India's defences and the wider Expert Committee on the Defence of India (Chatfield Committee), which assessed India's military situation in the months before the Second World War, hewed to the line that the Soviet Union was a major threat; that the Afghan regime could change its spots and turn on the British at any moment; and that the North-West Frontier remained the preeminent menace to India's security.[88] This willful disregard for India's eastern Frontiers meant that the Indian General Staff developed a defence plan for that region only in the summer of 1940.[89]

By the end of the decade, the British still maintained that Indian politicians failed to understand the nature of India's defence problems – most notably the problem of the Frontier. The Report of the Expert

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[85] Secret Note by His Excellency the Commander in Chief on the Future Defence of India, 23 October 1935, IOR L PO 4/13. Chetwode's suggestion came to naught, and was seen as totally impractical for future Commanders-in-Chief such as Auchinleck. But the argument that the creation of Pakistan was somehow the natural outgrowth of Britain's duplicitous strategic thinking about the Frontier continues to be made. See, for instance, Narendra Singh Sarila, *The Shadow of the Great Game: The Untold Story of India's Partition* (London, 2006).

[86] Viceroy (Linlithgow) to Secretary of State for India (Marquess of Zetland), 26 April 1936, Linlithgow Papers IOR F125/3.

[87] See General Staff (India) Memorandum on Japanese Aggression Against India, September 1936, TNA WO 106/158.

[88] See Report of the Pownall Sub-Committee and Report of the Chatfield Committee.

[89] See Defence of India Plan, 1941, IOR L WS 1/530.

Committee on the Defence of India, chaired by Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield, who was assisted by the future Indian Commander-in-Chief, Claude Auchinleck, followed this pattern, heaping scorn upon the nationalists. It stated that "the Party" as it mischievously called Congress, showed "either a striking ignorance of the true facts of the position, or a refusal to admit them." Nationalists, and especially the "Hindus" that the Chatfield Committee suggested comprised the entire Congress party, "would find ample opportunity for undermining the constitutional position [of the British] as regards defence."[90] The 1930s saw the Congress party take the levers of power in provincial governments the width and breadth of the subcontinent, including the NWFP, but at the end of the decade the British still maintained that Indian nationalists failed to understand India's defence problems and could not be trusted.

For the British, both in London and in India, the key to India's security in the 1930s still lay on the North-West Frontier. Russia, Afghanistan, and the trans-border tribes continued to be seen as a fundamental menace to the Indian Empire. This had been orthodoxy in 1930, and it remained the basic assumption in 1939. But in 1930, the Frontier was still a land apart, cut off from the rest of India, and rarely brought up in discussions over India's constitutional future. With the rise of Frontier nationalism in the early 1930s, this *purdah* had been lifted. The NWFP was a now an All-India issue. The British had used the security of the Frontier as a fundamental argument against Indian control of the armed forces and defence policy. The sword cut both ways, however, and during the course of the 1930s the British military regime on the Frontier, and especially their policies in the unadministered tribal tracts, became a major component in the Congress's efforts to dislodge the British Raj.

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[90] Report of the Chatfield Committee.

8
"A Welcome Weapon of Criticism": Tribal Policy and Its Discontents, 1930–1939

In the aftermath of the Frontier uprising of 1930, British policies in the settled districts of the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) became a source of heated debate in both India and Britain. Indian nationalists and their allies lambasted the Government of India's use of excessive force in the settled districts of the Frontier, arguing that this illustrated the fundamental violence that underwrote Britain's Indian Empire. This criticism, combined with the magnitude of the nationalist movement on the Frontier, convinced the British administration of the need to extend reforms to the NWFP, which brought the administered districts into the All-India political sphere. No longer a "forbidden land," as one nationalist critic called it, cut off from the rest of India, the Frontier assumed a key role in the constitutional wrangling of the 1930s.[1]

In this process, the settled districts of the Frontier received a number of All-India reforms. The British, however, intended to keep one area of the Frontier completely outside the All-India purview: the tribal agencies. Located outside of "British India," the tribal agencies remained the dominion of the Indian Political Service and the Indian Army, controlled by the Governor of the NWFP in his capacity as Agent to the Governor-General (Viceroy). Situated between the administered districts of the NWFP and the Durand Line, which delineated the international border with Afghanistan, the Raj neither taxed nor administered the tribal agencies. The British presence comprised the Army, Royal Air Force

[1] Allah Bukhsh Yusufi, *The Frontier Tragedy: An Account of the Inhuman Acts of Repression and Terrorism, Blockades, Loot, Incendiarism & Massacres – Through Which the People of the North-West Frontier Province Have Had to Go During the Present Disturbance* (Peshawar, 1930), p. 10.

(RAF), and Political Agents, who were charged with following specific procedures in specific agencies. These procedures ranged from a "close border" policy of non-interference in the Malakand, to the modified "forward" policy premised on military occupation and road construction in Waziristan. All these policies, even relatively recent ones such as that in Waziristan (1919–1922), were hammered out by the British alone, with no input from Indians.

Regardless of specific policy, British management of the tribal areas rested implicitly on a liberal use of force. Soldiers and Political officers operated on the assumption that the Pathan tribes were violent fanatics. Therefore, the only way to "handle them" was with the sword arm of empire. The numerous tribal incursions into the settled districts of the NWFP and the Punjab to raid or kidnap were met with punitive force in the form of an armed column that marched on villages, killed all the livestock, burned the village to the ground and demanded payment as restitution. This policy of "butcher and bolt," as the scholar and critic of Frontier policy Collin Davies called it, had characterized the British stance towards the Frontier tribes since the 1860s.[2] By the 1920s, these methods were often superseded by an all-out assault on "recalcitrant" villages by the RAF, which often lead to even greater destruction. This was the hallmark of what the British euphemistically referred to as "peaceful penetration" in the tribal areas during the inter-war period.

This chapter examines British Frontier policy in the 1920s and 1930s, an era in which the Government of India faced an increasing number of constraints on its freedom of action. By the 1930s, the landscape in which the British operated had changed radically from the political vacuum in which Frontier policy had once been conducted. "Political India" had awakened and was taking an active interest in British actions on the Frontier in general and in the tribal areas in particular. Many nationalists believed that the violent regime that predominated in the tribal agencies not only contributed to Britain's retention of control over India's defences, but was the only reason for India's cripplingly high defence expenditure. Moreover, the Indian, British and international press took a strong interest in British policies on the Frontier, especially the bombing campaigns against the tribesmen, which scandalized liberal opinion in Britain and the United States and was used by Hitler and Mussolini as an example of British hypocrisy. Finally this chapter examines the gradual acknowledgement of this new

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[2] Cuthbert Collin Davies, *The Problem of the North-West Frontier 1890–1908: With a Survey of Policy since 1849* (Cambridge, 1932), p. 27.

"constraint" upon the British administration's ability to construct and implement policy in the tribal agencies. It argues that by the end of the decade many within the Government of India, including the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, agreed with the Governor of the NWFP, Sir George Cunningham, who observed in 1939 that: "Indian public opinion must gradually have more and more of a say in Frontier policy."[3]

Inter-war tribal policy

One of the principal reasons behind Lord Curzon's decision to sever the NWFP from the Punjab was to give the central government a direct hand in the formulation and administration of Frontier policy. Since the Afghan Frontier was the most important land frontier in the British Empire, its administration was considered too vital to be entrusted to a mere provincial governor. With the establishment of the NWFP, both the Government of India and the India Office in London took a leading role in the formulation of tribal policy. Heavily influenced by the military, the new regime developed different approaches to each of the tribal agencies.

In the far north of the province, Chitral and the valleys of Swat and Dir were ruled by reliable autocrats, the Mehtar of Chitral, the Wali of Swat, and the Nawab of Dir, over whom the British could exercise "informal rule" as they did in the Indian Princely States. Further south, in the Malakand tribal agency, the epicenter of the 1897–1898 revolt, the guiding principle behind British policy was a strict adherence to "non-interference." There was a Political Agent and tribal levies but no regular troops. The Mohmand country that lay to the west of the Malakand featured a similar formula.[4] Further south, the Khyber Agency included elements of both the "close border" and the "forward" schools. The areas immediately around the Khyber Pass were patrolled by regular troops who resided in the fort at Landi Kotal, but, away from the roads, the Khyber Agency's Afridi tribesmen retained for all intents and purposes complete independence in their affairs. In the Kurram Agency, nestled along the Afghan Frontier, the British adhered to a close border policy of non-interference. The Army could only enter

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[3] Confidential Note on Frontier Policy for His Excellency the Viceroy by Sir George Cunningham (Governor, NWFP), 20 June 1939, India Office Records (IOR) L P&S 12/3171.

[4] For British views on the Mohmands, roughly analogous to Evelyn Howell's *Mizh* see William Merk, *Report on the Mohmands* (Lahore, 1882).

when invited by the local Political Agent.[5] With the exception of the Mohmand country, where a forward policy was initiated in the early 1930s, these policies, laid down by Curzon and the Indian Foreign and Political Department at the beginning of the twentieth century, changed little in the subsequent decades.[6] In Waziristan, of course, the "modified forward policy" consisting of roads, a large cantonment of British and Indian troops, placed at Razmak and later also at Wana, and, as elsewhere, the payment of allowances, followed the collapse of Curzon's earlier system in the Third Anglo-Afghan War. Yet, although policy in Waziristan was explicitly geared towards a military solution, the Army and the RAF were major components of tribal management in *all* the tribal areas. The British responded to any tribal incursions or signs of unrest with a column of troops or aerial bombardment. More so than anywhere else in the Indian Empire, the British regime in the tribal belt was based on naked force.

Although the 1920s opened with full-scale revolts in the Khyber Agency and Waziristan, by 1922 both of these uprisings had been defeated and the rest of the decade was characterized by an unusual level of peace and stability throughout the Frontier. Tranquility was relative, however, and the 1920s were still punctuated by a number of "incidents." The year 1923 witnessed the notorious "Molly Ellis Case" in which an outlaw band of Afridis from the Tirah attacked the home of a British officer in Kohat, murdered his wife, and abducted his 18-year-old daughter, Molly, whom they held for ransom. She was eventually rescued and the perpetrator's village burned to the ground, but this "outrage" coincided with a number of other, less sensational, attacks on European women in the NWFP, leading to an outcry in the British press about the Government's inability to protect British subjects.[7] Despite these problems, the fact remained that there were few major tribal conflagrations in the 1920s and the only substantial upheaval centered on the Mohmand country situated to the north-west of the Peshawar District in 1927.[8] After a dispute over tribal allowances a local mullah, known as the Faqir of Alingar, declared a *jihad* and attacked

[5] General Staff Memorandum on North-West Frontier Policy, 1 November 1920, IOR L PO 4/4.
[6] Minute by His Excellency General Sir Robert Cassels, KCB, CSI, DSO, ADC, Acting Commander-in-Chief in India, 2 June 1933, IOR L P&S 12/3143.
[7] Deputy Commissioner, Kohat to Chief Commissioner, Peshawar, 19 April 1923, IOR L P&S 10/1062.
[8] Sir William Barton, *India's North-West Frontier* (London, 1939), p. 87.

the Shabqadar fort, which stood directly in the path to Peshawar.[9] The administration acted quickly to stop Alingar's *lashkar* of 600 men. Local RAF aircraft were sent to bomb the *lashkar* and enforce an aerial blockade against the participating villages. This had an immediate effect, and the Faqir's revolt, which had the potential to cause great damage in the settled areas, was brought to an end quickly by this new and increasingly common instrument of control on the Frontier: aerial bombing.[10]

The British first used aeroplanes on the Frontier during the Third Anglo-Afghan War in 1919, when RAF aircraft dropped bombs on Jalalabad and Kabul. Aircraft were utilized in concert with troop movements throughout the Waziristan campaign, and the military gave glowing reviews of the effect of aerial bombardment against the tribes. The Commander-in-Chief, Lord Rawlinson, claimed that it was "impossible to overestimate the value of aircraft" when used tactically with ground troops. These sentiments were echoed by the air staff in India who were keen to maintain the RAF as a separate service and take on additional responsibilities.[11] From the beginning, the RAF insisted that "air control" was superior to military columns. Bombing, they argued, produced less collateral damage and fewer fatalities to ground troops. Moreover, in light of the Government of India's admitted desire to "advance civilization" up to the Durand Line, the mere threat of bombing encouraged the surrender of recalcitrant tribes, thus sparing both the tribesmen and the British unnecessary costs in men and treasure.[12] This, the airmen argued, was the way of the future.

Not all officials in India believed that aerial bombardment was the best way to carry out "tribal control," however. Within the Army and the Frontier service there was a strong fear that the possible death and maiming of men, women, and children during aerial bombardment would lead to legitimate grievances and growing tensions on the Frontier. In London, the Secretary of State for India, Lord Peel, was also

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[9] For more on the 1927 Mohmand blockade, see Sana Haroon, *Frontier of Faith: Islam in the Indo-Afghan Borderland* (New York, 2006), pp. 138–144.

[10] Notes on the Main Modern Military and Air Operations of the North-West Frontier of India, 1897–1929, in Memorandum by Air Staff on What Air Control Means in War and Peace and What it Has Achieved, for the Defence of India Sub-Committee (Enquiry into the Extended Use of Air Power) Committee of Imperial Defence, July 1930, The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA) CAB 16/87.

[11] On the RAF in this period, see David Omissi, *Air Power and Colonial Control: The Royal Air Force, 1919–1939* (Manchester, 1990).

[12] Notes on the Main Modern Military and Air Operations of the North-West Frontier of India, 1897–1929.

concerned, informing the then Viceroy, Lord Reading, in 1923 that he worried that the recent abduction of Molly Ellis and other "outrages" were connected to aerial bombing:

> One theory to which publicity has been given, and for which the authority of local knowledge is claimed, is that the frequent use of aeroplanes for what amounts to police rather than military work, and the resultant indiscriminate bombing of men, women and children in tribal country, is responsible for the adoption by the tribesmen of what is in their eyes a policy of retaliation.

Peel told Reading that he assumed that "opinions differ widely as to the general effect on the mentality of the tribesmen of the North-West Frontier of the use of aeroplanes, and the inevitably indiscriminate results of bombing operations from the air." Peel requested that the question be given "serious and careful examination."[13]

Reading looked into this question and replied to Peel's query – *two years later* – after Peel had been succeeded by Lord Birkenhead. The Viceroy rejected the notion that aerial bombardment was either inhumane or that it contributed to undue amounts of resentment among the Frontier population:

> There is no doubt of the potency of the fear of becoming subject to air operations. Of this there was striking proof during the recent operations [in Waziristan], when the rifles stolen from the Gumal police station were surrendered by tribesmen from fear of being subjected to the same punishment from the air as their … neighbours.

The fear of being bombed was sometimes enough, but when actual aerial bombardment occurred, Reading allowed that there was, of course, an initial shock among the victims. Yet:

> Our evidence goes to show that it is not the way force is applied but its effectiveness that is feared, and to that extent resented. Once force is actually applied, the tribesmen probably dislike land and air operations equally, except that in the latter his prized inaccessibility is taken from him and his opportunities for hitting back are far more limited.

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[13] Extract from Secret Despatch No. 3 to Government of India, 9 August 1923, IOR L P&S 10/1064.

Lastly, neither the Viceroy nor his council believed that there was any serious danger of the Frontier administration acquiring a reputation for "barbarism." Due to the specific warnings given prior to aerial assault and the fact that these operations were under the control of the Political Department and the Army, rather than the RAF, bombardment was in no way "inhumane." Strikingly, the Viceroy did not expect any genuine public "criticism," either in India or Britain, of air operations on the Frontier.[14] Aerial operations were also cheap. Air control possessed the "near-miraculous property of lengthening the arm of government whilst shortening its purse."[15] This was something the Government of India was in desperate need of in the 1920s. Although the Government was committed to a policy of a gradual "penetration, control, and civilization" of the trans-border tribes, the massive deficits that faced Delhi in the wake of the First World War continued throughout the next decade.[16] The parlous state of India's finances dictated that this seemingly effective new technology be used as much as possible.

Aerial bombardment also fitted into the British view of what sort of policies showed results among the tribesmen. While the first two decades of the twentieth century were dominated by Curzon's general policy of minimal intervention in the tribal belt, both the Political Service and the Indian Army believed that the level of tribal unrest in the 1919–1922 period proved that this approach had failed. They entered the 1920s convinced that the real answer to the "problem of the North-West Frontier" lay in an aggressive extension of British "civilization" all the way up to the Durand Line. An important corollary to this assumption was that the best way to realize this policy was by liberal use of armed force and, when possible, actual military occupation.

For most officials, Waziristan constituted the primary example of efficient military occupation. Although the initial "forward policy" urged by the Army in the heat of the Waziristan revolt of 1919–1922 emphasized the role that economic development could play in a genuine

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[14] Government of Indian Secret Despatch No 11 of 1925 on the Principles to be Adopted in Flying on the Frontier, 15 October 1925, CAB 16/87.

[15] Charles Townshend, "Civilization and 'Frightfulness': Air Control in the Middle East between the Wars," in Chris Wrigley (ed.), *Warfare Diplomacy and Politics: Essays in Honour of A .J. P. Taylor* (London, 1986), p. 143.

[16] Note by Sir Ralph Griffith, KCSI, CIE, Governor of the North-West Frontier Province, 28 June 1933, L P&S 12/3143. For the Government of India's financial crisis in the inter-war period, see Brian R. Tomlinson, *The Political Economy of the Raj, 1914–1947: The Economics of Decolonization in India* (London, 1979).

pacification of the tribes, the impoverished Indian exchequer contributed very little towards economic infrastructure in the coming decade.[17] Despite this, the British continued to pay lip service to economic development through the mid-1920s. Speaking to the Central Legislative Assembly in 1923, the Indian Foreign Secretary, Sir Denys Bray, stated that the root of the tribal problem lay in the poverty of the region, where the inhabitants "breed more than they can feed."[18] Yet little to no funds were released for this purpose.[19] Instead, the large sums of money that the Government of India did invest in Waziristan went into road building and the tools of military occupation.

The Government of India's emphasis on military expenditure grew out of the widely held conviction that British policy in Waziristan had succeeded and that this success was due to Britain's military occupation. The former Resident, Sir Ralph Griffith, stated that old men in Waziristan told him that "never within living memory have they known such peace and security" and attempts in the late 1920s to reduce the number of troops garrisoned in the region were successfully resisted by the Frontier administration.[20] In fighting possible reductions, Evelyn Howell, and later Charles Bruce, in their successive capacities as Resident in Waziristan, predicted catastrophe and argued that, although the RAF could take over some of the Army's duties, they would have to act "ruthlessly."[21] Victory assured, the road system on which the Army moved was extended in 1927 and a major cantonment – on the Razmak model – was established at Wana in the late 1920s.[22] By the early 1930s, the Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, argued that the military

[17] Report of Committee Appointed by the Governor-General in Council to Examine the Military Requirements of India, 1921, Hailey Papers IOR E220/3c.

[18] See Alan Warren, *Waziristan, the Faqir of Ipi, and the Indian Army: The North West Frontier Revolt of 1936–1937* (Karachi, 2000), p. 59.

[19] See Notes of a Conversation between Sir Horatio (Norman) Bolton and Lord Winterton (Under Secretary of State for India) at Peshawar, 22 January 1927, IOR L PO 5/24A.

[20] Note by Sir Ralph Griffith, 28 June 1933.

[21] Memorandum from the Resident in Waziristan (Evelyn Howell) to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, NWFP, 5 September 1924, IOR L P&S 12/3151; and Confidential Memorandum for the Resident in Waziristan (Charles Bruce) to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, NWFP, 4 January 1928, L P&S 12/3151.

[22] Confidential Memorandum from Sir Norman Bolton (Chief Commissioner, NWFP) on Future Policy in Waziristan, 8 June 1927, L P&S 12/3151.

presence was the great stabilizing factor in Waziristan.[23] It should in no way be altered.[24]

By the late 1920s, the idea of economic development as a necessary component of tribal stability had largely disappeared. Although there were medical services and some rudimentary schooling, serving around 1,000 pupils, these reached only a small number of individuals.[25] The British believed that road construction employed enough tribesmen to ensure a sufficient and constant income, and Frontier officers insisted that the standard of living was rising among the Mahsuds and the Wazirs. This, they argued, was due to their own enterprise rather than government largess.[26] Not everyone bought this. Lord Irwin, for one, believed that the chances of government-sponsored economic development in Waziristan were slim and the true economic salvation of the tribes lay in out-migration.[27] Interestingly, few admitted that the relative tranquility that prevailed in the region might be related to the fact that the Government was disbursing huge allowances to the tribes. Tribal allowances, which stood at Rs. 1·3/- crores (£8,666) per year in 1919 were more than doubled to Rs. 2·8/- crores (£18,700) by 1925.[28]

Criticisms of tribal policy, 1930–1939

Since the inception of British rule on the Frontier, the formulation of tribal policy had remained firmly in official hands. It engendered long and passionate debates, but the participants were uniformly British and official. The events of April 1930 and the British response in the following months sounded the death knell of this cozy arrangement, however. The Frontier was now firmly in the crosshairs of Indian nationalists, who publicized British "excesses" against the Red Shirts in the settled districts and the brutal nature of operations in the tribal areas as evidence of the violence that, they argued, stood at the core of British imperialism. The scope and size of the nationalist movement in the

[23] Government of India Secret Despatch No. 3 of 1934 on the Future Location of Troops in Waziristan, 12 July 1934, L P&S 12/3151.
[24] See Memorandum by Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Bruce, CIE on Policy in Waziristan, 23 January 1929, L P&S 12/3151.
[25] Warren, *Waziristan*, p. 61.
[26] Notes on a Conversation between Sir Norman Bolton and Lord Winterton, 22 January 1927.
[27] Extract from Private Letter from Lord Irwin (Viceroy) to Lord Birkenhead (Secretary of State for India), 19 May 1927, IOR L PO 5/23.
[28] Warren, *Waziristan*, p. 56.

administered districts dictated that the British make a number of concessions. This the British did, introducing reforms in 1932 and including the administered areas in the provincial reforms of the Government of India Act, 1935. The British, however, resisted the notion that there could be compromise with "political India" in the unadministered territory. Tribal policy thus became a key point of contention between the nationalists and the Raj in the 1930s.

Abdul Ghaffar Khan's nationalist movement was Pan-Pathan in its reach, and the social reformation espoused by Abdul Ghaffar and his brother, Dr. Khan Sahib, did not cease at the administrative line between the settled districts and tribal territory. In fact, the tribal belt was a principal target of the nationalists. This was the home turf of what they considered to be the worst excesses of Pathan society: the blood feud, illiteracy, grinding poverty, and an alarming predilection for violence.[29] For the British administration, however, the idea of a Tribal and Red Shirt combination was a nightmare. As much as the British feared what the Pathans in the settled districts might do to sweep away British control, those in the tribal areas were even more dangerous. That Mahsuds, Wazirs, or Mohmands might join in the nationalist movement was a proposition dreaded by the entire administration. Thus, beginning in May 1930, the authorities in NWFP embarked on a long-term project of sealing off the tribal areas from the "infection" of Indian nationalism.

After the shootings in Peshawar on 23 April 1930, and the subsequent British withdrawal from the city two days later, reports and rumors of the affairs in Peshawar spread rapidly across the administrative border into the tribal belt.[30] In the ensuing breakdown of British authority in the administered districts, a number of nationalist sympathizers entered tribal territory to, as the Commander-in-Chief, Sir William Birdwood, put it, "spread stories of alleged atrocities committed by the troops, of outrages inflicted under the provision of the Sarda Act, of the surrender of Peshawar, the imminent evacuation of Waziristan and indeed the whole North-West Frontier Province, and of the general downfall of British rule." Much of this was taken up by local religious leaders,

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[29] Report from Deputy Inspector General of Police, Intelligence Branch, NWFP, Peshawar (Lawther) to the Director, Intelligence Bureau, Home Department (Williamson), 24 April 1931, National Archives of India (NAI) HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part I).

[30] Note by J. P. Gibson (NWFP Government), 3 June 1930, IOR L P&S 12/3123.

and, as a result, the entire tribal territory from the Malakand to South Waziristan grew restive.[31]

In the Mohmand country, a tribal *lashkar* moved towards the Vale of Peshawar with the goal of joining the nationalist revolt. As men massed along the administrative border with Peshawar in early May, the new Chief Commissioner, Steuart Pears, called out the RAF and on 11 May they began intense bombing of the *nullahs* (ravines) and caves in which the tribesmen sheltered. Further to the south, in Waziristan, a *lashkar* of 4,000 Wazirs attacked a scouts' post and the RAF was called out to disperse the armed men and bomb their home villages. These air operations, in which all "personnel" seen were either "bombed or attacked by machine gun fire," commenced throughout the Frontier, and continued, unabated, until the middle of September. The Commander-in-Chief noted that although there were often few targets, casualties had mounted up.[32] By early June, the Mohmand *lashkar* was decimated and lacked sufficient force to invade Peshawar. Similar "successes" had been achieved in Waziristan. At the same time, several sections of Afridis from the Khyber Agency, who were sincerely outraged by the stories of British excesses on the Frontier, invaded Peshawar.[33] Aerial bombardment was also used against them, but failed to quell the rebellion until that fall, when a truce was agreed upon, and the Afridis returned to the Khyber Agency.[34] In the meantime, this apparent cooperation between the Red Shirts in Peshawar and the Afridi invaders deeply disturbed the Frontier administration.[35]

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[31] Despatch by HE Field Marshal Sir William Birdwood, Commander-in-Chief in India, on the Disturbances on the North-West Frontier of India from 23 April to 12 September 1930, 14 November 1930, TNA WO 32/3526.

[32] Despatch by HE Field Marshal Sir William Birdwood, 14 November 1930. See also General Staff Annual Summary of Events in North West Frontier Tribal Territory, 1 January 1930–1931 December 1930, IOR L P&S 12/3170.

[33] Memorandum Prepared by the Political Department, India Office: Measures Proposed by the Government of India for Restraining the Afridis, 27 September 1930, IOR L P&S 12/3162.

[34] Note by J. C. Walton (Political Secretary, India Office) to Findlater Stewart (Under Secretary of State) on the Afridi Situation and the Frontier Generally, 8 September 1931, L P&S 12/3162.

[35] The Chief Commissioner, Sir Steuart Pears, responded in part to this threat with a request that a new official, Lieutenant-Colonel D.G. Sandeman, be appointed to coordinate intelligence activities on the Frontier (See Christian Tripodi, *Edge of Empire: The British Political Officer and the Tribal Administration on the North-West Frontier, 1877–1947* (Farnham, 2011), pp. 176–179).

Over the next three years, the administration and nationalists engaged in a tense battle over the Frontier. During this period Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his Congress allies made numerous attempts to enlist the trans-border tribesmen into the nationalist struggle.[36] The British sought to quash these overtures by sealing off the administrative border through the Frontier Crossing Regulation and imposing severe punishments for suspected Congress agents and heavy fines on anyone who protected them in the tribal belt.[37] Pears informed Simla that he was particularly alarmed by speeches Abdul Ghaffar had delivered in Karachi and Bombay in which he argued that there was a strong community of interests among Pathans on either side of the administrative border. The Chief Commissioner warned that "if we do not make a stand now against interference of cis-Frontier agitators in tribal areas," it would be difficult to maintain Britain's monopoly over tribal policy "under a reformed constitution."[38]

The unrest in the tribal agencies in 1930, combined with the new concern about the relationship between the tribes and the nationalists in British India, led the Government of India to appoint a committee chaired by India's Foreign Secretary, Evelyn Howell.[39] Although the tribal unrest of 1930 paled in comparison to the full-scale revolts of 1919–1922, the entire nature of Frontier administration was again under attack. In Britain, newspapers such as *The Daily Telegraph* attacked the Government's bombing policy as ineffective and the entire administration as weak and divided.[40] Elsewhere, William Wedgwood Benn, the Secretary of State for India, felt that "Congress propaganda is an insufficient reason for the tribal disturbances." He said he wished that

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[36] This was especially true in 1931, when the nationalists enjoyed a great deal of leeway under the Delhi Pact. See, for instance, NWFP Diary No. 15 for the Week Ending 11 April 1931; NWFP Diary No. 21 for the Week Ending 30 May 1931; NWFP Diary No. 30 for the Week Ending 1 August 1931; NWFP Diary No. 35 for the Week Ending 5 September 1931, IOR L P&S 12/3155.

[37] Express Letter from the Resident, Waziristan, to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, NWFP, 6 July 1931, L P&S 12/3123.

[38] Chief Commissioner, NWFP, to Foreign Department, Government of India, 21 April 1931, L P&S 12/3155.

[39] Government of India, Foreign and Political Department, to Secretary of State, 18 December 1930, IOR L MIL 7/6649.

[40] See "With the Night Bombers: An Experience of an Air Attack on Afridi Villages" by Ellis Ashhead-Bartlett, in *The Daily Telegraph*, 10 December 1930; and "Keeping India's Frontier: Weakness Caused by a Futile System of Divided Command," by Ellis Ashhead-Bartlett," in *The Daily Telegraph*, 12 December 1930, L MIL 7/6649.

he knew more "about the economic needs and political demands of these people."[41] Howell's committee, the "Tribal Control and Defence Committee," was charged with getting to the bottom of the Frontier unrest in 1930 and figuring out whether the apparent widespread affinity of the tribes for the nationalist movement in British India emanated from economic distress, Congress "propaganda," or failures in the current system of "control."

The Report of the Tribal Control and Defence Committee, completed in 1931, was a remarkably conservative document. Unsurprisingly, given his long career on the Frontier, Howell argued that the fundamental problem behind the recent unrest was "the virile and martial qualities and the predatory instincts of the tribes," their geographical seclusion, their access to arms, and the relative prosperity of the settled districts of the NWFP.[42] Ignoring much of the actual evidence – especially regarding nationalist sympathies among the Afridis – the report gave Congress influence short shrift, arguing that a brewing conflict had simply been exacerbated by rumors of British withdrawal from the Frontier.[43] Howell concluded that any sign of weakness by the British would give the tribes *carte blanche* to go on a rampage. Tribal transgressions must be met with swift and violent retaliation and there could be no question of removing regular troops from their garrisons at Wana and Razmak. The problem demanded a military solution. Howell's report followed this logic, arguing that "too much" weight had been given to the economic conditions of the tribes. Arguments about the "hungry hills" were exaggerated and development policies would make life too easy for the tribesmen – thus stymieing attempts at "civilization."[44]

The Committee recommended that no major change in policy should be undertaken. The findings were endorsed by the Government of India. Howell's committee did, however, suggest a greater role for

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[41] Secretary of State (Wedgwood Benn) to Viceroy (Irwin), 14 August 1930, Halifax Papers IOR C152/6.

[42] *Report of the Tribal Control and Defence Committee*, 1931 (Delhi, 1931), L P&S 12/3143.

[43] The India Office files on the "Tribal Unrest" in 1930–1931 (Various files between L P&S 12/3122 and L P&S 12/3131) and the NWFP Tribal Territory Diaries make it clear that tribal sympathies for their cis-border brethren played a major role in the events of 1930. Using files found in archives in Islamabad and Peshawar, Sana Haroon comes to a similar conclusion (Haroon, *Frontier of Faith*, pp. 155–166).

[44] Report of the Tribal Control and Defence Committee, 1931.

the RAF on the Frontier. The Chief of Air Staff in India agreed with this suggestion, which fitted into a wider, and ultimately unsuccessful, power grab that the RAF was making East of Suez.[45] The Indian General Staff offered stiff resistance, noting that the chief victims of bombing were "old men, women and children." The Indian Army provided London and Delhi with long casualty lists to demonstrate that, while aerial bombardment was effective, it was by no means the civilized and humane weapon touted by the RAF.[46] This reaction to an increase in aerial bombing was inspired in part by the ongoing turf war between the two services, but it also grew out of genuine concern that bombing caused "real hardship." For this reason, many conservative voices in Britain who still believed in Britain's "civilizing mission," like the diehard Lord Lloyd, were adamantly opposed to "air control."[47]

The new Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, decided to stand pat on Frontier policy. But he did so for explicitly political reasons. He wrote:

> Just at the moment of constitutional revision, and of internal and political unrest throughout India, there would be an undue risk in making any substantial change either in policy or in disposition of troops on the Frontier, which could be interpreted by the tribesmen as indicating a general weakening of British influence, and which

[45] Comments of Air Vice Marshal J. M. Steel (Air Officer Commanding Royal Air Force India) on the Report of the Tribal Control and Defence Committee, 10 June 1931, CAB 16/87. For the Air Staff's recommendations for sweeping powers in almost all British possessions East of Suez, see Memorandum for the Sub-Committee on the Defence of India (Committee of Imperial Defence) by the Chief of the Air Staff (Lord Trenchard) on the Fuller Employment of Air Power in Imperial Defence, November 1929, CAB 16/87.

[46] As an example of the terrible carnage that could accompany aerial bombardment even when given substantial forewarning, the General Staff quoted the 1930 aerial bombing of the Massozai in the Kurram Agency an example of these results: "The fighting men of the tribe had already been defeated by our troops in an attempted invasion of the Kurram, though the tribe had not yet surrendered. After due warning aircraft bombed their villages and the results claimed were – 65 persons killed and wounded; 98 animals killed; 69 houses destroyed; 852 trees and 9 entire gardens destroyed; 192 acres of standing crops totally wrecked. Of the personal casualties, reports indicate that more than half were women and children" (General Staff Criticism of the Tribal Control and Defence Committee, 9 May 1931, CAB 16/87).

[47] Hansard, *House of Lords Debates*, 9 April 1930, pp. 22–62. See Omissi, *Air Power*, and Townshend, "Civilization and 'Frightfulness'."

> might therefore provide an incentive for a general rising in cooperation with agitators in other parts of British India.[48]

This was an ironic decision. Howell's recommendations for a policy of military rather than civil pacification, resting on military occupation and aerial bombardment, and eschewing any type of economic development, was the exact opposite of what most Indian nationalists wanted.

This miscalculation was further exacerbated by the fact that as tribal problems continued into the 1930s, the publicity that British policies and techniques received in the Indian and international press grew. Major bombing campaigns against villages in Bajaur in 1933 and in Mohmand country in 1935 led to, as the pro-Government *Civil & Military Gazette* called it, "a frenzy of sentiment" against the bombing policy in the British and international press.[49] The Raj had a public relations problem. Over the next two years, story after story appeared in the British papers damning the Government of India's bombing policies. *The Scotsman* called it "unsporting" whereas *The Church of England Newspaper* carried the headline "Bombing Helpless Tribesmen."[50] Citing an Indian nationalist source in Simla, the *Manchester Guardian* stated that the goal of bombing was simply "unnecessary suffering."[51] Along with the Church press, the Labour and socialist press was, predictably, the most scathing. In *The New Leader*, the radical Labour Member of Parliament, pacifist, and anti-imperialist, Fenner Brockway, whom Willingdon privately referred to as a "horrible man," called the Frontier "Britain's Abyssinia."[52] In his polemic, he compared the noted tribal leader, the Haji of Turangzai, to Haile Selassie, and compared

[48] Despatch from Government of India, Foreign and Political Department, to Sir Samuel Hoare on Frontier Tribal Control and Defence Against Tribal Incursions, 15 September 1931, L P&S 12/3143.
[49] "To Secure Peace on the Frontier," in the *Civil & Military Gazette*, 4 August 1933, IOR L P&S 12/3190.
[50] "Unsporting Methods: Tribesmen and RAF Bombing," in *The Scotsman*, 21 August 1933, L P&S 12/3190; and "Bombing Helpless Tribesmen," in *The Church of England Newspaper*, 18 August 1933, L P&S 12/3190.
[51] "Philosophy of Bombing," in the *Manchester Guardian*, 4 August 1933, L P&S 12/3190.
[52] Viceroy (Willingdon) to Secretary of State (Sir Samuel Hoare), 29 May 1932, Templewood Papers IOR E240/5.

British India to Mussolini's Italy.[53] Both were violent aggressors.[54] The Government of India was not without its supporters in the home press, however. Sir Henry Dobbs, the career Frontier officer and former High Commissioner in Iraq, where he oversaw the construction of an air control policy over the entire country, wrote a forceful letter to the *Times* as early as 1929, arguing for the benefits of aerial bombing.[55] Moreover, British newspapers also described the "vain and vindictive" nature of the tribesmen and featured lurid (yet not necessarily false) tales of the hideous fate that awaited downed airmen at the hands of the tribes.[56]

Tribal bombing was also seen as a threat to international stability. The British press bemoaned what this would mean for the League of Nations' disarmament agenda. A cartoon in the *Yorkshire Observer* showed a biplane entitled "bombing policy" bombarding a ground on which was painted "the cause of disarmament," and asked "what of the undesired effect" of aerial bombing?[57] In Germany, bombing was portrayed as further proof of Britain's perfidy, and the new National Socialist leadership claimed that it demonstrated Germany's need to re-arm with a *Luftwaffe*. An ominous cartoon in Munich's *Jugend* compared Hitler's "paper bomb" demonstrations with images of fleeing "natives" being bombed into oblivion on the North-West Frontier.[58] In

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[53] Willingdon himself complained to Hoare that he felt like Mussolini, following the decision to crack down on Congress in December 1931 (Viceroy to Secretary of State, 20 December 1931, Templewood Papers E240/5).

[54] "Britain's 'Abyssinia' – Secret War Against Independent Tribes Across Indian Frontier," by Fenner Brockway, in *The New Leader*, 27 September 1935, IOR L P&S 12/3251.

[55] Sir Henry Dobbs to *The Times*, 5 May 1929, CAB 16/87.

[56] "They Fear Nothing on Earth: Tribesmen of the North-West Frontier – Cannot Be Civilised," in *The Daily Telegraph*, 1933, L P&S 12/3190; and "Perils of the Indian Frontier: Insults and Torture Await Our Captured Airmen," in the *Evening Advertiser*, 7 August 1933, L P&S 12/3190.

[57] "What of the Undesired Effect?," in the *Yorkshire Observer*, 3 August 1933, L P&S 12/3190. The British delegation to the League of Nations Disarmament Conference in 1933 successfully insisted that aerial bombardment on the Frontier be excluded from any agreement, a decision that helped to neuter the final accord.

[58] Cutting from *Jugend*, 3 September 1933, L P&S 12/3190. As an effort to scare the German people about the need for rapid rearmament and full-scale air force, the Munich chapter of the Reich Civil Defence League staged a mock air raid over the city in August 1933. A number of low flying aircraft dropped "paper bombs" weighted with small bags of sand. In the aftermath, Nazi Stormtroopers swarmed the city in gas masks, clearing "debris" and attending to the "wounded" (see David Clay Large, *Where Ghosts Walked: Munich's Road to the Third Reich* (New York, 1997), p. 300).

other foreign presses, the Irish Free State treated the bombing policy on the Frontier as another example of Britain's callousness towards those yearning to be free.[59] The American press was less hostile, but still voiced concern about the human toll.[60]

The negative nature of this publicity concerned both London and Delhi. Gone were the days when Frontier administrators could carry on with their policies in a political vacuum. The bombing policy was increasingly questioned in both houses of parliament. Gandhi, who truly understood the importance of image and the modern media, had demonstrated the power of negative publicity over the course of the Civil Disobedience movement and the authorities in India recognized this. The administration tried to keep the lid on reports of aerial bombardment, inviting reporters who were known to be friendly on aerial surveys of the Frontier and keeping out those whom they believed to be critical.[61] Yet criticism continued and this publicity about the aerial bombings gave the Raj's "numerous critics fresh opportunities for ventilating their views." British officials worried that this criticism could force the Raj to suspend air operations.[62]

By the mid-1930s, the "numerous critics" who most concerned the British were those in the Indian National Congress. During a series of bombings over Mohmand country in 1935, the Government of India acted to suppress all mention of the heavy bombardment that was under way. They knew, however, that Khan Sahib, who had been elected to the Central Legislative Assembly in 1935, had been in contact with Mohmand leaders and planned to "ventilate" his deep concerns about air control in the Assembly – something that had been forbidden until now.[63] Criticism of aerial policy was an unwelcome development, but more than this, the British knew that aerial bombardment on the Frontier offered a wedge for wider nationalist concerns about British policy on the Frontier.

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[59] "The North-Western Frontier," in the *Cork Examiner*, 4 August 1933, L P&S 12/3190.
[60] Angus Fletcher (Secretary, British Library of Information) to Sir Findlater Stewart, 15 August 1933, L P&S 12/3190.
[61] J. C. Walton to Sir Aubrey Metcalfe, 14 February 1936, L P&S 12/3190; and Sir Aubrey Metcalfe to J. C. Walton, 24 December 1935, L P&S 12/3190.
[62] J. C. Walton to R. A. Butler (Undersecretary of State for India), 20 February 1936, L P&S 12/3190.
[63] J. G. Acheson (Acting Foreign Secretary, Government of India) to J. C. Walton, 20 August 1935, L P&S 12/3190.

Image 6 Dr. Khan Sahib (far left) and other NWFP Congress Members of the Central Legislative Assembly, 1936

The nationalist critique of Britain's tribal policy came to the fore in the Central Legislative Assembly – then sitting at Simla – in September 1935, when, as predicted, Khan Sahib proposed a vote of censure of the "bombing of women and children on the Frontier."[64] In a full-dress debate between the Government and some of the leading lights of the Congress party, the wider issues of the "Frontier problem" and the "forward policy" were drawn into the heated discussion. Although the British had encountered Indian critiques in the past – most notably from Sir Muhammad Shafi in 1922 – this was new. The Congress members produced a damning indictment of Britain's policies and intentions in the tribal belt.[65]

The crux of the nationalist argument was that it was the British, and their forward policy of military occupation and aerial bombardment, that lay at the heart of the "Frontier problem." The tribes were traditionally democratic, and so any policy that included roads and Government interference into their lives was bound to lead to warfare.

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[64] *Indian Central Legislative Assembly Debates,* 4 September 1935, p. 377.

[65] Confidential Memorandum on the Waziristan Problem by Muhammad Shafi, December 1922, Hailey Papers IOR E220/3c.

This warfare was a curse. Not without reason, the Congress argued that these wars simply gave British officers an opportunity to gain medals, and provided a convenient excuse to retain control of India's defence and maintain the Indian Army at an inflated and bankrupting size.[66] During the Simla debate, the noted attorney and leader of Congress in the Assembly, Bhulabhai Desai, argued:

> Once you have got an army there is always an inclination – almost a justification for its use … In fact it is this very talk of warfare which throughout the last 30 years has been the only excuse for piling up the armaments at the expense of the poor people of this country.[67]

Moreover, it was putting the name of the Indian taxpayer on a barbaric policy of civilian bombing enforced by a "foreign autocrat." The Government, keen to make their own arguments public, made disingenuous statements regarding the written warnings dropped on illiterate tribesmen as proof that "no women or children" were ever present when bombardment commenced. Another nationalist argued that, even if this were true, a similar policy taken against London would be widely condemned. This was barbarism on the "German model."[68] Desai remarked that although Indians were "less scientific and mechanized," at least they believed in civilization.[69] By their actions, it was clear the British did not. When the house divided, every elected member, and thus a majority, voted in favor of the censure.

Waziristan, Congress, and the failure of the modified forward policy

Rather than just another debate in a toothless talking shop, the Simla debate inaugurated a new phase of Indian opposition to the Raj's tribal policy. In the first half of the 1930s, much of the criticism of the Government's behavior in the agencies was located in the British and foreign press. Indian politicians and the Indian press understandably focused on the life-and-death struggle taking place in the administered districts. But the Government of India Act was signed in August of

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[66] This unknowingly echoed the argument that Sir John Maffey made against the extension of the forward policy in Waziristan in the early 1920s.
[67] *Indian Central Legislative Assembly Debates*, 4 September 1935, p. 392.
[68] *Indian Central Legislative Assembly Debates*, 4 September 1935, p. 384.
[69] *Indian Central Legislative Assembly Debates*, 4 September 1935, p. 395.

1935 and the Frontier was now a full governor's province with a nascent (if often sycophantic) press in Peshawar.[70] Crucially, elections for a *responsible* provincial government, as provided by the new constitution, were being arranged. With the overwhelming popularity of Abdul Ghaffar and the Red Shirts, it looked likely that the NWFP would have a Congress Ministry. With these issues settled, Congress and its allies increasingly focused on the nature of Britain's regime in the tribal areas.

Congress was given a prime example of the continued problem of tribal administration in March 1936, when a 15-year-old Hindu girl from Bannu, named Ram Kori, eloped with a Pathan schoolmaster named Noor Ali Shah from a village in Waziristan. Ram Kori converted to Islam and took the name Noor Jehan, but became better known as "Islam Bibi." Since she was a minor, the girl's family pressed charges and the Resident in Waziristan, James Acheson, gave permission to the Deputy Commissioner of Bannu to enter tribal territory and take her into custody. Noor Ali was arrested on a charge of abduction. The case reached the court in Bannu city "amid a blaze of publicity." With the case now in the legal system, Frontier officials had their hands tied and the sitting magistrate handled the case in an impartial manner that was bound to create communal tension. It appeared that the girl had joined Noor Ali of her own free will, but since there was no "proof of legal marriage," he was convicted of abduction and given two years' imprisonment. "Islam Bibi" refused to return to her mother and was thus put under the care of a third party until she reached her majority.[71] The case, and the threat of the girls' conversion to Islam being forcibly overturned, had inflamed religious feeling in the region. This sentiment burst into full-scale revolt in August when the Judicial Commissioner in Peshawar overturned the earlier ruling and returned Islam Bibi to her mother and, presumably, Hinduism.[72]

Led by a local mullah named Mirza Ali Khan – better known as the Faqir of Ipi – Waziristan, which had been the showcase for the efficacy of the modified forward policy over the previous 15 years, exploded in revolt.[73] The two-year attempt to pacify Waziristan required modern

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[70] The main English language paper in the province, *The Khyber Mail*, was decidedly pro-Government.

[71] Warren, *Waziristan*, pp. 80–82.

[72] *Tribal Disturbances in Waziristan (25 November 1936–13 June 1937) presented by the Secretary of State for India to Parliament, June 1937* (London, 1937), IOR L P&S 12/3187.

[73] For the Waziristan campaign of 1936–1937, see Government of India, *Official History of Operations of the North-West Frontier of India, 1936–1937* (Delhi, 1938);

artillery, tanks, armored cars, and 40,000 troops in order to "pacify" fewer than 100,000 men, women, and children.[74] By 1937, it was clear to all that the inter-war policy of "peaceful penetration" illustrated by the Waziristan model of roads, military occupation, allowances, and "air control" had failed. Among the British, this fact led to a great deal of soul searching. Some, such as the redoubtable Charles Bruce, argued that the policy had failed because it had not followed Sandeman's system closely enough.[75] The former Commander-in-Chief, Philip Chetwode, believed that it was because the tribesmen's women had been mocking them for their peaceful ways.[76] Yet others, such as Aubrey Metcalfe, the Indian Foreign Secretary, believed that there had been no trouble for a number of years and that the younger generation, "who have never experienced Government's wrath, are anxious to try conclusions with Government and to have a fight, even if the results are unpleasant."[77]

This dark night of the Frontier officer's soul was readily joined by the cavalcade of Congress criticism that seized upon the Waziristan revolt. In the Central Legislative Assembly, where Frontier policy was now allowed to come under official debate, Congressmen hammered away at the Government. Asaf Ali, the deputy leader of the Congress in the Assembly, stated that the Government was pursuing a policy of "aggression, pure and simple." The long-time critic went on:

> These operations are necessitated by the fact that the British Indian Government has been treating the independent tribal territory as their own and they have been trying to bring a people who are utterly independent under control. The result is that these people, who have never allowed themselves to be subdued by anybody throughout the ages, resent it and will want to retaliate.

Milan Hauner, "One Man Against the Empire: The Faqir of Ipi and the British in Central Asia on the Eve and During the Second World War," in the *Journal of Contemporary History*, 16 (1981), pp. 183–212; and Warren, *Waziristan*.

[74] Barton, *India's North-West Frontier*, p. 251.

[75] Lieutenant-Colonel Charles E. Bruce, *Waziristan, 1936–1937: The Problems of the North-West Frontiers of India and Their Solutions* (Aldershot, 1938).

[76] Letter from Sir Philip Chetwode to Charles E. Bruce, 4 January 1938, Bruce Papers IOR F163/65.

[77] Sir Aubrey Metcalfe to J. C. Walton, 22 March 1937, Walton Papers IOR D545/9.

Asaf Ali, supported by Dr. Khan Sahib, insisted that the Government of India's forward policy was "preposterous." It was time, he argued, to leave the "independent" tribesmen alone.[78] During the debate Ali backed up his assertions with a book entitled *The Problem of the North-West Frontier* (1932) by a former Gurkha officer named Collin Davies, then lecturing at the School of African and Oriental Studies (SOAS) in London. In the book, Davies investigated the problems of the Government's policies on the Frontier from 1890 to 1908. A serious scholarly work, the volume voiced criticisms that were seized upon by nationalists.[79] Congress critics were particularly drawn to Davies' assertion that "we can never hope to solve the Frontier Problem until the tribesmen are able to gain a livelihood without being forced to raid the settled districts. So long as hungry tribesmen inhabit barren hills which command open and fertile plains, so long will they resort to plundering incursions in order to obtain the necessities of life."[80] Economics became the centerpiece of the Congress' case against the Government's Frontier policy.

In his 200-page book on the North-West Frontier, Gandhi's long-time associate, Reverend Charles Andrews, carried this argument forward, and called for a policy based on a "new economic foundation" and a "transformation of the purely military regime for one wherein the benefits of civilized government play an ever increasing part … economic development and the provision of medical relief, along with attempts at education."[81] Like the British officers who had used the Scottish Highlands analogy to buttress the road-building that underlay

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[78] *Indian Central Legislative Assembly Debates*, 8 March 1937, pp. 1616–1619.

[79] Davies had served on the Western Front in the First World War. After being shot through a lung he was sent to India in 1918 to wait out the war as a captain in the 2/1st Gurkha Rifles. Davies was still with the regiment when the Third Anglo-Afghan War erupted and he saw several years of service on the Frontier. When he returned to England and took up an academic career, first at SOAS and later at Oxford, he parlayed his Frontier service into a study of Frontier policy in the 1890s and 1910s. *The Problem of the North-West Frontier*, which was the first work on the Frontier by a non-official who had access to official records in the India Office, remains a masterwork (Cyril Henry Philips, "Cuthbert Collin Davies: A Tribute," in Donovan Williams and E. Daniel Potts, (eds), *Essays in Indian History: In Honour of Cuthbert Collin Davies* (New York, 1973), pp. vii–ix).

[80] Davies, *The Problem of the North-West Frontier*, p. 179, quoted in Mohammad Yunus, *Frontier Speaks: With a Forward by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru* (Bombay, 1946), p. 83.

[81] Charles F. Andrews, *The Challenge of the North-West Frontier: A Contribution to World Peace* (London, 1937), pp. 65–66.

Image 7 Abdul Ghaffar Khan (far left), Jawaharlal Nehru (second from left), and Dr. Khan Sahib (third from left) at the entrance to the Khyber Agency during Nehru's tour of the Frontier, 1938

the forward policy, nationalists used the example of the Highlands to make the case for economic development, arguing that the Highlander "problem" only dissipated after they were offered economic parity through employment in "the army, navy and similar branches of the civil administration."[82]

Jawaharlal Nehru, who travelled to the NWFP in 1938, agreed with this approach. In a speech at Bannu, Nehru asserted that the whole

[82] Yunus, *Frontier Speaks*, p. 83.

British approach to the tribal regions had been wrong and "worse than futile." The British policy was "rooted in hostility." The right approach was one of friendship and cooperation, and the economic problems of the region could be easily tackled. Nehru and the Congress party believed that the military should be withdrawn from the tribal areas, the system of allowances curtailed, and that money should be invested in tapping into the region's supposed mineral wealth.[83] Numerous other Congress politicians and publications echoed Nehru's ideas.[84] In the NWFP, Khan Sahib suggested that the trans-border tribesmen be left alone, and advocated mutual goodwill and honesty. Nehru and Madeleine Slade – Gandhi's Mirabehn – offered to tour the tribal territories and convince the people there to follow Gandhian non-violence. Gandhi himself, who had been in contact with several tribal leaders when he visited the Frontier in 1937, believed that spinning could help the economic condition of the tribal belt.[85]

Congress attacks on Frontier policy continued throughout 1937 and 1938. In 1937, the All-India Congress Committee session at Faizpur condemned the Government of India's tribal policy, stating that it was imperialist, it failed in its purpose, that it was designed to justify an increase in military expenditure, train troops – a charge given credence by a recent speech by Philip Chetwode arguing just that – and that it was uncivilized. Writing in Delhi's *National Call* in July 1937, Asaf Ali called on the Government to invite Congress to take over India's Frontier policy; a similar article appeared in the *Tribune* calling for a full-scale economic development scheme in the tribal areas.[86] The Congress party's largest single document on the tribal areas, their 1938 *Report on North-West Frontier Province and Bannu Raids*, published in response to a massive increase of kidnappings in the wake of the Waziristan revolt,

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[83] Yunus, *Frontier Speaks*, p. 93. Yunus's volume was originally written in the late 1930s but was proscribed by the Government of India for the duration of the Second World War. The Congress Party always emphasized the "democratic" character of the Pathans, arguing that this was the reason that the British continually failed to pacify the region. The British also discussed the "democratic" nature of the Pathans. In this case, however, democracy was essentially equated to chaos and anarchy.
[84] See, for instance, Jagat S. Bright, *Frontier and its Gandhi* (Lahore, 1944).
[85] Note by Sir George Cunningham (Governor, NWFP), 20 June 1939. A full report of Gandhi's tour can be found in Pyarelal Nair's *A Pilgrimage for Peace: Gandhi and Frontier Gandhi Among the N.W.F. Pathans* (Ahmedabad, 1950). Dinanath G. Tendulkar provides a full account of both Gandhi and Nehru's Frontier tours in *Abdul Ghaffar Khan: Faith is a Battle* (Bombay, 1967), pp. 217–288.
[86] Note by Sir George Cunningham, 20 June 1939.

called for a total rollback of the modified forward policy and an end to Britain's militaristic attempt to subdue the "independent tribes."[87]

Liberal and pacifist opinion in Britain also seized upon the idea that the root of the "tribal problem" was economic. Charles Andrews, who kept a foot in both countries, had, of course, argued that the problem was economic, but many others did as well. Although Andrew's book was denigrated by officials in India and London, another book which emphasized poverty, published by the Quaker Peace Committee, received a far less hostile review within the India Office.[88] The issue of tribal poverty was also at the center of a meeting of the National Peace Council on "Frontier Problems and Policy" in 1936.[89] The "peace" conference was attended by several retired Army and Frontier officers, including Sir Francis Younghusband, a recent convert to the premise of Indian nationalism.[90] This was telling. The fact of the matter was that Congress's argument was gaining ground. Although a return to a "close border" policy in the tribal areas remained beyond the pale for many officers with memories of the collapse of Curzon's system in 1919, the current system was clearly failing as well. A policy of economic development provided an alluring middle ground between the militaristic forward policy of the last 20 years and the alternate extreme of building some sort of Great Wall of China between India and the tribal tracts.[91] Veteran Politicals like Sir William Barton – no friend of Indian nationalism – argued that that if only a third of the over £4 million spent on military campaigns since 1919 had been spent on economic development "there would be a different story to tell." Moreover, the problem could no longer be treated in isolation: future policy would have to attract the maximum support from "political India."[92]

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[87] All India Congress Committee, *Report on North-West Frontier Province and Bannu Raids, 1938* (New Delhi, 1938), pp. 50–52.

[88] See J. C. Walton to Sir Findlater Stewart, 20 November 1937, L P&S 12/3251; Carl Heath, *The North-West Frontier of India* (London, 1937), L P&S 12/3251; J. C. Walton to Sir Findlater Stewart, 22 November 1937, L P&S 12/3251.

[89] National Peace Conference, *Frontier Problems and Policy: Report of a Conference Held in London, 7 April 1936*, Hopkinson Papers IOR D998/11.

[90] See Sir Francis Younghusband, KCSI, KCIE, *Dawn in India: British Purpose and Indian Aspiration* (New York, 1931); see also Patrick French's excellent biography of Younghusband (*Younghusband: The Last Great Imperial Adventurer* (New York, 1994)) which traces the great man's strange journey from muscular Christianity and staunch imperialism to spiritualism, Indian nationalism, and free love.

[91] Comments by the Governor of the North-West Frontier Province on the Frontier Committee's Report, 1945, 12 July 1945, IOR L P&S 12/3266.

[92] Barton, *India's North-West Frontier*, pp. 252–256.

Although more officials were coming to see Waziristan as a civil problem rooted in economic underdevelopment, the nature of the Waziristan revolt convinced others that their longstanding assumptions about the region were true. The policy of roads and partial military occupation may have been a failure, but the fundamental problem remained the fanatical nature of the Mahsuds and Wazirs, a fact underlined by the recent leadership of the revolt by the Faqir of Ipi. The chief intelligence officer on the Frontier, Major James Robinson, argued that the Faqir's revolt in fact made it clear that the root of the problem was *not* economic. The tribal sections that led the revolt, such as the Tori Khel Wazirs, were "the most prosperous" in Waziristan. Inequalities in tribal allowances may have had some role but it could not be argued that the root of the disturbances was economic.

For Robinson, the fact that it was the wealthiest tribal sections that revolted proved that the problem was that the tribes remained fanatically devoted to their independence and would not submit to "non-Muslim dominion." In a memorandum circulated throughout the Frontier administration, Robinson argued that the unrest stemmed from the urgings of religious leaders influenced by the nationalist movement in the administered districts of the Frontier. He wrote:

> The religious (and political) leaders on both sides of the administrative border are closely connected. Most of the important Mullahs of tribal territory have received their religious education in mosques within the border, and their sympathies are definitely with Indian Muslims, not only in religion, which is natural, but in politics, which follows.

He went on to say:

> This association between religious leaders on both sides of the border ensures that any movement involving religion in any way, particularly where it is feared for the safety of religion, will be felt in British India and tribal territory, though reactions may take different forms according to the usual methods of expression in them: meetings in British India; armed *lashkars* in tribal territory.

Nationalism and Islam was a double-edged sword, however. Robinson concluded that the Waziristan tribes believed that the recent passing of the Government of India Act, 1935, meant that the British were yielding to a Hindu majority that would inevitably lead to "Hindu

Image 8 Sir George Cunningham, Governor, NWFP, 1937–46 and 1947–48

domination." This communal issue had led to a "great deal of anxiety and instability in the tribal mind." This abdication of British power to Hindus had sparked the revolt, with Islam Bibi merely providing the context. The resulting war, however, "caused sympathizers of the Faqir of Ipi to further harden their hearts against a Government which they now considered to be more unjust than ever, and more antagonistic to Islam."[93] The argument that Indian constitutional reform and the threat of "Hindu Raj" under a Congress-led government at the center was the root of the crisis in Waziristan was echoed both privately and publicly by Frontier officials throughout 1937 and 1938.[94]

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[93] Report on the Disturbances of 1936–1937 in Waziristan and their Causes, by Major J. A. Robinson (Assistant Director, Intelligence, Government of India), 27 July 1947, Mallam Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, Cambridge University (CSAS).
[94] Barton, *India's North-West Frontier*, p. 169; Lieutenant-General Sir J. R. E. Charles to Charles Bruce, 29 December 1937, Bruce Papers IOR F163/65.

Yet, this was only one side of what was once again becoming a full-fledged debate *within* the British administration and Army leadership. A committee chaired by Admiral of the Fleet, Lord Chatfield, that was dispatched to India in 1938 to evaluate the state of the Raj's military defences in event of another world war, confessed that they were "disturbed" by the conflict of evidence received when interviewing Frontier officers. As a result, the Chatfield Committee recommended "that very early steps should be taken to review the frontier problem in its entirety with the objects not only of clarifying the policy for defining the practical objectives to be aimed and the methods by which they are to be reached."[95] The Chatfield Committee recommendation was accepted by the defence of India committee of the British Cabinet in February 1939, and the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, began a review of policy in Waziristan shortly thereafter.[96]

Questionnaires for the policy review were distributed throughout the Frontier cadre of the Political Service, but the most important input was sought from the Governor of the NWFP, Sir George Cunningham. Cunningham was a long-serving Frontier officer who, like many of his generation, believed he "knew the Pathan mind" better than the Pathan himself. Small and compact, Cunningham was, along with Howell and Caroe, one of the giants of the Frontier administration in the twentieth century. He had a brilliant career as an undergraduate at Magdalen College, Oxford, and Caroe, who matriculated at Magdalen the year after Cunningham left, recalled dons and undergraduates alike "speaking of him as having almost run the college when president of the junior common room."[97] Thereafter he played rugby for Scotland and left for India in 1911. Cunningham, who very much kept his own counsel and rarely showed emotion, possessed a magnetic personality and even those that disagreed with him respected and liked him immensely.[98] He began his Frontier service as Sir George Roos-Keppel's assistant during the First World War. Later, as the Political Agent for North Waziristan, Cunningham was an early advocate of a modified forward policy.[99]

[95] Report of the Expert Committee on the Defence of India, 1938–1939 (Chatfield Report), IOR L MIL/5/886.

[96] India Office Political Department Minutes, 1939, IOR L P&S/12/3265.

[97] Unpublished Caroe Memoirs.

[98] See Norval Mitchell, *Sir George Cunningham: A Memoir* (Edinburgh, 1968). See also G. Leslie Mallam and Diana Day, *A Pair of Chaplis and a Casssock* (London, 1978), Mallam Papers; and Fraser Noble, *Something in India* (London, 1997).

[99] Notes by Political Agent, Miranshah (George Cunningham) on Razmak Policy, 6 November 1922, Cunningham Papers D670/13.

His basic thinking was thoroughly traditional and he was unsure "whether a Pathan is more likely to give trouble when he is in poverty or when he waxes fat."[100] Yet Cunningham, unlike a number of his Frontier colleagues – such as Caroe and Howell – distinguished himself with his flexibility. He had built a strong personal and working relationship with Khan Sahib, who had become the Congress Premier of the NWFP in September 1937, and clearly believed that the future belonged to the nationalists.[101] With the likelihood of an All-India federation on the horizon, their views would have to be taken into account. When the Viceroy asked Cunningham for his views, the Governor informed Linlithgow that Indian public opinion would have to be consulted in any future policy.[102]

The Viceroy took Cunningham's advice. Prior to succeeding Willingdon as Viceroy in 1936, Linlithgow had chaired the Joint-Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform. He was a staunch conservative who had little patience for Indian nationalism and believed that Britain should retain a strong position in India for the foreseeable future. He had a notably terrible relationship with Gandhi – though Lord Halifax (Irwin) observed that Linlithgow did "not really get on human terms with anybody."[103] Despite this, Linlithgow realized that British policy in the tribal areas had failed. In a 1939 report, drafted by Lord Linlithgow in cooperation with his influential Private Secretary, Sir Gilbert Laithwaite, the Viceroy claimed that the modified forward policy in Waziristan had "failed" to realize its own goals, the most important of which was the extension of "civilization" to the tribal areas. Linlithgow believed that the time was ripe to revisit a policy of economic development and civil pacification on the Frontier. Since 1922, military operations had constituted the principal means of enforcing control and advancing "civilization." Whereas the Howell Committee had confirmed the modified forward policy in 1931 and dismissed other tactics, such as economic development, as ineffective, there was now a shift. The Viceroy noted that although a number of authorities expressed grave doubts

[100] Comments by the Governor of the North-West Frontier Province on the Frontier Committee's Report, 1945, 12 July 1945.
[101] See Mitchell, *Sir George Cunningham*.
[102] Note by Sir George Cunningham, 20 June 1939.
[103] Lord Halifax (Irwin) to Lord Templewood (Sir Samuel Hoare), 13 July 1953, Templewood Papers E240/76. For Linlithgow's momentous Viceroyalty, see Gowher Rizvi, *Linlithgow and India: A Study of British Policy and Political Impasse in India, 1936–1943* (London, 1978); and John Glendevon's sympathetic study of his father, *Viceroy at Bay: Lord Linlithgow in India, 1936–1943* (London, 1971).

about the economic underpinnings of the tribal problem, Linlithgow had decided to commission a survey of the economic conditions in Waziristan and move forward on the construction of a hydroelectric facility in Malakand. Furthermore, it was important to create employment opportunities and improve educational and medical service in the tribal districts. Significantly, the memorandum mooted the reduction of regular troops in the Wana and Razmak garrisons.[104]

Tribal policy was also hindered by the spread of "democratic ideas," which undermined the authority of the *maliks*, whose power the British had attempted to foster. The constitutional and political situation in India posed serious problems for the freedom of British action on the Frontier. Linlithgow wrote:

> Frontier policy has become moreover of great interest to those Indian politicians who desire to see the establishment of a responsible system of Government at the Centre. Our difficulties on the Frontier provide them with a welcome weapon of criticism which unites the Hindu and Moslem [sic] in the defence of the so-called "independence" of the marauding tribes. The tribesmen themselves are becoming increasingly politically minded and are quick to take advantage of any phase of Indian politics which assists them to combat efforts to control them.

Among the chief limitations which Indian political consciousness placed on British policy was the use of air control. Although the Viceroy considered the use of aerial bombardment an effective tool against recalcitrant tribes, he concluded that the Government of India must now "take into account the severe restrictions imposed by public opinion both in India and abroad on the effective use of air action especially against those whom we claim to be our subjects." It was clear that Delhi needed a policy that could succeed in pacifying the tribes and also mollify public opinion in India.[105]

"Political India" and the tribal belt

Ultimately, Linlithgow's review signaled a shift, rather than a major change in British policy towards the tribal areas. It expressed

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[104] Memorandum by His Excellency the Viceroy on Frontier Policy, 22 July 1939, IOR L P&S 12/3265.
[105] Memorandum by His Excellency the Viceroy on Frontier Policy, 22 July 1939.

concern about the possible economic underpinnings of the revolt in Waziristan, and suggested that the retention of the regular Army at Wana and Razmak be reviewed at some point. The significance of the Viceroy's memorandum lay in the acknowledgment that the tribal belt was not an exclusively British concern. The Secretary of State for India, Lord Zetland, approved the recommendations outlined in the memorandum. Yet, with war on the horizon, any major changes in Frontier policy would have to be postponed until the cessation of hostilities with Germany. Zetland wrote that after the war there would have to be another appraisal of policy, hopefully along the lines of Linlithgow's report.[106] When this reappraisal eventually took place in 1944, the report, authored by Lieutenant-General Sir Francis Tuker, followed the same path as Linlithgow: the forward policy had failed; the root of the tribal violence and raids was poverty; and "political India" would have to be consulted.[107]

Thus, in the early 1920s, as the Government of India grappled with Gandhi's non-cooperation movement and a financial crisis, London and Delhi had nevertheless managed to forge a new tribal policy in a political vacuum, focusing on the decades-old Russian threat and the role of Afghanistan in fomenting unrest among the "fanatical" tribes of the North-West Frontier. Soldiers and officials carried on as if Victoria was still the Queen-Empress. By 1939, this illusion had been torn asunder. In the intervening years, the cause of Indian nationalism had gone from strength to strength. It was a slow and often tortuous process, and the British still held the whip by virtue of their control of the Indian Army. But the writing was on the wall. A key constraint of the inter-war years – the impact of negative publicity on the British Raj, expertly utilized by the Indian National Congress – had made major inroads in the Government of India's ability to act without consequence. The tribal areas, still officially beyond the border of "British India," were slowly but surely being integrated into the Indian political consciousness.

The key reason for this was the nature of British policy in the tribal areas. Regardless of whether the specific area was supposedly managed through the "forward policy" of outright military occupation, a "close border" regime of minimal interference, or somewhere in-between, the fact remained that all these policies rested on a philosophy of violence. The Army and Frontier cadre that was charged with formulating and

[106] Zetland to Linlithgow, 26 February 1940, L P&S 12/3265.
[107] Report of the Frontier Committee, 1945, L P&S 12/3266.

carrying out policy on the Frontier all started with the fundamental assumption that the "problem" of the tribal areas stemmed from the violent nature of Pathan society. The only solution was military pacification. There was some acknowledgment that poverty might play a role in the near constant unrest, and the road systems built in the Waziristan and the Mohmand country in this period were meant to foster trade as much as they were made for military transportation. Yet, through an admixture of ideological resistance to any real expenditure on economic development, and the simple fact that the Government of India was on a shoestring budget throughout this era, the economic factors were shunted aside in favor of a military solution.[108]

As the tumult of the All-India political situation temporarily subsided in the mid-1930s, nationalist attention was drawn to the tribal agencies and the British policy of military pacification. In particular, the policy of aerial bombardment scandalized opinion, both in India and overseas. In light of an international situation that included Italy's brutal invasion of Abyssinia, the Japanese invasion and rape of China, and the rapid rearmament of Europe, air control on the Frontier was seen as direct proof of British hypocrisy when dealing with its Indian subjects. Bombing opened the door to a wider criticism of tribal policy, which in the wake of the Faqir of Ipi's revolt, appeared to be not only barbaric and unnecessarily violent, but a failure as well. By 1939, Congress ran the NWFP government and many, including the Viceroy, believed that an All-India federation with Congress in a strong position was just around the corner. Frontier policy could no longer be carried out in the shadows.

[108] See Mallam, *A Pair of Chaplis*, p. 100; and Warren, *Waziristan*, p. 61.

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"A Glorified Maginot Line"?: The Frontier and the Second World War, 1939–1946

When war broke out in Europe in September 1939, British officials throughout the subcontinent dug in for a long and protracted conflict. The Viceroy, Linlithgow, declared India at war with the King's enemies without consulting a single Indian politician on the night of 3 September and, whereas the authorities in the First World War had waited until 1915 to drastically curtail civil liberties, in 1939 Delhi immediately went to work on war legislation. Shortly thereafter, the British administration regained total control of most of India's provinces. Congress ministers, who had resigned in protest over Linlithgow's unilateral declaration, were replaced by Governor's rule under section 93 of the Government of India Act.[1] In the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), Dr. Khan Sahib's Congress government resigned at the beginning of 1940, and Sir George Cunningham took up the reins of power under section 93, before passing it off to a Muslim League ministry in 1943.[2]

Despite the changes in policy and perceptions that loomed over the North-West Frontier by the close of 1930s, the onset of the Second World War and the age-old concerns that the war brought to the fore – the chief fear being the survival of the Raj during the stress of a prolonged global conflict – resulted in a general reversion to the *status quo ante* in the region. Yet, the very nature of the war and the surprising ways in which it weakened and strengthened British imperialism on

[1] Johannes H. Voigt, "Cooperation or Confrontation?: War and Congress Politics, 1939–1942," in Donald Anthony Low (ed.), *Congress and the Raj: Facets of the Indian Struggle, 1917–1947*, 2nd edition (New Delhi, 2004), pp. 349–374.

[2] For the rise of the Muslim League in the NWFP, see Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam, and Nationalism: Muslim Politics in the North-West Frontier Movement, 1937–1947* (Karachi, 1999).

the Frontier, in India as a whole, and on a global scale, led to a major re-evaluation of the nature of British rule in the North-West Frontier and the assumptions that underwrote it. Ultimately this led to a repudiation of many of the Raj's most closely held ideologies about the Frontier. As war materialized, British planners had assumed any attack on India would come not from the Japanese in the East, but from the Soviets – fresh from the Nazi-Soviet Pact – on the North-West Frontier. Military and civil authorities therefore put their energies into defending the arid Afghan borderlands, rather than the jungles of Assam and Manipur. The fact that no attack ever came, and instead the entire edifice of British rule east of the Suez was imperiled by the Japanese onslaught through Burma seriously undermined traditional British views on the strategic importance of the region.

This shift in strategic thinking coincided with a growing movement within the Frontier administration for a new approach to the Pathan tribes. These calls were accompanied by an awareness by many officers, expressed both publicly and privately, of the ways in which the belief in racial immutability distorted past British attempts to understand and work with the Pathan tribes. The Frontier officers were neither omnicompetent administrators basing their actions on empirical understandings of the region that lead to a surprisingly successful tribal policy in spite of inherent Pathan intransigence, nor were they late imperial martinets, so heavily imbued with innate Orientalist precepts, that they were precluded from any success in understanding, let alone "controlling," the tribes. Despite the conservative tendencies among the Political Service throughout the inter-war period, the final decade of British rule on the Frontier witnessed a slow but steady change in British perceptions of the Pathan tribes. Reflecting wider changes in India in the twilight years of the Raj, much of it stemming from the rising consciousness that British India was not long for this world, the Frontier cadre, far from being mere functionaries too influenced by background, bureaucratic procedure, and prejudice to understand the facts of the situation, increasingly understood the limitations of their worldview and sought to change their policies accordingly. This awareness went hand-in-hand with a growing belief that Britain's mission vis-à-vis the tribes had failed.

Afghanistan and the defence of India

The Army in India entered the Second World War facing the wrong direction. Much of the military establishment in India, having been

constructed to fight Frontier wars, was also woefully unfit for a major conflict with a great power. In the final years before the war, the Raj had attempted, like the home government in London, to modernize its forces and revisit its strategic assumptions. The Chatfield Committee and the Pownall Subcommittee, which had been charged with this brief, did make a number of key suggestions on the revamping of India's defence planning, yet many of the fundamentals remained the same. The major threat posed to India by the advent of another Great War was to be found on the Afghan marches, and the threat would emanate from Moscow.[3]

One of the fundamental issues for preparing the defence of India in London and Delhi in the late 1930s was the question of Afghanistan, where German and Turkish agents had operated with near impunity during the last war. Unlike during the First World War, Afghanistan was now a sovereign, independent nation and, while most believed that the Kabul government was friendly, there remained the problem of how to keep them friendly and outside the influence of a potentially hostile power. Relations with Afghanistan from 1936 to 1941 were therefore dominated by the question of what level of support and what sort of guarantees the British could offer the Afghan authorities should they be invaded by the Soviet Union or the victim of a *coup d'état* orchestrated by Moscow. The British Chiefs of Staff Defence of India Plan (1928) had stipulated that any Soviet invasion of Afghanistan would lead to a British declaration of war on the Bolsheviks. This was later amended to a cessation of diplomatic and trade relations with the Soviets.[4] Whereas British fears of Soviet infiltration of Afghanistan were originally inspired by Amir Amanullah Khan's burgeoning relationship with Moscow, after 1932 and the accession of Nadir Shah and his family to the throne, concerns centered on the possibility of a Soviet-backed pro-Amanullah coup that would be, by definition, anti-British. Such fears were shared in Kabul, and the Afghan regime attempted to get clear assurances of British military support throughout the 1930s. These overtures were rebuffed in large part during this period as a result of continued suspicion of any Afghan regime on the part of the Political Service and leadership of the Army in India.

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[3] See Defence of India Plan, 1941, India Office Records (IOR) L WS 1/530; Milan Hauner, "The Soviet Threat to Afghanistan and India, 1938–1940," in *Modern Asian Studies*, 15, 2 (1981), pp. 287–309.
[4] Hauner, "The Soviet Threat," pp. 292–293.

Upon taking up the reins as Britain's envoy to Afghanistan in 1936, the Political officer, Sir William Kerr Fraser-Tytler, urged the British and Indian governments to support the Afghan regime to the fullest extent. Fraser-Tytler argued that, in contrast to the late government of Amanullah, there was no question that the present regime was overwhelmingly anti-Soviet. Other matters concerned Kabul, however. Fraser-Tytler believed that the "constitutional changes in India" and the growing specter of Japanese power in East Asia were leading to a growing disquiet among Afghan leaders about their relationship to Britain in the event of a war. The Prime Minister, Mohammad Hashim Khan, told Fraser-Tytler that he feared that the Muslims of India would, in due course, become subject to the rule of the "Hindu" Congress, or even a "façade of Hindu rule controlled by Japan." Although Fraser-Tytler could not foresee the constitutional changes "ever reaching such a point as to force us to let go our hold on the key positions in India, such as control of the army," he realized that such anxieties should be met with full British guarantees for Afghanistan's security, especially if the British hoped to keep the Frontier quiet in time of distress.[5] Political officers such as Olaf Caroe, who was then serving as Assistant Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, remained wary of closer relations with Afghanistan. Caroe, who had a reputation for being "anti-Afghan," argued that the regime in Kabul could not be trusted since they continued to interfere with the Pathan tribes on the British side of the Durand Line.[6]

The Nazi-Soviet Pact and the outbreak of the war intensified the debate over British guarantees for Afghanistan's integrity. In September, the Secretary of State for India, Lord Zetland, and the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax (Irwin), authored a joint memorandum calling for a Mutual Assistance Agreement with Afghanistan. Halifax had served as Viceroy during the Afghan revolution of 1929–1930 and Zetland, as well as being a former Governor of Bengal, President of the Royal Geographical Society, and Curzon's official biographer, was something of a Frontier expert in his own right. The two argued that German and Italian agents would use Afghanistan for a base against India, that the pacification of the trans-border Pathan tribes during the war depended on Afghan cooperation, and that there was a high probability of Amanullah (who, since 1929, had resided in Italy) being restored to

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[5] Private and Personal Letter from Kerr Fraser-Tytler to Aubrey Metcalfe, 22 February 1936, IOR L P&S 12/3210.

[6] Confidential Memorandum by Olaf Caroe, 6 March 1936, L P&S 12/3210.

the throne by the Germans and Soviets working in concert.[7] The Chiefs of Staff in London rejected the proposal, but in December the Indian General Staff sent two officers to Kabul to discuss an agreement. The Afghans made impossible demands for training and *materiel*, and, since the British were unable to provide much of what the Afghans deemed necessary, the negotiations stalled. When the British did offer concrete support in the spring of 1940, the situation in Europe meant that Kabul was hesitant to accept these measures. By the winter of 1940–1941, however, the Soviet Union's involvement on the European stage signaled a dramatic drop in fears over an immediate Russian invasion across the Amu Darya and British concerns about their north-western marches declined as they slowly turned to face the growing Japanese menace in the East.

Although the situation in Afghanistan was viewed as closely intertwined with Britain's position on the North-West Frontier, it was not considered to be exactly the same. In the immediate aftermath of Britain's declaration of war on Nazi Germany, Olaf Caroe, now serving as External Affairs Secretary in the Government of India, was asked to summarize the threats that war would bring to the Frontier.[8] Caroe began with a discussion of Waziristan, which was still under military control. He argued that both the initial revolt in Waziristan and some of the more recent troubles in the agency were the result of the introduction of Congress rule in the NWFP, which, Caroe believed, was seen by the tribes as a retreat and surrender of power by the British. Although he reckoned that provincial premier, Khan Sahib, would be staunch in his support of the British war effort, there were nevertheless problems with an indigenous regime governing all of the settled districts. To counter the impression of renunciation, Caroe urged a resumption of full direct British control over the Bannu district, which abutted Waziristan on its western extremities and, if necessary, the NWFP "proper in general." He further encouraged the government to root out extremist religious cells that had taken root in the Tirah and other tribal agencies over the last year, writing that "the dislodgement of such cells is possibly the matter of chief importance, if the tribal area is not to become a serious side show and if the stability of Afghanistan is to be assured." Moreover, he expected the Axis powers, in association with the Soviets, to finance and encourage "centres of disaffection" in Waziristan and Tirah. Finally,

[7] Hauner, "The Soviet Threat," p. 296.

[8] The title for India's Foreign Secretary had been altered to "External Affairs Secretary" in 1937.

he argued that the Defence of India Ordinance should be used to suppress any "appeals to tribal intransigence on the part of the Indian press, while a positive organization of propaganda . . . should be applied to Afghanistan and the Tribal Areas."[9]

For George Cunningham in Peshawar, fears of tribal unrest were reinforced in the summer of 1938 by the appearance of a figure known as the Shami Pir. A Syrian "holy man," the Pir was apparently in the payment of Germany.[10] Holding a meeting in southern Waziristan in June 1938, he collected a number of armed men to attack the British garrison at Razmak. Cunningham wrote that the "tribesmen were swept off their feet by his appeal to Islam, and it was with great difficulty (by heavy bombing and finally by buying off the Pir himself) that we were able to prevent [further hostilities]."[11] Meanwhile, the Faqir of Ipi remained holed up in his mountain fastness. Cunningham believed that the Faqir hoped to "stir the pot" until the outbreak of a war.[12]

In line with Caroe's recommendations, in August 1939 the Frontier administration concluded that the best way to keep the Frontier "quiet" for the duration of hostilities was through a propaganda campaign using the region's Islamic leadership. Entrusted to an Indian official, Kuli Khan, the program was to be highly confidential and Kuli Khan was instructed to avoid putting anything in writing. The British kept detailed records of the local religious leadership, identifying those who might cause problems for the administration and those who may prove more cooperative. Meeting with mullahs and leaders of religious organizations throughout the Frontier, Kuli Khan argued that the British were "working for the good of Islam against the arch enemy of Islam – the Bolshevik." He represented the Germans as being "collaborators with the Russians in their activities against Islam, and indeed, against religion generally."[13]

Kuli Khan enlisted a Mullah Marwat as his middleman to distribute subsidies to a number of mullahs who had until this point been anti-British. With money in hand, religious organizations like the *Jamiat-ul-Ulema*

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[9] Memorandum from Olaf K. Caroe to Lord Zetland, 3 September 1939, IOR L PO 4/4.
[10] See Hauner, "The Soviet Threat," pp. 287–309.
[11] The Pir received a cheque for £25,000 from the Imperial Bank of India. Summary of Events in the NWFP, 1937–1946, by Sir George Cunningham, Cunningham Papers IOR D670/17.
[12] Summary of Events in the NWFP, 1937–1946.
[13] Note on Propaganda through Mullahs, by Sir George Cunningham, April 1941, Cunningham Papers IOR D670/19.

passed a resolution that if Russia ever attacked Afghanistan, it would be the duty of all Muslims to join a *jihad* against the Soviets. Spread throughout the Frontier, the propaganda campaign was viewed as highly successful by the British. In the dark days of May and June 1940, Cunningham called a *jirga* in Peshawar attended by over 1000 Pathan tribesmen. To his relief, the numerous statements he made condemning Russia and Germany were "hailed with pleasure" by the assembled tribal leaders.[14]

The problem remained Waziristan, however. Although the propaganda campaign was extended to this restive region, it remained, in the Viceroy's words, "a plague spot."[15] Raids continued to be made into the administered areas and the Faqir of Ipi continued to attack military convoys and kill British officers on patrol. Although the British propaganda was clearly making little impact on the Faqir's base of support in 1940, there were some encouraging signs by 1941. By June of that year Cunningham believed that the Faqir of Ipi "seemed to be much more the champion of Islam than the friend of Germans or Russians, and certainly in South Waziristan the Mahsuds heartily disliked the idea of any German advance towards India." By the end of the year, the propaganda campaign was deemed to have made inroads. Cunningham wrote that "Mullahs in Waziristan – partly, it is true, at my . . . instigation – were advising Ipi that to fight the British, while they were at war with Germany, was unlawful." Tribal *jirgas* presented funds to help buy fighter aeroplanes and for months there were few violent incidents in Waziristan. The Faqir of Ipi continued to collect funds from German and Japanese agents based in Kabul, but he kept a low profile.[16]

Leslie Mallam and the Malakand experiment

Despite the reassessment of British assumptions and tribal policy in the wake of the Waziristan Revolt, Cunningham's propaganda campaign was very much of the old school. The scheme revealed that many in the administration continued to believe that the basic motivations behind the tribesmen's actions stemmed in large part from the influence of Islam. There was little room for theories about poverty and material want. Yet changes were nevertheless taking place within the Frontier

[14] Note on Propaganda through Mullahs, by Sir George Cunningham.
[15] Letter from Linlithgow to Leo Amery (Secretary of State for India), 29 August 1940, IOR L P&S 12/3265.
[16] Summary of Events in the NWFP, 1937–1946.

cadre. As the war continued, new voices arose from the ranks of the Political Service, arguing that the various manifestations of policy that prevailed in the tribal belt had not only failed, but that the assumptions that underwrote them were overly simplistic and out of date. Among the most vocal dissident Politicals in this era was the veteran Frontier officer Leslie Mallam. Mallam had always been somewhat different from many of his fellow officers: he was from the Army, possessed a law degree, but no university degree, and from the early 1930s took a decidedly liberal view of Indian nationalism, as seen in his actions as Assistant Commissioner for Charsadda, the epicenter of Pathan nationalism. With certain exceptions throughout the 1930s, however, Mallam rarely veered too far from the general orthodoxy about the character of the inhabitants of the tribal belt. Even in the case of Waziristan he was not among those vigorously calling for a complete reformation of policy. Instead Mallam's point of departure on tribal policy began in earnest in 1939 when he was appointed Political Agent for Malakand, Dir, Swat, and Chitral.

Whereas Dir, Swat, and Chitral were under the control of their own autocratic rulers in treaty relations with the British, Malakand, located just to the north of the Vale of Peshawar, was a more traditional tribal agency. In Malakaland, the Political Agent (PA), with the help of Indian subordinates, was charged with overseeing the workings of the various tribal *jirgas* that sat as judge and jury and, for most tribal affairs and criminal cases, theoretically acted unanimously according to the particular *riwaj* (customs) of the tribe or clan and the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR), which barred appeals, the use of evidence, and permitted the use of torture. The PA and his subordinates were then charged with carrying out the sentences imposed by the *jirga*. With much of his territory under-ruled by indigenous autocrats, Mallam spent the bulk of his time working with the *jirga* of the Yusufzai tribe in the southern Swat valley. Although Mallam, who had entered the Political Service in 1921, was a relatively senior Frontier officer, most of his work had been in the settled districts or the legation in Kabul. His appointment to these northern territories was his first time presiding over a wholly tribal territory. Upon arriving, he quickly came to the conclusion that the presiding system was broken. Malakand was impoverished, life was cheap, and what passed as a judicial system was hopelessly corrupt. Armed with an English legal education, he was especially critical of the manner in which PAs were expected to carry out the FCR and *jirga* sentences. He wrote that Frontier officers "with a minimum of legal training [were] passing thumping sentences of rigorous imprisonment

with hard labour, sometimes even transportation for life, without hearing any evidence and solely on the recommendation of four or five elders chosen by his Indian Assistant. All this on a sensitive Frontier!" He came to the conclusion that describing such proceedings as "satisfactory to all parties" was nothing but smooth official language for a "disgracefully low standard of administration."[17]

Mallam believed that the reason that there were numerous outbreaks of violence both on the personal and the grand scale – and these were common, as became "clear from even a casual perusal of the agency reports" – lay in the British belief that the Pathan tribes were inherently violent and welcomed anarchy. He argued that it was all well and good to call British policy on the Frontier "indirect rule," but it was in effect sanctioned anarchy and corruption with no actual framework. Mallam, still tending to espouse essentialist arguments – even if they were the opposite of received administrative opinion – increasingly came to believe that the answer to the tribal problem was to jettison the entire system and lead the tribes back to the path of true self-government by means of unearthing their *pre-colonial* constitutions – constitutions of which even the Yusufzai themselves would be unaware. Mallam discarded the old argument that the Frontier officer knew the Pathan better than the Pathan knew himself, giving short shrift to the concept that past PAs in the Malakand had had a sound understanding of the workings of Yusufzai society. He therefore began to try to uncover a pre-British, and therefore "natural" set of laws and customs that would allow the tribes to happily govern – and control – themselves.

Wary of giving the impression that he was trying to foist a codified *riwaj* on the Yusufzai and unsure of how to uncover this indigenous constitution, Mallam retreated to the agency record room housed in the fort at the Malakand Pass to go through the hundreds of case files that had been collected over the previous 50 years. Using the oldest files, he selected a few outstanding cases under the main headings of crime – murder, theft, adultery – and noted that each case contained a unanimous finding by the elders in the *jirga*. His working hypothesis was that such an agreement indicated something akin to original *riwaj*. He then waited for similar new cases to come before him. Noting the *jirga's* findings on, say, a murder case, he would summon the *jirga* to discuss their conclusions. He then asked if their findings were in

[17] G. Leslie Mallam and Diana Day, *A Pair of Chaplis and a Cassock*, (London, 1978), Mallam Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, Cambridge University (CSAS), p. 87.

accordance with *riwaj*. After being assured by some of the members that it was, he read out the names of the elders who had signed (via thumb print) a similar historic case and queried whether anyone remembered these men. Mallam then instructed his assistant to read the findings of the original case and asked if these older findings (distinct from the contemporary conclusions) were in accordance with *riwaj*. When assured that they were, he then pointed out that the outcome of the two similar cases were at variance with one another. He then returned the current case to the *jirga* for reconsideration. When returned to him, the revised findings were identical to the old findings in a similar case. Convinced that he had found something akin to the original *riwaj*, he had cases recorded in a new register of tribal case law along the lines of English common law.[18] Mallam reported that the "result was startling . . . the spirit of the tribe revived, with a renewed confidence in their own peculiar law and procedure, which now became the rule for deciding almost every case."[19]

Mallam was convinced that he had uncovered the basis not only for a clear case law among the tribes – or at any rate among the Yusufzai – but also a basis for tribal self-government and an end to tribal raids, revolts, and its attendant collective punishment and the FCR. Mallam correctly judged that many of his colleagues in the Political Service believed that tribal Pathan society was lawless and that the only thing that mattered was "power, brute force, or bribery." In retirement, he wrote: "The truth revealed in my inquiry was very different . . . there was no proof that the Pathan tribes were far from being lawless. In the heart of these primitive communities lay a core of justice and morality, capable of controlling every individual, however headstrong, and of raising the standard of tribal life to a high level."[20]

Although Mallam was aware of the fact that his research was far from exhaustive, he sent a 23-page report on his findings and suggestions entitled "Notes on Tribal Reconstruction" to the North-West Frontier Chief Secretary, Ambrose Dundas, in February 1941 with instructions for it to be distributed throughout the administration. In it, Mallam queried just how successful the tribal policies of the last 30 years had in fact been. Acknowledging the finite nature of British rule in India, he argued that the British time on the Frontier was drawing to a close and

[18] Notes on Tribal Reconstruction by G.L. Mallam, 12 February 1941, Mallam Papers.
[19] Mallam, *A Pair of Chaplis*, p. 88.
[20] Mallam, *A Pair of Chaplis*, p. 89.

that it was incumbent upon his generation of Political officers to leave a lasting administrative legacy. History, he asserted, would view the current system as a failure, and the administration had not a moment to lose in finding a lasting solution to the "tribal problem." Mallam explained his experiment in Malakand, but went further, arguing that similar procedures along the tribal belt could provide the foundation for self-government at a village level. This, in turn could lead to indigenous governmental institutions at the agency level and even self-government for the whole of the tribal territory. Convinced that "the degree of deterioration [in the tribal territory] is governed by the extent and nearness of the contact of the tribes with government officials," withdrawing the hand of British Indian government, after securing the revival of "tribal constitutions," would lead to a renaissance in tribal governance and societal welfare.[21]

Although a large part of Mallam's arguments were grounded in what he saw as his empirical experience among the Yusufzai, it was also the product of his own essentialized view of Pathan society. Mallam believed, like many other Frontier officers, that the Pathan tribes were *inherently* democratic. Unlike many of his peers, however, he didn't use democracy as a synonym for license and anarchy. Mallam was convinced of the sincerity of the Frontier nationalist movement and its association with non-violence and democratic ideals. It was therefore logical for him to assume that the tribesmen shared the same essential ideals as their brethren in the settled districts. He did not claim that democratic ideals were universal to mankind; he simply claimed that they were universal to the Pathan psyche.[22]

Tribal democracy was, of course, not the reality in most of the tribal areas, nor especially in the agencies over which Mallam presided – namely Dir, Swat, and Chitral, all of which were ruled by autocrats. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, a number of Frontier officers had seen the construction of autocratic states in the tribal territories as a panacea to the tribal problem and Mallam was aware that many administrators saw these absolute rulers, especially the Wali of Swat, as the "blue-eyed boys" of the Frontier. In order to buttress his argument that, despite the apparent tranquility of the tribes under these regimes, the tribes should enjoy a democratic rather than an autocratic future, Mallam insisted that, in Swat in particular, the Wali's autocracy was made possible by "the merging of the Pathan with the non-Pathan central Asian races of

[21] Notes on Tribal Reconstruction.
[22] Notes on Tribal Reconstruction.

the Upper Swat Valley and the Indus Kohistan," which had been added to the state. Autocracy prevailed among the Pathans of these northern agencies, according to this dubious line of argument, only because they weren't actually Pathans. Mallam argued that "even the personality of the Wali of Swat," with whom he had a strained relationship, "would flinch before the Augean task of subjecting Pathan tribes to autocratic rule." He summed up his argument for the British mission on the Frontier to embrace the democratic nature of the Pathans, by alluding to Britain's struggle against the dictatorships of Hitler and Mussolini: "As upholders of democracy in other parts of the world, including our own native country, are not the British race peculiarly well fitted to help these indigenous Pathan democracies to work out their own destiny on lines most suited to their ancient traditions?"[23]

The answer, from most of the senior officials who read the report, was "no." Both Caroe in Delhi and Cunningham in Peshawar were opposed to any change in the *status quo*. Cunningham believed that the situation in Malakand was in fact one of the best examples of the efficacy of the current system. Of course, the primary reason for him viewing this as a success was not internal order within Malakand, but the fact that the local tribesmen had refrained from raiding British Indian territory for so long.[24] Other senior officers, such as the Resident in Waziristan, William Hay, informed Mallam that he disagreed with almost everything his colleague posited. He continued:

> My opinion is that the trans-border tribesmen are for the most part savages whose main desire is not to be governed by anybody. They have certainly evolved some kind of *riwaj* . . . but it is in many respects barbarous, and I refuse to believe that there was ever a golden age in which the tribes enjoyed peace and quiet under their own democratic institutions.

Mallam himself pointed out in a draft of his memoirs that there "was a streak of full blooded imperialism here."[25] Yet, many members of the Political Service did like what they saw in the proposals. Dundas, who had earlier serves as PA in Malakand and would go on to serve as the next Resident in Waziristan where he became one of the most

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23 Notes on Tribal Reconstruction.
24 Note by Sir George Cunningham on North-West Frontier Policy, 1943, 5 June 1943, Cunningham Papers IOR D670/13.
25 Mallam Draft Memoirs, p. 195, Mallam Papers.

vociferous critics of tribal policy, informed Mallam that while he disagreed with many of his assertions, he nevertheless preferred Mallam's suggestions to the systems supported by Caroe and Cunningham.[26] Several officers responded to Mallam with encouragement, and the Deputy Commissioner for Mardan, where a large number of Yusufzai tribesmen resided, asked a prominent member of the Frontier Congress party to investigate. The nationalist politician, Ghulam Mohammad, reported back that not only was the new *jirga* system popular in the agency, but that, as best as he could ascertain, it reflected the old *jirga* "system of Pukhtoon."[27]

Nevertheless, Mallam had failed to persuade the Frontier establishment of the virtue of extending his system throughout the tribal territories. By the end of 1941, he was promoted to the position of Provincial Chief Secretary and had to put away his Malakand experiments. Mallam's new position, combined with the practicalities of not changing policy during war time, to say nothing of the ideological and professional challenges his suggestions involved, meant that the plan for tribal self-government would be placed next to Sir John Maffey's 1923 missive on the modified forward policy in Waziristan in the "unsolicited notes" file of the Peshawar secretariat for the duration of the war.[28]

Reappraisals of tribal policy

The rejection of Leslie Mallam's proposal for a new approach to tribal administration was indicative of the wider retrenchment of inter-war Frontier policy following the outbreak of hostilities with Germany. Although the Viceroy's 1939 review of the Frontier and Waziristan in particular had been relatively minor in its policy changes, suggesting, for instance, the gradual replacement of one battalion at Wana by tribal scouts and possibly the same at Razmak, and the realization of tribal fines in ammunition rather than rifles, the overall mood of many officers at the time was that larger changes would have to be made to the entire structure of the modified forward policy. The younger generation in particular tended to believe that the assumptions underlying military

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[26] Ambrose Dundas, Chief Secretary, NWFP, to Leslie Mallam, 12 March 1941, Mallam Papers.
[27] Mallam Draft Memoirs, p. 193, Mallam Papers.
[28] Ambrose Dundas, Chief Secretary, NWFP, to Leslie Mallam, 12 March 1941, Mallam Papers.

occupation – the unchanging nature of the Wazirs and the Mahsuds – were an outdated vestige of racial determinism. Instead, they argued that occupation only provoked the tribes and that other solutions, such as tackling the region's endemic poverty, may pay greater dividends for the future security of British India. This frame of mind was partly seen in the review itself, with its discussion of tribal economics and the need to consult Indian public opinion.[29] Yet, with a war on its hands, the Government of India was in no mood for innovation. There was neither time, nor energy, nor money, to overhaul the British stance towards Waziristan – let alone the rest of the tribal areas – in 1939.[30]

As witnessed with the propaganda campaign with the mullahs, the maintenance of both the operational and ideological *status quo* in the tribal areas worked reasonably well through the first desperate years of the war when the Russian and German menace on the North-West Frontier was quickly replaced by the specter of the Japanese juggernaut on India's eastern borders, but the truce in Waziristan began to crumble in early 1943, and raids as well as attacks on British and Indian troops recommenced.[31] Officials acknowledged that the propaganda campaign helped pacify Waziristan, yet it had not been enough. The continued threat from Waziristan guaranteed that, as a post-war review stated, the region remained the "cheapest concentration camp for Allied servicemen the Axis ever possessed." As Britain and the British Raj fought for their lives in Europe, North Africa, and the Burma theater, this nominally peaceful region ate up 5,000 members of the Frontier Constabulary, 10,000 tribal militiamen, fifty-two battalions of the regular British and Indian armies (an estimated 50,000 men), and two squadrons of the Royal Air Force and Royal Indian Air Force. All told, a full 38% of the Army in India's peacetime establishment of active battalions spent the entirety of the war keeping the lid on Waziristan – at a price of £10 million annually.[32]

The outbreak of further violence in Waziristan in 1943 convinced even Cunningham that something was amiss in the British approach towards the troubled region.[33] Cunningham had been Linlithgow's

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[29] Memorandum by His Excellency the Viceroy on Frontier Policy, 29 June 1939, L P&S 12/3265.

[30] Zetland to Linlithgow, 26 February 1940, L P&S 12/3265.

[31] North-West Frontier Province Governor's Report No. 8, 23 April 1943, IOR L P&J 5/220.

[32] Report of the Frontier Committee, 1945, IOR L P&S 12/3266.

[33] Note by Sir George Cunningham on North-West Frontier Policy, 1943, 5 June 1943.

key resource when writing the 1939 report on Frontier policy and his views had a major influence over its recommendation. Cunningham, just as much as events, had been a primary reason for the retention of the modified forward policy in 1939.[34] The Governor had taken over the Frontier Province in the midst of the Waziristan revolt, and had believed that there should be no major reassessment of policy. Though the last two years had been "disappointing," that did not mean the policy had "failed." He had argued that occupation had resulted in a far greater level of control over the tribes of Waziristan than the British had before they had occupied it in 1923. In his report on the issue, Cunningham, took a swipe at the younger officers calling for a new policy, stating that "no officer, I think, who knew Waziristan [before 1923] would challenge this statement." Cunningham argued that the revolt of 1936–1938 was "not immediately connected with the policy of occupation." He admitted that while some of the younger tribesmen may have resented the occupation of Wana and Razmak and perceived this as a diminution of their independence, it would be "wrong to attribute the whole blame to shortcomings in our main policy, or in the execution of it."[35] In another report, Cunningham urged the Government to extend roads and military occupation into the Shaktu area of Waziristan, previously outside the government's reach.[36] Ultimately, he recommended the continuation of the policy started in 1922, with such reorientation as may be possible and desirable, arguing that from 1923 to 1936 this policy was a "striking success, and may be successful yet."[37]

By 1943, however, Cunningham was beginning to have doubts. Responding to a query over the possibility of moving troops from Waziristan to the Burma front, Cunningham argued that a drawdown of regular troops in Waziristan would be "disastrous." It would be seen as a retreat of imperial power, spark a revolt in Waziristan, and probably lead to unrest in other parts of the Frontier as well. Perhaps, when the war was over, there could be a gradual drawdown of "three regular battalions," from the post at Razmak, but even this

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[34] Memorandum by His Excellency the Viceroy on Frontier Policy, 29 June 1939, L P&S 12/3265.

[35] Note by HE Sir George Cunningham on North-West Frontier Policy, 27 October 1938, Cunningham Papers D670/13.

[36] Note by HE Sir George Cunningham – Roads in Shaktu, 13 May 1937, Cunningham Papers D670/13.

[37] Note by HE Sir George Cunningham on North-West Frontier Policy, 27 October 1938.

would possibly imperil the peace of the Frontier and would have to be watched carefully. Yet, although this was not the right moment, Cunningham was willing to admit that economics may have played a substantial role in tribal unrest. Moreover, moving forward, he worried about the continued heavy presence of the military in Waziristan. Some of this, no doubt, stemmed from the age-old tensions between the soldier and the administrator on the Frontier, but this was an entirely new line for the conciliatory Governor. He wrote that no matter what, a permanent military governance of the region was out of the question and suggested that after the war a policy that was "not merely a Military – and a hostile – occupation" should be pursued in Waziristan.[38]

Members of the Frontier administration were beginning to sound more and more like their Congress detractors of the 1930s. By 1944, as Allied victory looked increasingly assured, and the Government of India started looking towards the formulation of a post-war policy that was almost guaranteed to involve Indian input and an eventual transfer of power, Mallam, still acting as Chief Secretary, once again presented his superiors with a plan for tribal self-government. The men it was sent to were nearly the same. Caroe was still Foreign Secretary, Cunningham remained Governor, and the recommendations were virtually identical. But the tone and the assumptions that underwrote it, as well as the response it received, were demonstrably different from 1941. Mallam's 1944 proposals were stripped of the essentializing language that characterized his unorthodox portrayal of the Pathans in 1941. Instead, he based his arguments on the universal human desire for security and good government. In what really was a departure from the assertions made by generations of Indian administrators, Mallam stated that "human nature is very much the same all the world over," and that it was safe to assume that the:

> Pathan tribes, like all other human beings living together in communities, are in need of the ordinary essentials of life, such as the kind of security which comes from good government, the just settlement of disputes, political and economic development, a reasonable standard of living and the means of social and cultural progress.

[38] Note by Sir George Cunningham on North-West Frontier Policy, 1943, 5 June 1943.

Unfortunately, Mallam argued, this assumption was generally *not* accepted by many in the British administration and it was "commonly alleged that Pathans are different from all other human beings." It was believed that the Pathan tribes enjoyed insecurity, were unsatisfied unless involved in "some blood feud with a relative or a neighbor" and would actively resent any attempt to change this state of affairs by the introduction of a judicial system for the prompt and final settlement of all domestic disputes. The Pathan tribesman, Mallam argued, had a reputation for brutality, not because he was racially disposed to violence, but because of circumstance. It did not follow that if the Pathan tribes were at present in a "state of anarchy, they have always been in that state or that because a man is poor, uncultured, uneducated, and forced to defend himself against an armed and treacherous enemy, he enjoys being always in that state." This assertion of the mutable nature of the Pathan, along with the statement that the tribesmen were men like any other, was a radical departure from a key orthodoxy of the British on the Frontier.

Mallam also entered new territory in the specific proposal he made for how the Government of India should collect the data needed to unearth the various tribes' indigenous constitutions. In 1941, he had mooted the idea of a bureau of tribal affairs; in this second incarnation, he went much further. Taking on the key Political Service belief that veteran British Frontier officers knew the Pathan better than he knew himself, Mallam argued that there was no evidence for the claim that these officers knew all there was to know about the indigenous workings of specific tribal *jirgas*. Mallam averred that "if they did possess this knowledge, they have left no record of it, and there is not in existence at the present day any treatise or manual, official or otherwise, on the subject of the political constitution of the Pathan tribes . . . it may be taken for granted therefore that the demands made on the tribes by British and Indian officials, and many of the inducements offered, were directly or indirectly opposed to the tribal constitution." The answer to this problem, Mallam argued, lay in impartial scientific studies, carried out by professional anthropologists working with the Government of India.[39]

What was remarkable about these proposals was not simply the ideas they carried, but the response they received. Caroe took great exception to the suggestion that an anthropological study could discoverer any

[39] G. L. Mallam, The Case for Tribal Self Government, 1944, IOR L P&S 12/3278.

more about tribal society than the combined knowledge of generations of Political officers. He wrote that:

> The Pathan tribes are not "primitives" – and they do not need the anthropologist to either measure their skulls or to study their weapons, or their institutions and least of all to make intimate photographs of their women (for that always seems to me to be one of the incentives of so many declared anthropologists!). Our officers on the frontier – a long line of them – e.g. Donald, Roos-Keppel, Griffith, Parsons, Barnes, Bacon, Dundas (to these you might add the Shaikh Abdurahim and Kuli Khan among others) – even my humble self, and most certainly your present governor . . . collectively know already almost all that there is to know about Pathan tribal organization.

Caroe was not opposed, however, to an indigenous system of self-government in the tribal areas. Although he admired the autocratic states of Dir, Swat, and Chitral, he was willing to admit that perhaps entirely self-governing tribal areas would be a good thing, especially with the unknown constitutional future facing India and the Frontier. In a prescient comment he suggested that "it may not be too much to aim at indigenous republics or theocracies in Tirah and Waziristan." Caroe suggested that Mallam show the proposal to Cunningham.[40] The Governor, too, was far more supportive. In conversations with Mallam, Cunningham appeared to accept most of his subordinate's points about the need for some new interpretation of tribal self-government.[41]

The response from other Frontier officers was also not nearly as vociferous as it had been three years before. Some younger officers, such as Alastair Low, who had served on the Frontier since the late 1930s, even chastised Mallam for being too old fashioned and inclined to believe that the mutable nature of the Pathans must be one of progress followed by decline. Low suggested that the facts that the tribes inhabited such inhospitable territory suggested that they had a long-term problem with organization that had led them to be driven into their Spartan domiciles in the first place, well before the arrival of Pax Britannica. He also cautioned his older colleague that, just because the Anglo-Saxons had developed common law, it did not mean that the tribes had some sort of hidden "immutable *riwaj*." More than anything, Low cautioned against any attempt to assert any new procedures into the tribal judicial

[40] Caroe to Mallam, 14 March 1944, Mallam Papers.
[41] Mallam to Caroe, 29 May 1944, Mallam Papers.

process that resembled British Indian law. Low did agree, however, that the situation in the tribal areas was far from satisfactory and that some sort of "scientific" study of the region would be welcome.[42]

By the time Mallam reintroduced his proposals many members of the Frontier cadre were aware of the fact that British rule in India was coming to an end. Mallam, therefore, attempted to press upon his fellow officers the need to extend a form of self-government for the tribes that would be in keeping with the self-government that he and others, such as Cunningham, believed would soon come to India as a whole. The economic development that he envisioned accompanying these reforms would march with the political development of an independent India. He further reasoned that his policy would smooth the eventual transfer of power to Indian political parties, stating that Congress would support it since "it would afford the best possible protection against tribal incursions from the North-West," whereas for the increasingly powerful Muslim League the "education of the tribes in the art of self-government" would add strength and "self-respect to the Muslim cause." Mallam was hopeful for the future. His worst fear was that once his term as NWFP Chief Secretary came to an end, his next appointment would be in Baluchistan or the Indian States and he would not be able to play a role in the future of tribal areas. He had now been in the Political Service for over 20 years and senior positions on the Frontier beyond his current position were few and far between. He enlisted both Caroe and Cunningham to assist him in staying.[43]

Shortly after submitting his "Case for Tribal Self-Government," Mallam's personal life was upended by a string of tragedies. This began with the death of his wife, Marie, from birth complications in June 1944. This was followed in April of 1945 by the death from typhoid fever of his six-year-old daughter, Judith, who had spent most of the last year living with the Cunninghams in Government House.[44] Mallam responded to these calamities by throwing himself into work, but he was in no position to press for his reforms or take up the duties of Resident in Waziristan, the coveted role from which he hoped to begin enacting his program for tribal self-government.[45] This professional disappointment was mitigated, however, by the fact that Cunningham

[42] Low's Views, Given to Mallam on 9 December 1944, Mallam Papers.
[43] Mallam to Caroe, 29 May 1944.
[44] Caroe to Mallam, 7 June 1944, Mallam Papers; and Mallam, *A Pair of Chaplis*, p. 96.
[45] Draft Letter from Mallam to Caroe, 16 August 1944, Mallam Papers.

created a new position for Mallam that allowed him to stay in the NWFP: Commissioner for Post-War Planning. The Governor cautioned Mallam, however, that his development planning should focus exclusively on the settled district of the Frontier.[46]

Yet, change was in the air. The conclusion of the war prompted a fresh review of Frontier policy. With Linlithgow's 1939 recommendations, and all the subsequent criticisms in mind, a committee was formed under Major-General Sir Francis Tuker in September 1944 and charged with formulating a new policy.[47] The new Viceroy, Lord Wavell, noted: "The old see-saw of frontier policy goes on, much as it has gone on for the last 100 years, without getting any nearer to a permanent solution."[48] Questionnaires were sent out to the Frontier administration, asking officers their opinion on past reports, such as the Howell report and the 1939 recommendations, as well as their views on current policy.[49] When formulating the five-man committee, Caroe and other senior officials initially planned to include both Mallam and Ambrose Dundas, both of whom were well known critics of current policy in Waziristan and the tribal areas in general. On further reflection, however, the Government of India decided to omit them so that they could provide expert testimony to the committee. Presumably this testimony would call for a new approach, suggesting that Caroe and others were in favor of changing Frontier policy and were looking for procedural cover.[50]

The Frontier Committee Report, 1945

The final Report of the Frontier Committee was released in 1945 and echoed long-held British opinions in diagnosing the problem, stating: "If the love of independence were in itself a virtue, it would have a commendable aspect; for the Pathan's most striking trait which lies at the

[46] Mallam, *A Pair of Chaplis*, p. 100.
[47] Tuker later served as Eastern Commander of the Indian Army and was therefore responsible for security in Bengal and Bihar during the communal massacres of 1946–1947. See Sir Francis Tuker, *While Memory Serves: The Last Two Years of British Rule in India* (London, 1950).
[48] Wavell's Diary entry for 31 October 1945, in Sir Penderel Moon (ed.), *Wavell: The Viceroy's Journal* (Karachi, 1997), p. 179.
[49] Answers to Questionnaire, Frontier Committee, 1944, Mallam Papers.
[50] Letter from Sir Olaf Caroe to the Honorable Lieutenant-Colonel W. R. Hay, CSI, CIE, Agent to the Governor-General, Resident and Chief Commissioner in Baluchistan, 31 August 1944, L P&S 12/3265.

root of all his actions is his fierce independence." Yet, the report argued, for the Pathan tribesmen this independence meant license, it meant "the right of the individual to resist any curtailment of his liberty, irrespective of the needs of his neighbors or its repercussions on contiguous communities."[51] Here the similarities with past policy reviews ended, however. Despite these "deficiencies" in the Pathan character, the Tuker Committee concluded that it was the British, and not the tribesmen, who were responsible for the "disappointing" lack of "civilization" in the tribal belt and Waziristan in particular. For, "while the military administration supposedly has [the tribesman] under control, [the tribesman] in fact has the administration in control." There was much in the report that dovetailed with Mallam's 1941 and 1944 proposals. Although there was no explicit discussion of "tribal self-government," Tuker's committee called for the employment of anthropologists to work with the tribes in order to ensure smoother indigenous governance. The report also emphasized the role of economic development in Frontier unrest. The Committee argued that poverty was not the problem *per se*, for the tribal tracts were often awash in cash from their government allowances. The problem was the lack of infrastructure. They called for a policy of economic development and enhanced educational opportunities throughout the tribal areas, writing that the groundwork should be done by a "staff specially appointed for the tribal areas' economic development, i.e. irrigation, agriculture, animal husbandry, afforestation and anti-erosion, industry and public works." It was recommended that funds be provided to the provincial administration to carry out new schemes. These deficiencies, argued Tuker and his colleagues, rather than immutable racial characteristics, constituted the core of the Frontier problem.[52]

Many within the Frontier cadre continued to look askance at these sorts of arguments, and remained wedded, even if increasingly estranged, to the modes of thought that had undergirded their policies for the last 100 years. But events were moving quickly: the war would

[51] Report of the Frontier Committee, 1945.

[52] As Hugh Beattie has pointed out, the report even questioned the entire "tribal" taxonomy of the region as it had been understood since Eliphinstone, noting that among the Mahsuds "so kaleidoscopic is the structure, so loose the organization that an infinite variety of alliances is possible, negotiations with them are difficult and treaties seldom binding" (See Hugh Beattie, "Custom and Conflict in Waziristan: Some British Views" in Magnus Marsden and Benjamin D. Hopkins (eds), *Beyond Swat: History, Society and Economy Along the Afghanistan-Pakistan Frontier* (New York, 2012), p. 218).

soon be over, questions about the British "legacy" in the subcontinent were starting to percolate, and the experience of the war had made much of the world, as Mallam put it, increasingly "planning-minded."[53] Cunningham himself had organized the importation of thousands of tons of Punjabi grain into the province over the course of the war in order to make up any possible shortfalls.[54] Additionally, both Caroe and Cunningham were concerned about the large numbers of Pathans from both the settled districts and the tribal areas who were involved in some level of war service, whether it was in the Army, the Frontier Corps, the Frontier Constabulary, or the police. Once the war was over, they would be unemployed and without means of securing food for themselves and their families.[55] In reviewing the Frontier Committee's recommendations the Governor of the NWFP was now in general agreement with the need for government-sponsored economic development.[56] Like all provincial governors, he received post-war directives from the Government of India to initiate development schemes. Having already created an office for this, he placed the scheme in Mallam's hands.

In reviewing the Tuker report, Cunningham observed that the committee tended to fall "into the mistake, common nowadays, of thinking and talking of Waziristan as it is were the whole Frontier." This was true. Although the report was ostensibly about the tribal areas as a whole, the majority of the document dealt with Waziristan alone. This had been the most glaring problem before the war, and remained so as it drew to a close. Waziristan's centrality to any discussion of general tribal policy was one of the major reasons why Mallam had hoped to become Resident after his stint as provincial Chief Secretary. In the final months of the war, with fiscal restrictions and troop reductions looming, the major question became whether Waziristan should still be garrisoned by regular soldiers and what the new policy should be if they were removed. Summing this mood up in a speech on Frontier policy in 1944, Ambrose Dundas, the former Resident in Waziristan and, admittedly, a long-term opponent of the modified forward policy, whose supporters had long ago dubbed

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[53] Mallam, *A Pair of Chaplis*, p. 98.

[54] Fraser Noble, *Something in India* (London, 1997), p. 278. Also see Fraser Noble, "An Experiment in Foodgrain Procurement: A Case Study in Planning in an Undeveloped Area," *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 5, 2 (1957), pp. 175–185.

[55] Olaf K. Caroe to Sir George Cunningham, 7 May 1943, IOR L P&S 12/3277.

[56] Comments by the Governor of the North-West Frontier Province on the Frontier Committee's Report, 1945, 12 July 1945, L P&S 12/3266.

a "disappointment," remarked: "The main source of argument is whether it is right to locate a garrison at Razmak or not. That is . . . really all that people mean now when they think they are arguing for a forward or a close border policy."[57]

The Tuker Committee recommended sweeping changes in policy: regular forces on the Frontier should be drawn back to the settled districts. The garrisons at Razmak, Wana, and in the Khyber Pass would be replaced by "tribal Scouts and Khassadars." These tribal levies, under the command of Political Agents, would serve as the sole "law and order" component in the tribal agencies.[58] At its core, the proposed policy reverted to the Curzon formula of 1901. Cunningham believed that a total withdrawal (including Scouts and *Khassadars*) from the tribal belt and the implementation of a sort of "Great Wall of China" between it and the settled districts would be both "pusillanimous and unnecessary." Yet he agreed that the military component of the modified forward policy had indeed contributed to the tribal problem. He wrote:

> If it is true – as it must be – that our ultimate object is to improve conditions of life in Waziristan, the presence of regular troops is an obstacle. Everyone seems to agree that troops are an irritant to the tribes. This is more true, in my opinion, today than it was 15 years ago. I see no likelihood of the Army, for their part, ever regarding the people of Waziristan as anything but a foreign enemy. The Army is not to blame. But the atmosphere is not conducive to development.[59]

Cunningham thus urged the Government of India to follow the Report's recommendation and withdraw regular forces from the tribal areas. The committee had split, however, over the question of how this partial evacuation could be achieved. The success of this new policy depended on a somewhat nebulous "increase in political control in Waziristan and the disarmament" of the tribes.[60] This was rejected by almost all

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[57] Ambrose Dundas, "The Problem of Watch and Ward on the North-West Frontier: A Lecture delivered by Mr. Dundas, CIE, ICS, lately Resident in Waziristan, in Delhi on 5 August 1944" (New Delhi, 1944), p. 8, L P&S 12/3265. See Major Claude Bremner, to Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Bruce, 1 June 1929, Bruce Papers IOR F163/20.

[58] Report of the Frontier Committee, 1945.

[59] Comments by the Governor of the North-West Frontier Province on the Frontier Committee's Report, 1945.

[60] Report of the Frontier Committee, 1945.

Frontier officers. Caroe believed that disarmament could only occur as a by-product of social and economic development.[61] Cunningham opined that no "sensible person" could disagree that disarmament would be a good thing. But this could only be done through force of arms. The Indian government possessed neither the troops nor the funds to pursue such a large-scale operation. The Governor was also alive to the changing constitutional situation in the subcontinent. The Labour Party, under Clement Attlee, the man who had penned the analogy of reforms on the Frontier being akin to a cigarette in a powder magazine in 1929, had come to power in the general election of July 1945, and this, combined with the breakdown of the All-India situation, meant that Indian independence was on the near horizon.[62] Cunningham wrote that "on the eve of impending constitutional changes of great magnitude in India, it is quite impossible to lay this down as our objective. I feel very doubtful if any of the big political parties in India would face a policy of this character, the first step in which is a Waziristan war." Disarmament was out of the question, but Cunningham, for one, hoped that a withdrawal could succeed and a replay of the 1919 revolt could be avoided by the fact that British prestige was high following their victory in another major world war. Moreover, in case of any major problems, the air force could be called in for aerial bombardment, though Cunningham was somewhat concerned that this tactic would soon be outlawed by an Indian-led central government.[63]

Ultimately, disarmament, with all its manifest difficulties, was off the table, but the ending of the modified forward policy in Waziristan was embraced by nearly all parties. At a conference held in Peshawar in April 1946, the administration agreed that, if approved by London, the Wana and Razmak camps would be evacuated by autumn 1947 and summer 1948 respectively.[64] Regardless of the future constitutional arrangement in India and on the Frontier, the British intended to get out of Waziristan.

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[61] Secret Memorandum by the External Affairs Department, Government of India, April 1946, L P&S 12/3266.

[62] See Robin J. Moore, *Escape from Empire: The Attlee Government and the Indian Problem* (Oxford, 1983).

[63] Comments by the Governor of the North-West Frontier Province on the Frontier Committee's Report, 1945.

[64] Record of a Conference held at Government House, Peshawar, on 24 April 1946, to Discuss the Plan for Substitution of Civil Armed Forces for Regular Troops in the Tribal Areas of the North-West Frontier, L P&S 12/3266.

The war and the realities of British power

The inter-war years witnessed a dramatic diminution of British freedom of action on India's North-West Frontier. Whereas the Viceroy in 1925 could confidently foresee a policy of aerial bombardment of tribal civilians free of criticism, in 1939 a later Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, confessed that Frontier policy was, and would be, "severely restricted" by Indian public opinion in the future. Many, on the eve of the Second World War, including the Viceroy and George Cunningham believed that future Frontier policy was likely to lie in the hands of a Federal Congress ministry. This was a real defeat for Britain's self-imposed historical mission in India. Yet, the advent of the Second World War staved off this inevitability. Across India, full-blooded British imperialism reasserted itself. War was declared the same way as it had been in 1914; British governors resumed control of many Indian provinces under section 93 of the Government of India Act; Congress's Quit India campaign was ruthlessly suppressed; and the Indian Army swelled to immense proportions. Views and policies on the Frontier reverted to the old patterns as well. Administrators and soldiers studied the Afghan horizon, agonizing over how to guarantee Kabul's cooperation and keep the Nazis and Soviets at bay. In the NWFP itself, large sums were spent on elaborate concrete bunkers built to withstand Soviet tanks and the Governor pursued a propaganda campaign designed to prey on the deepest religious fears of the tribes.[65] In Waziristan, the modified forward policy was retained and even enhanced with more troops, despite mounting criticism from both Indian politicians and British officials. The ambiguities and uncertainties raised by the multiple crises of the 1930s were swept away in favor of securing the Frontier in this new conflict.

The realities of the war, however, meant that these reassertions of British power were short lived. Although the 1.2 billion yards of cloth per year produced in Indian mills "clothed the armies East of Suez," during the war, it is debatable whether the Emperor, or in this case, the King-Emperor, was indeed wearing clothes.[66] The economic-cum-military relationship that undergirded the entire imperial project in South Asia was in tatters. The Indian Army was a sight to behold, but in a bizarre inversion, much of the bill for it had been footed by the British taxpayer after a 1939 agreement between London and a perennially

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[65] Note on Propaganda through Mullahs.

[66] Indivar Kamtekar, "A Different War Dance: State and Class in India 1939–1945," in *Past and Present*, 176, 1 (2002), p. 195.

cash-strapped Delhi. Britain emerged from the war a *debtor* to India.[67] There were other aspects of retreat. The Indian Civil Service was also a shadow of its former self. The war had rapidly increased the rate of Indianization and the administration was 50% Indian by war's end.[68] The most tragic sign of this weakness was the calamity of the Bengal Famine in 1943. Despite the bravado of the war years, by 1945 the British in India, now clad in soft hat and open-neck bush shirt rather than a *sola topi* and tie, were nearing the end.

The war led to reappraisals of British perceptions about the North-West Frontier as well. Enemy activity in Afghanistan was limited and the existential threat to the Raj came not from the Russians or the Germans in the mountainous west but from the Japanese emerging from the steamy jungles of Burma, thus shattering strategic certainties maintained and burnished since the early nineteenth century. Even the very notion of a strategic frontier was under attack by the end of the war. The advent of aerial warfare and the atomic bomb seemed to render areas like the North-West Frontier moot. One post-war American expert went so far as to refer to the region as a "glorified Maginot Line."[69]

To these strategic reconsiderations were added growing concerns about tribal policy on the Frontier. This was, of course, nothing new. But the tone and arguments that came to the surface during the war challenged not just the current policies, but the perceptions of the Pathans that had created these policies. Leslie Mallam's proposals for tribal self-government reflect these changes. Influenced by the rhetoric of the Allied war effort, empirical evidence, and a belief that no particular group of people possessed immutable characteristics distinct from the rest of humanity, Mallam's suggestions mark a massive departure from a battery of earlier shibboleths. They demonstrate an attempt by at least some British officials to break free of the essentialist assumptions prevalent on the Frontier and come to grips with the limitations that these assumptions had placed on creating a competent, informed, and compassionate administration. Many of these prescriptions were debated by his colleagues, such as Caroe and Cunningham, but Mallam

[67] Brian R. Tomlinson, *The Political Economy of the Raj, 1914–1947: The Economics of Decolonization in India* (London, 1979), p. 140.
[68] See Simon Epstein, "District Officers in Decline: The Erosion of British Authority in the Bombay Countryside, 1919 to 1947," in *Modern Asian Studies*, 16, 3 (1982), pp. 493–518.
[69] Letter from Phillips Talbot to Walter Rogers (Institute of Current World Affairs), 30 November 1946, RG 84, UD 3063, 2, Records of the Department of State, National Archives of the United States (NAUS).

was no crank on the fringes. He was a senior official who had allies throughout the Political Service. A number of his arguments about the economic underpinnings of tribal unrest and the need to bring disinterested parties into the policymaking equation were incorporated into the 1945 Frontier Report, Britain's last major stab at solving the Frontier "problem." These changes were further revealed in the decision to replace the modified forward policy in Waziristan. Almost as crucial as the choice to evacuate Wana and Razmak was the conversion of Cunningham and others to the idea that past unrest was not simply the product of innate religious bigotry and love of independence, but was tied to poverty, lack of infrastructure, and isolation. Although much remained the same, by 1946 there were new ideas in the air. Many of these were related to the realization that the British period on the Frontier was rapidly drawing to a close. In 1946, however, few Frontier officers realized just how soon the end would actually be.

Conclusion: The End of British Rule and the Frontier Legacy

The final year of British rule on the North-West Frontier witnessed upheaval, change, and continuity as well. Whereas in 1939, politics in the settled areas of the province were firmly in the hands of the local Congress party, at the end of the war Congress was locked in battle with the upstart Muslim League, which held power in Peshawar between 1943 and 1945. Crucial to both a united India and a cornerstone of a potential Pakistan, the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), including the tribal areas, was plunged into the center of the growing conflict between the British, Congress, and the Muslim League. Likewise, although they had read the writing on the wall, British officials in Peshawar and Delhi had maintained total control over tribal policy during the Second World War. This now came to an end. The advent of an interim government at the center in September of 1946, and the growth of increasingly acrimonious political parties willing to take their message into Malakand and Waziristan meant that the cordon the British tried to maintain between the settled and tribal areas of the NWFP was terminated. As the speed of events rapidly outpaced the prognostications of both officials and politicians, the last British rampart within the Frontier crumbled away.

Change was coming, but the question remained what that change would look like. The great question before and during the war was over the future of the tribal agencies. Many, both inside and outside the administration, believed that the answer lay in the slow and steady integration of the tribal tracts into the rest of the NWFP. To this end, Leslie Mallam was charged with a development scheme for the whole province where he continued his crusade for a new approach to tribal matters. There were also questions about what role the Frontier would play within India's new constitutional framework – whatever that may

be – and men like Sir Olaf Caroe, who was now serving as Governor of the NWFP, had strong ideas about the region's role in the new India. But, despite all these plans, the political situation both at the All-India level and within the province was rapidly spiraling out of Britain's – and the Political Service's – control. The Frontier was becoming a major zone of confrontation between Congress and the Muslim League. The NWFP was the one Muslim-majority province where Congress governed, and the retention of this government was crucial both to Congress's claims to speak for all of India and a potential fly in Muhammad Ali Jinnah's Pakistan ointment. Similarly, for Jinnah and the Muslim League, the Frontier was crucial for his claim to be the sole spokesman for India's Muslims. As the concept of Pakistan began to take more of a solid shape in the aftermath of the failed Cabinet Mission, the Muslim League needed the NWFP if they were to achieve a Muslim homeland. Anything else would result in a Pakistan more mutilated and moth-eaten than anything the *Quaid* (Jinnah) would later lament. Thrown into this political morass was the uniquely violent history of the Frontier cadre's relationship with any form of Indian or Pathan nationalism, as well as the Political Services's continued predilection to view the Pathans in explicitly religious terms.

Frightened of the potential trouble the tribes could cause if they were under the sway of the Muslim League or, he was convinced, unfriendly members of the Political Service, Jawaharlal Nehru, who now held the new portfolio of External Affairs Minister in the interim government, traveled to the tribal areas in October 1946. The resulting disaster led to a series of recriminations between the nationalist leader and members of the Frontier cadre, most notably, Caroe, who had succeeded George Cunningham as Governor in March 1946. The conflict brought old arguments to the surface, but also demonstrated beyond a shadow of a doubt that the political situation in India would impinge on the Political Service, both in the settled districts and the tribal areas. In bringing matters to a head, it also led to a crisis of confidence among the Frontier cadre. Change was imminent. Indian independence in August 1947, however, brought many of these new approaches to a dramatic halt. The new Pakistani government, at war with India, and stretched for both men and money, opted to retain what vestiges of the British administration in the region were most expedient and inexpensive. This meant that, from the beginning, large segments of the pre-existing administrative framework were maintained, including the separate legal and political systems for the tribal agencies and the lack of economic infrastructure. Crucially, most of the Pakistani administrators

who inherited the mantle of the Raj on the Frontier, had received their training at the hands of British military and Political officers in the 1930s. As a result, many of the perceptions held and policies pursued by the Frontier administration in the interwar era lived on under the post-colonial regime.

The future of the tribal agencies

The year 1946 opened with Mallam, now serving as NWFP Development Commissioner, still pressing for his reform of tribal administration while simultaneously working on a development plan for the entire province. He recalled that he was increasingly panicked about the timeframe that the British faced on the Frontier: "I felt that I was up against a mental paralysis, largely induced by the war, a built-in resistance to change, and perhaps above all the obsession with Waziristan and a military solution of the Frontier problem."[1] He had become an outspoken critic of not just the *jirga* system and the British interpretations of tribal *riwaj*, but of the entire apparatus of tribal administration. He argued that the net result of the military intervention, allowances, and road building that accompanied the policy was that:

> Tribal life has gone on away from the roads and cantonments, much in the same way as it did before these made their appearance, but with a difference – that while on the one hand some of the more superficial modern habits and accomplishments such as tea drinking and motor driving and a certain new wealth have been acquired, on the other hand there has been a steady deterioration in the internal affairs of the tribes.

This had led to a gradual slide into anarchy and the empowerment of "powerfully armed gangs." Mallam advocated a solution to this lawlessness through economic development, arguing that education and medical facilities were far more popular than roads.[2] On leave in England over the summer of 1945, he had met with India Office officials about his proposals and he garnered the interest of the Permanent

[1] G. Leslie Mallam and Diana Day, *A Pair of Chaplis and a Cassock* (London, 1978), Mallam Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, Cambridge University (CSAS), p. 100.
[2] Lieutenant-Colonel G. Leslie Mallam CIE, "The N.-W. Frontier Problem," in *The Journal of the United Service Institution of India*, 76 (1946), p. 387.

Undersecretary, Sir David Monteath.[3] He also began working on a publishable article on the subject. He sent a draft to Caroe, who was now NWFP Governor. Caroe still had reservations about Mallam's approach, but encouraged Mallam to submit it to the *Journal of the United Service Institution of India*, though he asked him to make it clear that this was not the Government's accepted policy.[4]

Returning to Peshawar after his leave, however, Mallam discovered that the cash-deprived central government in Delhi had made massive cuts to any long-term development schemes in the NWFP. Since the Frontier was a deficit province, any development was contingent upon these funds. Looking for assistance, Mallam approached Alastair Low, now serving as Provincial Finance Secretary. Low refused, informing Mallam that he personally was entirely *laissez faire* and opposed any form of Government-led development schemes. Mallam now took the unorthodox step (for a Political officer at least) of approaching the Chief Minister of the province, Dr. Khan Sahib. Khan Sahib endorsed Mallam's ideas and encouraged him to proceed with a long-term development scheme, promising that he would do his utmost to procure the funds when necessary.[5] This settled, Mallam continued his conversations with leaders of both Congress and the Muslim League in the NWFP. Convinced that a new development policy would have the support of the two major parties, thus making it sustainable in an era of constitutional ferment, work went forward on the scheme.[6]

Although the scheme that Mallam and his assistants were working on through 1946 covered the whole province, special attention was given to the fact that the tribal areas were included in its proposals. That these territories were part of the scheme reflected not only Mallam's own preference, but that of the Frontier cadre as a whole. Increasingly, when confronted by what was still seen as an intractable problem, especially in Waziristan, British officials on the Frontier expressed the opinion that the only real long-term solution was the slow and steady integration of the tribal tracts into the settled districts. As early as 1943, Cunningham had embraced this repudiation of the earlier insistence on a *cordon sanitaire* between British India and the tribal belt. After discounting most of the other possible solutions to tribal unrest and

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[3] D. M. Cleary (India Office) to Leslie Mallam, 8 August 1945, India Office Records (IOR) L P&S 12/3278.
[4] Caroe to Mallam, 22 March 1946, Mallam Papers.
[5] Mallam, *A Pair of Chaplis*, p. 101.
[6] Mallam, "The N.-W. Frontier Problem," p. 387.

raiding, the Governor opined that if there was ever to be a major change in British policy, it would be based on the gradual union between the two units with the Government of India no longer administering the tribal areas. He predicted: "Political pressure in this direction, is, I think, likely to develop in future; the tribes themselves may desire it," before going on to say that "the hard and fast dividing line of the administrative border – a line largely of our own invention – created and now perpetuates an unnecessary instinct of independence in the tribal mind."[7] Later, in February 1945, Cunningham went further, stating that even if the defence of the Frontier remained a British responsibility in a self-governing India, which many continued to believe it would, the administration of the tribal tracts should come under the provincial administration. Any other arrangement would lead to resentment among both provincial and All-India politicians. Indigenous ministerial control from Peshawar had the added bonus of guaranteeing that the future administration of the tribal areas would be carried out by Muslims in the Frontier province, rather than by Hindus in Delhi, which Cunningham feared would lead to constant unrest. Ultimately, the more integrated the two, the better, since the clear-cut division between the settled and tribal areas was "undoubtedly responsible for a good many of our troubles."[8] Caroe was also thinking along these lines, though he was contemplating the utility of a Pathan "regional federation" that would be centered in Peshawar.[9]

As Mallam constructed his scheme, he informed Fraser Noble, his assistant in the Provincial Development Department, that the events of 1930–1931 had been the most dramatic upheaval of his life. He confided to Noble that in the wake of the deaths of his wife and daughter and the fatigue of the war years, he would not be able to survive another similar episode. He believed that the fate of the tribal areas and the settled districts were inextricably linked to one another and only through development in both regions could another major tribal conflagration be prevented.[10] With the conviction that the tribal agencies could no longer be separated from their Pathan brethren on the plains, Mallam proposed a 450-page, Rs. 27/- crores (£20.3 million) development

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[7] Note by Sir George Cunningham on North-West Frontier Policy, 1943, 5 June 1943, Cunningham Papers IOR D670/13.
[8] Memorandum by Sir George Cunningham on Our Policy in the Tribal Tracts vis-à-vis Afghanistan, 18 February 1945, Cunningham Papers, D670/13.
[9] Caroe to Mallam, 22 March 1946.
[10] Fraser Noble, *Something in India* (London, 1997), pp. 284–285, and Mallam, "The N.-W. Frontier Problem," p. 392.

scheme in September 1946 that would address agriculture, animal husbandry, medical service, public health, jails, public works, forestry, local self-government and provincial finances.[11] Although Cunningham had earlier stated that no further schools, hospitals or development programs should be introduced until specifically requested by the tribes, he was now in retirement in St. Andrews and Mallam went ahead, asserting that no program could be pursued in the province without a constructive program of political and economic development in the tribal areas. He also recommended the expansion of medical and educational facilities, but stipulated that no compulsory education could be supported in the tribal areas until "political conditions permit."[12]

The report encountered resistance and/or apathy from many members of the Frontier administration. Caroe all but ignored it. But by this point the levers of power were increasingly in the hands of Indian politicians. Khan Sahib and his colleagues, who had won the cold weather elections of 1945–1946, gave it their full support. As well as believing in the utility of the scheme, Khan Sahib hoped to use it as a tool against the rising tide of the Muslim League. The question remained how to finance the Post-War Development Plan, however. The central government had only provided Rs. 3/- crores, far below what the scheme called for. In order to get the plan off the ground, they needed at least an additional Rs. 6/- crores. Accompanied by Khan Sahib and the unconverted Finance Secretary, Alastair Low, Mallam flew to Delhi for meetings with the finance department. The meetings were a failure, which Mallam chalked up to the fact that the official with whom they dealt was a Hindu. The specter of communal difference was, as the situation in India grew more intense, becoming increasingly prominent for Mallam and his colleagues. Mallam asked Khan Sahib if there was a high-ranking Muslim official with whom they could speak. Khan Sahib brought Mallam to see Sir Akbar Hydari, the Secretary for Industries and Civil Supplies on the Viceroy's Council. The gambit paid off, and in February 1947 the Government of India agreed to contribute the necessary funds to make the plan a reality.[13]

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[11] Lieutenant-Colonel G. Leslie Mallam, *The Post-War Development Plan for the N.-W.F.P. and Tribal Areas* (Peshawar, 1945), Library of Congress (LOC).
[12] Mallam, *Post-War Development Plan*, p. 66.
[13] Mallam, *A Pair of Chaplis*, pp. 101–104.

The crisis of the political service

While Mallam was fighting for his development scheme, the Political Service on the Frontier was embroiled in a firestorm of controversy with the Congress Party and its leader, Jawaharlal Nehru. As the Muslim League went from strength to strength in 1945 and 1946 and the communal situation in India worsened, the Frontier was once again thrust into the forefront of the All-India political debate. Since the leader of the Muslim League, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, first embraced the concept of a Muslim homeland in 1940, he had kept his demand for Pakistan purposefully vague. This had made the Cabinet Mission's May 1946 plan, which provided for provincial units grouped along religious and geographical lines (a proposal welcomed by many members of the Frontier administration, including Caroe and Cunningham), seem like a distinct possibility. The collapse of this scheme in July, however, was to affect the Frontier and the Political Service in two distinct ways. First, it led Jinnah to make a far more concrete demand for Pakistan. Secondly, it prompted the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, to form an interim government in which Nehru took up the External Affairs portfolio, among other duties. These two facts, combined with the strong memories of the violent confrontation between the nationalists and the British administration in the 1930s, created a crisis that severely weakened the morale of the Frontier cadre.

Since the NWFP was a majority Muslim province, Jinnah's Pakistan would be impossible without its inclusion. Yet it was Congress, under the leadership of Khan Sahib, rather than the Muslim League that controlled this 96% Muslim province. Reasoning that as long as there was a Congress ministry in Peshawar there was no hope of the NWFP acceding to a still nebulous Pakistan, the Congress High Command made it a primary goal to keep Khan Sahib's government in place. The Muslim League, naturally, did everything it could to bring down the Congress ministry. Although Khan Sahib remained in office, by the autumn of 1946 it was clear to many in the Frontier administration that the tide was turning against Congress. Although this judgment was partly based on objective observation, a far more important motivation for this belief among the Political Service was their conviction that it was impossible for Congress, with its overwhelmingly Hindu leadership at the center, to hold the ring against the appeal to political Islam among a Pathan population. Added to this was the fact that Caroe and Khan Sahib had a distinctly adversarial relationship.

Cunningham and Khan Sahib had worked well together and mingled socially. When Khan Sahib languished in a jail in the aftermath of the Quit India campaign, his English wife, Mary, often visited Government House and enjoyed a beer or sherry with the Governor and his wife, Robin.[14] There was real sympathy between the two men. Much of this stemmed from the fact that they were consummate politicians. Cunningham had climbed the ranks of the Indian bureaucracy while simultaneously managing to be respected and liked by all he met – in part because he always kept his cards so close to his vest. Khan Sahib was also well liked by both Indian politicians and most Political officers, who respected him despite the fact that he was a "Congress-wallah." Cunningham and Khan Sahib also shared a certain political and ideological flexibility. By and large, this was not the case with Caroe. Wavell, an excellent judge of people, had reservations about Caroe's appropriateness for the position. Caroe had a record that few could match, but the Viceroy thought he "always seems to me too narrow, theoretical and pedantic."[15] Cunningham, however, persuaded Wavell to appoint Caroe.

Caroe genuinely liked Khan Sahib, but over the course of the spring and summer of 1946 the relationship between the men became increasingly acerbic as Caroe grew impatient with Khan Sahib and the latter became increasingly intransigent.[16] Caroe, who had been at the forefront of those calling for a decisive blow against the nationalists in 1930–1931, now found himself in harness with the very men he had once sought to crush.[17] Problems between Congress and Caroe came to a head in the late summer of 1946 when the British began

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[14] Sir George Cunningham to his Sister, 10 January 1941, Cunningham Papers D670/38.

[15] Wavell to Lord Pethick Lawrence (Secretary of State for India), 5 August 1945, quoted in Peter John Brobst, *The Future of the Great Game: Sir Olaf Caroe, India's Independence, and the Defense of Asia* (Akron, Ohio, 2005), p. 105. Brobst's work deals with Caroe's status as the "official mind" of the Great Game in the final decade of British rule in India and the first years of independence. It examines Caroe's career as India's Foreign Secretary, Governor of the NWFP, and his subsequent activities in retirement. For Caroe's Governorship also see, Parshotam Mehra's excellent *The North-West Frontier Drama, 1945–1947: A Reassessment* (New Delhi, 1998).

[16] See Mehra, *The North-West Frontier Drama*, pp. 59–63.

[17] It is worth noting that Cunningham was away from the Frontier throughout most of the 1930–1933 period – first as Private Secretary to Lord Irwin, and then on leave for one year. It is possible, therefore, that he lacked some of the emotional baggage that men like Caroe carried from that experience.

a bombing campaign against the Shabi Khel Mahsuds. The bombings were a response to the kidnapping of Major John (Jos) Donald, the Political Agent for South Waziristan, whose father had been Resident in Waziristan 30 years earlier. Believing him to be an Army engineer, Mahsud tribesmen had abducted Donald and then released him unharmed several weeks later. Despite the apparent assurance from the Resident in Waziristan, Kenneth Packman, that they would not be attacked, Caroe decided to bomb.[18] Echoing Lord Reading's sanguine views on bombing 20 years before, Caroe doubted whether it would lead to any "formidable political reactions."[19]

Caroe was wrong. News of the bombings reached the press and Abdul Ghaffar Khan issued a statement condemning this "wholesale slaughter." More troubling were the implications this had for the Congress government on the Frontier. Nehru was now External Affairs member in the interim government, having assumed the portfolio in part because it included tribal affairs. The fact that this bombing of tribal civilians was carried out under the auspices of Nehru's department was not only an embarrassment for this old critic of Britain's Frontier policy, but potentially disastrous. Muslim communalists, both in India and on the Frontier, could now charge that this was but the first taste of the impending "Hindu Raj."[20] Nehru had intended visiting the Frontier in the hope of garnering support for the province's Congress Ministry. Alarmed about Caroe's suggestion that negotiations between the tribes and the Indian constituent assembly be facilitated by the Political Service, Nehru also wanted to open, "free and friendly" discussions with the *jirgas* himself.[21] The bombings sealed his intentions to visit both the settled districts and the tribal areas, but Caroe was opposed. The communal problem on the Frontier (and India) had grown in recent months and he believed the tribesmen would repudiate Nehru's tour. Caroe therefore urged the Viceroy to abrogate Nehru's right to travel to a region for which the latter was ostensibly responsible in the interim government![22] Wavell's Private Secretary, however, believed that barring Nehru from the agencies was "impossibly out of date," and the tour went ahead.[23]

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[18] Abdur Rashid, *Civil Service on the Frontier* (Peshawar, 1977), p. 44.
[19] Caroe to Wavell, quoted in Mehra, *The North-West Frontier Drama*, p. 67.
[20] Mehra, *The North-West Frontier Drama*, pp. 68–69.
[21] H. V. R. Iengar, Secretary, Constituent Assembly, to Major G. C. L. Chrichton, Secretary, External Affairs Department, 31 July 1946, IOR L P&S 12/3280.
[22] Caroe to Wavell, 28 September 1946, IOR R 3/1/92.
[23] G. E. B. Abell to Wavell, 30 September 1946, R 3/1/92.

Image 9 Sir Olaf Caroe (right) greets Jawaharlal Nehru at Peshawar for the latter's tour of the Frontier, October 1946

Beginning in Waziristan and heading north to the Khyber and ending in Malakand, Nehru's visit was a disaster. Upon arrival in Peshawar, Nehru's aeroplane was met by a massive and hostile demonstration organized by the Muslim League. This was a far cry from the reception that Nehru had received on past tours of the NWFP. He then proceeded to Waziristan. Unfortunately for the Congress leader, the League had anticipated Nehru's every step through tribal territory and requested to send their own representative, the 25-year-old firebrand Mullah of Manki, into these protected (i.e. off-limits to politicians) areas. Caroe was blind to the fact that Nehru represented the interim Government

of India, choosing instead to see Nehru's visit as entirely political, especially since Abdul Ghaffar Khan shadowed Nehru the entire time. Not wanting the Political Service to be seen as partisan, he acceded to the Muslim League's request: if Congress could send a representative, then so could the Muslim League. In retrospect, it was a false equivalency and quite inappropriate. The Mullah promptly set out ahead of Nehru, warning the susceptible tribesmen of the impending disaster of a "Hindu Raj" under Congress.[24] For his part, Nehru was increasingly convinced that tribal unrest was not simply the result of British militarism, but that the traditional allowance system provided via the *maliks* had created a destructive class system between the haves and have nots.[25] This became the "master theme" of his remarks to the assembled *jirgas*. According to Packman, Nehru's already rancorous meeting with members of the Mahsud *jirga* at Razmak took a turn for the worse when he told them that they were "slaves" to the Government for taking allowances. The allowances were a red flag for tribesmen, many of whom had heard of Mallam's development scheme and worried that their allowances would be replaced by a Congress government intent on planting fruit trees and providing "mechanics for cultivation and drying fruit" in lieu of cash.[26] Additionally, some of those present accused Congress of failing to deliver on promises made to the Mahsuds in 1930, leaving revolting tribesmen in the lurch, who subsequently suffered "incalculable losses" at the hands of the British.[27] Similar comments were made to other tribes with comparable results. After a number of verbal and physical assaults throughout tribal territory, the nadir of the tour occurred in Malakand, where the future Prime Minister of India, along with his chaperones, Abdul Ghaffar and Khan Sahib, was nearly killed by a mob, while the local Political Agent, Sheikh Mabub Ali, sped ahead in his own car.[28]

[24] Caroe to Wavell, 23 October 1946, R 3/1/92.

[25] Confidential Note by Jawaharlal Nehru on his tour of the Tribal Areas of the North-West Frontier, 24 October 1946, R 3/1/92. Nehru's hypothesis about "class conflict," while certainly in line with his political outlook, has also been corroborated by recent scholarship. See Hugh Beattie, "Custom and Conflict in Waziristan: Some British Views" in Magnus Marsden and Benjamin D. Hopkins (eds), *Beyond Swat: History, Society and Economy Along the Afghanistan–Pakistan Frontier* (New York, 2012), p. 217.

[26] Extract of Report by Musa Khan, 23 September 1946, R 3/1/92.

[27] Report by K. C. Packman on Mahsud Jirga, 21 October 1946, R 3/1/92.

[28] Full descriptions of Nehru's ill-fated tour can be found in Mehra, *The North-West Frontier Drama*, pp. 74–78, and Charles Chevenix Trench, *Viceroy's Agent* (London, 1987), pp. 324–327. See also Brobst, *The Future of the Great Game*,

Caroe, who had read classics at Oxford, saw Nehru's tour as a "Greek tragedy on the old theme of hubris followed by nemesis."[29] Nehru, however, blamed the failure of his tour on Caroe and the Political Service.[30] On the last evening of the tour, the two men met at Government House. Nehru claimed that the Political officers on his tour were not only guilty of inefficiency in failing to prevent the demonstrations but that the Indian members of the Political Service and their subordinates had helped organize the mêlées. This was both true and false. The few Pathans Politicals – men like the future Governor General and President of Pakistan, Iskander Ali Mirza – did have decidedly Muslim League sympathies, but they were not inventing these demonstrations in the tribal tracts. He told Caroe that he would not tolerate the "authoritarian habits" of the Indian Civil Service (ICS) and that the sooner the Political Service's "romance of the frontier" – shorthand for the overall ideology and style of the Frontier cadre – ended the better. In line with his earlier views of Congress and the Frontier nationalist movement, Caroe replied that he believed Indian political parties were far more authoritarian than the Political Service. He then informed the nationalist leader that the tour had destroyed "any hope of bringing the tribes into the new India peacefully and free of party lines." Caroe then informed Nehru he had weakened Khan Sahib's government in Peshawar.[31] Returning to Delhi, Nehru wrote a report of his journey, emphasizing the insidious influence of government allowances on the tribes, and arguing for the introduction of literacy and education programs, perhaps introduced through films, something that was being done in the other Indian provinces. Most importantly, Nehru claimed that a large part of the problem was found in the Political Service itself. He agreed that they undoubtedly knew "a great deal about the tribal people," but the fact that they were essentially a cadre, "cut off from wider currents in India," meant that their views were too limited, too old fashioned, and too resistant to any sort of change. Ultimately, Nehru argued that while there were a number of fine officers in the Service, there were too many grievances stemming from past conflicts between the Frontier cadre and Congress

p. 116. For an excellent overview of Nehru and Abdul Ghaffar Khan's view of the Frontier tour, see Dinanath G. Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan: Faith is a Battle* (Bombay, 1967), pp. 384–394.

[29] Caroe to Wavell, 23 October 1946.

[30] Confidential Note by Jawaharlal Nehru, 24 October 1946.

[31] Caroe to Wavell, 23 October 1946.

for a healthy working relationship. Nehru believed the Political Service was incompatible with Indian democracy.[32]

The fallout from this fiasco was threefold. First, the tour underlined the fact that the communal tensions that had spread across the subcontinent were just as strong, if not stronger, on the Frontier – this boded ill for the idea that the NWFP would remain outside of Jinnah's Pakistan. Secondly, the tour produced a high level of enmity between Nehru and Caroe. Nehru and his Congress colleagues were increasingly convinced that Caroe was a Muslim League sympathizer. Lastly, Nehru's tour – and his accusations about the Political Service – led to a crisis of confidence among the Frontier cadre from which it never recovered. Whereas the ICS as a whole had experienced their moment of doubt in the immediate aftermath of the First World War – a period that witnessed a number of high-profile resignations and a dramatic reduction in recruitment – the Political Service suffered their crisis of confidence in these final months of the British Raj.[33] In 1946, the Political Service remained overwhelmingly European. Of its 124 serving members, only 17 were Indian. Whereas most ICS men believed that independence was near at hand and had been prepared for it for nearly a decade, the Political Service as a whole had difficulty grasping this concept. Men like Mallam realized "constitutional changes" were coming soon, but the nature of these changes, and the idea that there would be an entirely new regime run by their former adversaries, was a shock.

Nehru made a terrible impression on the Frontier officers he met. Even a relatively sympathetic Political like Mallam was left with one impression only: "intellectual arrogance." Believing that Nehru would be eager to speak with him about development issues, Mallam was surprised that the nationalist leader treated him instead like a "*Naib Tehsildar*" (junior district official).[34] To this was added the knowledge that Khan Sahib publicly stated that his ministry no longer trusted the Political Service. The Deputy Commissioner for Mardan, Gerald Curtis, informed Nehru that the Political Service could not function in these conditions.[35] They had, as Noble recalled, lost their "prestige."[36] Curtis informed Nehru that, unless he made a public statement about the trustworthiness of the Frontier cadre, he must "give British officers

[32] Confidential Note by Jawaharlal Nehru, 24 October 1946.
[33] See Roland Hunt and John Harrison, *The District Officer in India, 1930–1947* (London, 1980).
[34] Mallam, *A Pair of Chaplis*, p. 105.
[35] G. C. S. Curtis to Caroe, 23 October 1946, R 3/1/92.
[36] Noble, *Something in India*, p. 294.

their gratuities, proportionate pensions and bowler hats" and bid them farewell. Informing Caroe of his own resignation, Curtis wrote that he believed it was "the duty of every British official in the Political Service on the frontier to resign, here and now . . . If officers of our service do not protest vigorously against the abominable insinuations made against it . . ., we shall lose both our own self-respect and that of the Pathan population."[37] Though few went so far as to resign so early, the feeling of despondency was widely felt throughout the Frontier Political Service.[38]

Overall despondency was further increased in this period by the suicide of Major Donald, the Political Agent whose kidnapping by the Shabi Khel had prompted the August and September bombings. He was released unharmed and went to Nathiagali to spend a couple days with the Caroes. The Governor pressed him not to return to his headquarters in Tank, but Donald insisted. A few days after his return to Tank, a delegation of his former kidnappers came to see him. They reminded Donald of his father and how in those days the Briton's "word could always be trusted."[39] They claimed Donald had assured them that they would not be bombed but now their homes were destroyed. He got up saying he was going over to the house for a few minutes. When Donald failed to return, his assistant went to check and found him sprawled on his desk. He had shot himself in the head. Reportedly he had written on a paper in front of him: "I have failed in my duty. I have lived a lie." The Frontier was a violent place where death was a regular occurrence, but this suicide made a significant impact on the Frontier service in the twilight of Empire. Caroe took it particularly hard. In a sentence that encapsulates so much of the Frontier service mentality, Caroe wrote: "[Donald] felt he had let down not only himself but also me (to be egotistic) and his father, and perhaps the Mahsuds too."[40]

Over the coming months the political situation on the Frontier deteriorated. The Muslim League, aware of Congress's overwhelming majority

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[37] Curtis to Caroe, 23 October 1946.

[38] See, for instance, Norval Mitchell (David Mitchell (ed.), *The Quiet People of India: A Unique Record of the Final Years of the British Raj* (Sarasota, Florida, 2007).

[39] Donald's father, Sir John Stewart Donald, had served as Resident in Waziristan from 1908 to 1913, and then as Chief Commissioner, NWFP (1913–1915).

[40] See Akbar S. Ahmed, *Resistance and Control in Pakistan*, Revised Edition (London, 1991), pp. 177–178; Unpublished Memoirs of G. C. S. Curtis, Collected Indian Civil Service Memoirs IOR F180/58; Unpublished Memoirs of Mrs. H. A. Barnes, Collected Indian Political Service Memoirs IOR F226/1; Caroe Unpublished Memoirs, Caroe Papers IOR F203/7; Noble, *Something in India*, p. 294; and Trench, *Viceroy's Agent*, pp. 220–221.

in the Provincial Legislature, resolved to remove Khan Sahib's ministry through extra-parliamentary means: thuggery, demonstrations, and appeals to religious bigotry. Meanwhile, in March 1947, Wavell was replaced by Lord Mountbatten, who was given sweeping powers to help him enforce a political settlement. At the same time, Congress, both at the local and central level, was "gunning for Caroe," as Wavell put it.[41] As their position became increasingly perilous in the face of the Muslim League's "civil-disobedience," Khan Sahib and his allies became convinced that Caroe was in bed with the Muslim League.[42] This became especially pronounced as it became clear that Caroe believed that there needed to be fresh special elections in the NWFP to settle the Pakistan question once and for all. When Mountbatten visited the NWFP in April 1947, Khan Sahib informed the Viceroy that there was no "Muslim League leader in the province other than the Governor and his officials."[43] All these accusations were false. Caroe remained the man who had taken such a jaundiced view of nationalism and Indian politicians in the 1930s. He saw the problem as one in which a Muslim Pathan population, and the tribes in particular, would never live under a Hindu-dominated Congress government in Delhi. Officials from Mountbatten down tended to agree.[44] He cared little for Congress but he also had little sympathy for the Muslim League. By and large, he consistently believed that the whole concept of a separate Pakistan was untenable. If anything, and ironically, given his long-standing opposition to any Afghan recidivism west of the Indus, Caroe was most sympathetic to the movement for a separate "Pathan national province" that arose in the last months of British rule.[45] As usual, Wavell's assessment, that Caroe had "never yet really reconciled himself to the idea of our leaving India," seems the closest to the truth.[46]

After months of negotiation, Mountbatten, Nehru, and Jinnah announced an agreed plan for India's future on 3 June 1947. Indian independence would be brought forward from June 1948 to August 1947. Moreover, the Indian Empire would be partitioned between Hindustan and Pakistan. Unlike the other provinces where accession would be decided by the provincial legislature, the future of the NWFP would be

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[41] Entry for 6 November 1946, Moon, *Wavell*, p. 373.
[42] Mehra, *The North-West Frontier Drama*, Chapter 3.
[43] Meeting of Mountbatten with the Governor, NWFP and the Four Ministers, 28 April 1947, IOR L PO 6/19.
[44] Mountbatten to Nehru, 30 April 1947, L PO 6/19.
[45] Mehra, *The North-West Frontier Drama*, p. 192.
[46] Entry for 8 August 1946, Moon, *Wavell*, p. 329.

decided by plebiscite. In preparation for this referendum Mountbatten was bombarded with calls for Caroe's ouster. Nehru informed the Viceroy that he believed neither the Governor nor most of the senior Political officers on the Frontier were fit for service. Yet he never charged Caroe with Muslim League sympathies. Instead he wrote: "The part that Sir Olaf Caroe played as Deputy Commissioner of Peshawar in 1930 when there was large scale shooting and killing of peaceful demonstrators still evokes bitter memories."[47] The ghosts of the repressions of the early 1930s were coming back to haunt the administration.

Mountbatten accepted his friend's suggestion and asked Caroe to stand down for the duration of the plebiscite. Caroe, who after the exertions of the war and the tumultuous last year-and-a-half was a tired man, acknowledged his fate, but, in a sign that the old Frontier spirit had not died, he wrote to Mountbatten: "In the long run I believe HMG will not be able to divorce themselves from . . . this delicate and difficult Frontier."[48] Yet here, in the final hours of the Raj, these words had an overwhelming emptiness. The British Governor of the NWFP had been removed at the behest of nationalist "agitation." More so than anywhere else in British India, the British on the Frontier did not adjust to the rise of nationalism. In the end, Caroe was a victim of his own, and indeed his services', intransigence.

The plebiscite and Pakistan

Congress was also in trouble. The plebiscite on Pakistan took place in July 1947. Khan Sahib and Congress boycotted it and the NWFP overwhelmingly voted for Pakistan. Although only 51% of the eligible electorate voted in the referendum, 99% of those who did plumped for Pakistan. Jinnah and the Muslim League showed themselves to have a very different agenda on the Frontier than their Congress forbearers. Jinnah, who, it has been argued, assumed the role of Governor General of the new Pakistani Dominion in order to dismiss Khan Sahib's Ministry under section 93 of the 1935 Government of India Act, made no major changes in Frontier policy after he took control on 15 August 1947.[49] There were both practical and ideological elements to the new regime's conservatism. Ideologically, like the rest of the territories that

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[47] Nehru to Mountbatten, 4 June 1947, IOR R 3/1/170.
[48] Mehra, *The North-West Frontier Drama*, p. 159.
[49] Ayesha Jalal, "Inheriting the Raj: Jinnah and the Governor-Generalship Issue," in *Modern Asian Studies*, 19, 1 (1985), pp. 29–53.

became West Pakistan, the Muslim League was backed by the large land-owning Khans, the very people who had opposed change in the Frontier since the 1920s and saw little reward in land reform and democracy. The Pakistani state was also hopeful that some of the major problems in the NWFP stemmed from communal differences. Muslim would now govern Muslim and discord would diminish. Practically, the new state was short on both funds and personnel. Maintaining the *status quo* was affordable.

In an about face from Congress policies, the new Pakistani regime made it clear that, for the time being at least, there was still a need for the Frontier cadre. British Political officers were requested to stay, or invited back. Cunningham, for instance, was recalled from his Scottish retirement by Muhammad Ali Jinnah to once again take up the governorship of the NWFP on the eve of independence. That it was Cunningham, rather than Caroe, who had been waiting out the Frontier referendum in Kashmir, with his wife, Kitty, demonstrates the hollowness of the charge that the former governor was in the League's pocket. Cunningham remained in Peshawar until May 1948 when he returned home to Scotland. Thereafter he enjoyed an active retirement, involving himself in the affairs of the University of St. Andrews and the retired ICS association. He died in 1963 while having breakfast with the widow of his old boss, Lord Irwin (Halifax). Other Frontier officers remained as well. Some, like Ambrose Dundas and John Dring, whom Nehru had asked earlier to be relieved of his duties on the Frontier, stayed on well into the 1950s.[50] The NWFP was to have a British Governor until 1949. To the south on the Frontier, the last British Governor of Baluchistan resigned in 1955.

From the very beginning, the NWFP was an uncomfortable fit for Jinnah's Pakistan. The Frontier Congress party, morphing into the Pakistan Azad Party under the Khan brothers, became the first official opposition party to the Muslim League in 1948. The Pakistani government was also bedeviled by the growing prominence of the separatist Pathan "Pakhtunistan" movement supported by Kabul. From its beginnings in the final days of the British Raj, the Pakhtunistan movement would represent one of the most significant separatist threats to the cohesion of Pakistan. Thus, like the British in the inter-war period, the new regime was troubled by both Pathan nationalism and Afghan intrigue. Both Abdul Ghaffar and Khan Sahib took the oath of allegiance to Pakistan in 1948, but became involved in the Pakhtunistan

[50] Caroe to Wavell, 23 October 1946.

movement. In an echo of their relationship with the British in the 1930s, they were "rewarded" for their opposition with several stints in Pakistani jails. Khan Sahib was flexible, however, and by 1954 he had mended fences with the new Pakistani regime. He re-entered politics as Pakistan's Minister for Communications and, with the enactment of the One Unit Plan in 1955, which abolished the old British provinces – including the NWFP – he became the Chief Minister of West Pakistan, a post which put him at odds with his brother. In 1958, Khan Sahib was assassinated in Lahore by a disappointed office seeker.

The Pakistani authorities never trusted the "Frontier Gandhi," Abdul Ghaffar, and when he tried to extend the Khudai Khidmatgar movement in 1948 he was arrested for sedition and his political party was banned. After six years he was released but when he opposed the One Unit Scheme championed by his brother he was once again imprisoned and was in and out of prison until he left for medical treatment in Britain in 1964. He then lived in self-imposed exile in Afghanistan until 1972. Upon his return to Pakistan, he was again arrested by the regime of Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. In 1988, Ghaffar Khan died in India, where he was hailed as a hero of the nationalist movement.

Pakistan had neither the inclination nor the resources to support Mallam's NWFP Development Scheme, which had been approved in the final months of British rule. Nevertheless, Mallam offered to stay on and help direct development policies in the tribal areas. But, in a move that reflected wider Pakistani disregard for the economic development of the region, his offer was rejected.[51] In retirement, Mallam wrote that the importance of the development scheme was "less in its intrinsic value as a contribution to the cultural and ecological development of the Indus right bank, than in its existence as a British-Indian attempt at a solution of the Frontier tribal problem. It must be admitted (I think with shame) that the British failed to solve this problem, but it can no longer be said that no serious effort was made."[52] In August, Mallam went up to the hill station at Nathiagali for a few days and encountered the Caroes, recently returned from Kashmir. Mallam informed his sister that the Caroes, who would sail back to Britain on 20 August, were "in a sad state of depression, and I am sorry for them – up to a point." Mallam, who believed that independence day was a "great day" in the history of India, refused to be "unduly depressed" stating: "I have never

[51] Mallam to Lieutenant-General Sir Rob Lockhart (Governor, NWFP), 28 June 1947, Mallam Papers. See also Mallam, *A Pair of Chaplis*, p. 108.
[52] Mallam, *A Pair of Chaplis*, p. 108.

linked my career with the continuance of British rule in India . . . Caroe and I have had the benefit of more than 30 years in one of the finest services in the world."[53] Mallam returned to Britain in September 1947 and entered studies to be ordained a minister in the Church of England. He succeeded and at the age of 54 became a country vicar, remarrying and then retiring in 1965. Mallam, who stands out for his individualism and clear empathy for people in all walks of life, died in 1978. Caroe himself recovered from his depression and had an active and influential retirement, penning countless articles and writing books on the balance of power in Asia, a masterful study of the Pathans, and co-editing, with his old colleague Sir Evelyn Howell, a translation of the great Pashto poet, Khushhal Khan Khatak. Old wounds also healed over. At the request of the Pakistani government he authored a report on the efficacy of the One Unit Scheme in 1956 and he enjoyed the rare distinction of being invited for state visits to both India and Pakistan.[54] Whenever Khan Sahib or Abdul Ghaffar's children visited Britain, they stayed with the Caroes. He passed away in 1981.[55]

The continuities between British India and Pakistan in the tribal areas were even stronger than in the settled districts. The agencies were still set apart from the settled districts and remained under the control of Political Agents employed by the central government. *Jirgas* continued to collect government allowances. Political parties continued to be banned from the tribal tracts, while "law and order," in the form of the hated Frontier Crimes Regulation was introduced into the agencies. There were two key differences, however. The first was the fundamental Pakistani conceit, shared by many British officers in the waning days of empire, that as co-religionists, the Pakistanis would have an easier time "controlling" the tribes than their British predecessors. This philosophy can be seen in the long-standing Pakistani policy of using the tribes as a proxy in their regional conflicts with India and Afghanistan, a policy that began with the decision to transport and unleash tribesmen on Kashmir in a vain and brutal bid to annex that benighted kingdom to

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[53] Leslie Mallam to Helen Mallam, 12 August 1947, Mallam Papers.

[54] Report on "The Constitution and the North-West Frontier" by Sir Olaf Caroe for Iskander Mirza (President of Pakistan), 14 April 1956, The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA) DO 134/27.

[55] See Sir Olaf Caroe, *Wells of Power: The Oilfields of South-Western Asia: A Regional and Global Study* (London, 1951); Sir Olaf Caroe, *Soviet Empire: The Turks of Central Asia and Stalinism* (London, 1953); Sir Olaf Caroe, *The Pathans, 550BC–AD1957* (London, 1958); and Evelyn Howell and Olaf Caroe (eds), *The Poems of Khushhal Khan Khatak* (Peshawar, 1963).

Pakistan at the end of 1947. The second change, which stemmed in part from the co-religionist argument, was the reduction of military activity in the tribal areas. The fulcrum of military involvement in the tribal areas was, of course, Waziristan and its regular garrisons at Wana and Razmak.

Following the Tuker Committee's recommendations, the decision to withdraw regular troops from Waziristan had already been taken in 1946. But with independence and partition, all bets were off. The nascent Pakistani Army was stretched to the limit with the upheaval of partition and funds were low. In September 1947, the Pakistani Commander-in-Chief, General Sir Frank Messervy, informed Cunningham that "the Pakistan Army is in such a parlous state that I must, if possible, withdraw all troops from Waziristan within the next three months."[56] But Cunningham had already written to Jinnah, the Pakistani Foreign Department, and the Prime Minister, Liaquat Ali Khan, saying: "I think we must now face a complete change of policy. Razmak has been occupied by regular troops for nearly 25 years, Wana for a few years less. The occupation has been a failure. It has not achieved peace or any appreciable economic development. It ties up an unreasonably large number of troops, and for the last 10 years there have been frequent major and minor offences committed by tribal gangs against the troops."[57] These were welcome words to the new regime, who harbored "a sanguine hope that the tribesmen would see this as a conciliatory gesture" and respond with a true allegiance to Pakistan.[58] But Cunningham also appeared to believe that the tribal problem had in large part been solved. Cunningham may have been influenced by the demographic change that accompanied partition – namely the mass exodus of the NWFP's Hindu population – the usual target of tribal raids into the settled districts. As he explained to Liaquat: "With the almost total disappearance of Hindus from our villages on this side of the administrative border, raids against British territory [!] will merely be hitting Muslim villagers

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[56] Cunningham Diary: 20 September 1947, Cunningham Papers IOR D670/6

[57] Telegram from Sir George Cunningham, Governor, NWFP, to Foreign Department, Government of Pakistan, 10 September 1947, Cunningham Papers D670/13; Sir George Cunningham to Liaquat Ali Khan, 20 September 1947, Cunningham Papers D670/13.

[58] Ayesha Jalal, "India's Partition and the Defence of Pakistan: An Historical Perspective," in the *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 15, 3 (1987), pp. 299–300; Ayesha Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule: The Origins of Pakistan's Political Economy of Defence* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 42–43; Alan Warren, *Waziristan, the Faqir of Ipi, and the Indian Army: The North West Froniter Revolt of 1936–37* (Karachi, 2000), p. 260.

and Muslim shopkeepers."[59] Cunningham had consistently maintained that the problem of Waziristan emanated from the character of the tribesmen and their devotion to a particular form of Islam – not poverty or some other factor. He saw religion as the main reason for the revolt of 1936–1938 and clearly saw the manipulation of religion as the key to keeping the tribes in line during the Second World War. It is more than likely that, for Cunningham, partition itself, with the establishment of a Muslim government and the departure of the Frontier's Hindus, solved the problem of Waziristan. The evacuation gained Jinnah and Liaquat's assent. Cunningham and the military authorities immediately planned to remove all troops by January 1948 and the withdrawal took place in November and December 1947.[60] After 27 years, the modified forward policy was at an end. As this was essentially a return to Curzon's modified close border policy of 1901, the surprisingly peaceful evacuation was aptly named "Operation Curzon."[61] Upon hearing that this policy was going to be enacted, that old enemy of the modified forward policy, Sir John Maffey, who was now serving as British Representative to Eire, wrote to his former comrade in arms, Lord Hailey: "It has taken a long time for sanity to prevail! Perhaps the lesson had to be learnt."[62]

Lessons of a sort had been learnt since 1919. The inter-war period began with the British Raj, which was working towards a more collaborative relationship with Indians elsewhere in the subcontinent, taking a decidedly reactionary line on the North-West Frontier. Presided over by the Indian Political Service and the Army in India, the Frontier represented the continuation of the conservative side of British rule: a place apart that emphasized racial difference, military power, and autocratic rule. By the end of British rule, this formula, like British imperialism in the subcontinent in general, had collapsed. The Frontier was now a crucial element of the Indian and Pakistani equations. Inheriting the NWFP in 1947, Pakistan found that the region was just as restive under its regime as it had been under the British. In both the settled areas and the tribal tracts, the Pathan nationalist Pakhtunistan movement threatened the nascent Pakistani state. In Waziristan, the quasi-colonial system of control was continually challenged throughout the next decade by none other than the Faqir of Ipi. Relations with Afghanistan

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[59] George Cunningham to Liaquat Ali Khan, 20 September 1947, Cunningham Papers D670/13.
[60] Cunningham Diary: 6 October 1947, Cunningham Papers D670/6.
[61] Lieutenant-Colonel, H.E.M. Cotton, OBE, RE, "Operation Curzon – the Evacuation of Waziristan," in *The Royal Engineers Journal*, 62 (1948), pp. 183–196.
[62] Sir John Maffey to Lord Hailey, 17 January 1946, Hailey Papers IOR E220/55.

remained troubled and the North-West Frontier was again on the front-line of a new Great Game – the Cold War.[63] Today, in the aftermath of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the rise of the Taliban, and the "global war on terror," groups based on the Frontier threaten to destroy the Pakistani state and perhaps spread wider chaos. Lord Curzon once noted: "No one who has ever read a page of Indian history will prophesy about the Frontier."[64] The six decades that have followed independence demonstrate the wisdom of this observation. The British may have departed, but the problem of the Afghan Frontier remains.

[63] See A. Martin Wainwright, *Inheritance of Empire: Britain, India, and the Balance of Power in Asia, 1938–55* (Westport, Connecticut, 1994) and Robert J. McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery: The United States, India, and Pakistan* (New York, 1996).

[64] Sir Terence Creagh-Coen, *The Indian Political Service: A Study in Indirect Rule* (London, 1971), p. 200.

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IOR L/WS: WAR STAFF PAPERS
IOR R/3: CENTRAL GOVERNMENT RECORDS – VICEROY'S PRIVATE OFFICE
IOR V: OFFICIAL PUBLICATIONS
IOR MSS EUR: EUROPEAN MANUSCRIPTS COLLECTION
IOR MSS EUR C152 Halifax Papers
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Index

Abdur Rahman Khan, Amir, 21, 25
Acheson, James Glasgow, *n.* 210, 213
Aerial Bombing, 6, 18, 34, 58, 62, 132, 197–200, 204, 206–7, 231, 249, 261, 266
  Public Responses, 195, 200, 205, 207–12, 223, 225, 250, 261
Afghan Civil War (1928–1930), 90–1, 95, *n.* 110, 175
Afghanistan, 1, 4–6, 13, 20, 25, 29, 33, 40, 65–7, 86, 94–5, *n.* 110, 122, 174, 193, 251, 270–1, 273
  Relations with the Soviet Union, 44, 86–7, 113, 172, 178, 228–30, 232, 274
  Relations with British India, 15–16, 39–43, 51, 53–4, 56, 91, 123, 128, 175–8, 180, 189–90, 224, 227–31
Afridis, 16, 40, 63, 115, 117, 128, 131–2, 145, 189, 196–7, 204–6
Ali, Asaf, 214–15
Ali, Shaukat, 64, 159–60
All-India Muslim League, 4, 72, 75, 226, 244, 253–4, 256, 258–9, 262–9
All-India National Congress, 4, 18, 72, 75, 80, 88, 91–2, 94, 96–100, 102–7, 110–13, 116–18, 122–3, 127–30, 133–5, 138, 140–64, *n.* 170, 171, 173, 176, 178, 180–2, 184, 186, 193, 205–6, *n.* 209, 210–20, 222, 224–6, 229–30, 241, 244, 250, 253–6, 259–69
Amanullah Khan, Amir, 40–1, 44, 62–7, 86–8, 90–2, 123, 172, 175–7, 228–9
Andrews, Charles Freer, 215, 218
Anglo-Afghan War (1839–42), 15–16
Anglo-Afghan War (1878–80), *n.* 20
Anglo-Afghan War (1919), 40–1, 56, 62–3
Anjuman-i-Islah-ul-Afghania (Society for the Reform of the Afghans), 89, 92
Anjuman-i-Naujawanan-i-Sarhad, 92, 94, 113, 122
Army in India, 3, 11–12, 22, 28, 37–8, 40, 42–44, 46–53, 56–8, 59, 61–2, 66, 73, 79–81, 86, 99–103, 105, 107–9, 117–18, 120–1, 128–9, 132, 139, 151–3, 171–4, 180, 183, 188–91, 194, 196–8, 200–1, 206–7, 212, 214, 217, 223–4, 228–9, 239–41, 247–8, 250, 273
  Organization, 31
  Ideology, 19, 29–35, 44–5, 172, 191–2
Attlee, Clement, 60, *n.* 74, 78–80, 249
Attock, 141
Auchinleck, Claude John Eyre, 32, *n.* 192, 193

Bajaur (Agency) 16, 24, 128, 208
Baldwin, Stanley, 87
Baluchistan, 20, 24–28, 68, 88, *n.* 136, 137, 184, *n.* 185, 244, 269
Bannu (Town), 213, 216
Bannu (District), 16, 22–24, 42, 121, 132, 217, 230
Barnes, Humphrey Aston, 133, 243
Barton, Sir William Pell, 127, 130, *n.* 186, 218
Benn, William Wedgwood, 85, 108–9, 123–7, *n.* 131, 205–6
Best, Leslie (Archie), *n.* 112, 152–3
Birkenhead, Frederick Edwin Smith, 1st Earl, 73–4, 87, 199–200
Bokhara, 43, 90, 179
Bolton, Sir Horatio Norman, *n.* 68, 74–80, 85–6, 92–6, 108–113, 116, *n.* 117, 119, 121–2, *n.* 136, *n.* 153
Bombay (City), 150–1, 153–4, 205
Bombay Presidency, 60, 69, 143–4
Bray, Sir Denys de Saumarez, *n.* 23, *n.* 50, 54, 68, 72, 201
Bray Committee, *see* North-West Frontier Enquiry Committee, 1922

Bruce, Charles Edward, 27, 95, 112, 184–7, 201, 214
Bruce, Richard Isaac, 27, 39
Buner (Agency), 16
Butler, Sir Spencer Harcourt, 25

Caroe, Sir Olaf Kirkpatrick, 5, 14–15, *n.* 23, 28, *n.* 38, 64, 94, *n.* 97, 103, *n.* 104, 106, 109, 113, 116–18, 133–4, *n.* 136, 139–40, 146, 156–7, 160, 164, 221–2, 229–231, 237–8, 241–5, 247, 249, 251, 254, 256–62, 264–71
Charles, Sir John Ronald Edward, 172
Charsadda (Subdivision and District), 23–4, 65, 88–90, *n.* 95, 119–21, 131–3, 148, 150, 233
Chatfield Committee *see* Expert Committee on the Defence of India, 1938–39
Chelmsford, Frederic John Napier Thesiger, 1st Viscount, 40, 45, 52, 64, 67, *n.* 97
Chetwode, Sir Philip Walhouse, 188, 191–2, 214, 217
Child Marriage Restraint Act (Sarda Act), 92, 95, 127–9, 138, 203–4
Chitral, 11, 21, *n.* 22, 24, 196, 233, 236, 243
Churchill, Winston, 3, 51, 87, 142–3, 182–3, 187
Civil and Military Gazette (Lahore), 101, *n.* 104, 107, *n.* 112
Civil Disobedience, 96, 112, 115, 127–8, 133, 138, 140, 142–54, 159–63, 165, 176, 181, 210
Close Border Policy, 19–22, 38–44, 47–56, 186, 194–7, 218, 224–5, 248–9, 273
Cobb, Evelyn Hey, 99–101, 104
Committee of Imperial Defence, 1, 51–2, 55, 87
Communalism, 64–5, 68–9, 71–3, 75, 78–81, 96, 119, 129–31, 144, 147–8, 159–60, 169, 188–9, 213, 219–20, 229, 253–4, 257–69, 272–3
Communism, 43–4, 87, 92, 94, 113, 122–6, 137, 175, 178–9
Cunningham, Sir George, 27–8, 57, 95, 196, 221–2, 226, 231–2, 237–41, 243–5, 247–52, 254, 256–60, 269, 272–3
Curtis, Gerald, 265–6
Curzon, George Nathaniel, Marquis Curzon of Kedleston, 11, 21–2, 32, 34, 37, 39–40, 42–4, 50, 169, 196–7, 200, 218, 229, 248, 273–4

Davies, Cuthbert Collin, 195, 215
Delhi Pact, 1931, 133–8, 142–152, 163, *n.* 205
Dera Ismail Khan (District), 11, 16, 22–4, 39, 42, 121, 184
Desai, Bhulabhai, 212
Dir (Agency), 16, *n.* 22, 24, 178–9, 196, 233, 236, 243
Dobbs, Sir Henry, *n.* 23, 51, *n.* 91, 209
Donald, John (Jos) 261, 266
Donald, Sir John Stewart, 243, 261, *n.* 266
Dost Mohammad, 15–16
Dring, Sir John, 269
Dundas, Sir Ambrose Flux, 164, 235, 237–8, 243, 245, 247–8, 269
Durand, Sir Henry Mortimer, 21
Durand Line, 21, 41–3, 45, 50, 175–6, 194, 198, 200, 229
Dyer, Reginald, 41, 62, 107, 156, 182

Economic Development in Tribal Areas, 45–6, 55–7, 200–2, 205–8, 215–19, 222–5, 241, 244–9, 253, 255–8, 263, 265, 270–3
Elphinstone, Mountstuart, 12–15, 18
Elwin, Verrier, 155–8
Emerson, Sir Herbert William, 110, 117, 130, 138, 144, 147–8, 160
Expert Committee on the Defence of India, 1938–39 (Chatfield Committee), 192–3, 221, 228

Forward Policy, 19–22, 27, 37–9, 42–58, 69, 71, 184–5, 190, 194–202, 211–218, 221–5, 232–3, 238–41, 245–52, 272–3
Fraser-Tytler, Sir William Kerr, 229

Frontier Committee, 1944–1945 (Tuker Committee), 224, 245–9, 272
Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR), 18, 34, 62, 71, 88, 96, 120, 134, 141, 169, 233–6, 271

Gandhi, Devadas, 135, 145
Gandhi, Mohandas K., 6, 41, 61, 64, 80, 96, 115, 120, *n.* 124, 127, 133, 140, 142–5, 149–51, 153, 155, 160, 164, 210, 217, 222
Germany, 209, 212, 224, 230–2, 238
Ghaffar Khan, Khan Abdul, 61, 67, 88–94, 113, 115, 119–20, 123–6, 131, 133–7, 139–40, 142–3, 145–52, 154, 164, 170, 174, 176, 203, 205, 213, 261, 263, *n.* 264, 269–71
Government of India Act, 1919, *see* Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms
Government of India Act, 1935, 32, *n.* 125, 140, 142, *n.* 170, 181–91, 203, 212–13, 219–20, 226, 250, 268
Grant, Sir Anthony Hamilton, *n.* 23, 41, 54, 63–7
Griffith, Sir Ralph Edwin Hotchkin, 136–7, 147–52, 154, 158, 161, 178–80, *n.* 191, 201, 243

Habibullah Ghazi, Amir, 123, 175
Haig, Sir Harry Graham, 135
Haig Committee, *see* North-West Frontier Subjects Committee, 1931
Hailey, Sir William Malcom, 46–52, 54–7, *n.* 113, 144, 273
Hallet, Sir Maurice, 163–4
Hay, Sir William Rupert, 160, 237
Hijrat Movement, 64–7, 87–8, 124–5
Hindustani Fanatics, *see* Wahabis
Hoare, Sir Samuel, 87, 149, 152, 163, 174, 179–81, 188–90, *n.* 209
Howell, Sir Evelyn Berkeley, *n.* 23, 28, 38, 42, *n.* 44, 58, 86, 93–4, 110–12, 115–16, 122–5, 127–8, 130, 132, 134, 136, 138, 147, 149, 154–5, 177–80, 201, 205–8, 221–2, 271
Howell Committee, *see* Tribal Control and Defence Committee, 1931
Humphrys, Sir Francis, 90–1, *n.* 136

India, Defence of, 1–2, 5, 30–1, 33–5, 46–8, 51–2, 57, 60, 78–81, 86–7, 122–3, 169–81, 183–93, 195, 212, 221, 227–32, 250–1, 257, 268
Indian Civil Service, 18–19, 24–5, 27–30, 52, 53, 57, 264–5, 269
Indian Councils Act, 1909, *see* Morley-Minto Reforms
Indian Defence League, 183
Indian Empire Society, 182–8
Indian Mutiny (1857), 62, 108, 188
Indian National Congress, *see* All-India National Congress
Indian and Frontier Nationalism, 2, 4–7, 36, 46, 59–62, 64, 67, 71–2, 74–5, 80, 85–9, 91–113, 115–65, 169–78, 181–2, 184, 186, 192–5, 202–6, 208, 210–20, 222–5, 229–30, 236, 238, 259–61, 264, 269–70, 273
Indian Political Service, 3, 12, 52–53, *n.* 95, 126, 138, 194, 273
  Ideology, 26–30, 33–5, 175–7, 180–1, 227, 229, 233–8, 242–3, 254
  Crisis of confidence, 259–68
  Organization, 22–6
Indian Statutory Commission (Simon Commission), 32–3, 60, 73–81, 90–1, 172–4, 182, 188
Ipi, Faqir of (Mirza Ali Khan), 3, 213–14, 219–20, 225, 231–2, 273
Iraq, 36–7, 46, 51, 56, *n.* 91, *n.* 136, 209
Irwin, Edward Frederick Lindley Wood, Lord, 73–5, 85, 87, 95, 108, 110, 123–33, 140, 143, 175, 180, 187, 202, 222, 229, *n.* 260, 269
Isemonger, Frederick C., 101–3, 105–6, 127–8
Islam, 4–5, 14, 38, 40, 44, 48, 62–9, 71–5, 78–9, 89–92, 96, 116, 126–31, 147–8, 159–60, 175, 178–9, 189, 197–8, 213–14, 219–20, 229, 231–2, 244, 254, 257–9, 261–7, 269, 272–4
Islam Bibi (Ram Kori), 213, 220

Jacob, Sir Claud William, 33, 87, 188–9
Jallianwalah Bagh Massacre, 1919, 40–1, 62–3, 107
Japan, *n.* 190, 192, 225, 227, 229–30, 232, 239, 251
Jardine, Lionel, 124–5
Jinnah, Muhammad Ali, 174, 254, 259, 267–9, 272–3

Kashmir, 26, 122, 269–71
Keith, Arthur Berriedale, 173
Khan, Khan Bahadur Kuli, 231–2, 243
Khan, Sir Zulfiqar Ali, 76
Khassadars, 22, 50, 117, 248
Khilafat Movement, 47, 49, 64–7, 87–8, 159–60
Khost, 42
Khudai Khidmatgars (Red Shirts), 89–107, 109–17, 119–27, 129, 132–40, 142–3, 145–65, 174–6, 178–9, 184–5, 202–4, 213
Khyber Pass, 11–12, 15, 38, 40–1, 51, 61, 66, 127, 137, 156, 196, 248
Khyber (Agency), 16, 22, 24, 31, 52, *n.* 53, 72, 117, 196–7, 204, 216, 262
King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, 102–3, *n.* 118
Kipling, Rudyard, 3, 15, 17, 29–30, 32, 182
Kirke, Sir Walter Mervyn St. George, 172
Kirkpatrick, Sir George Macaulay, 42–3
Kohat (District), 16, 22, 24, 94, 121, 152–3, 158, 197
Kripalani, Jivatram, 157–8
Kurram (Agency), 16, 22–24, 196–7, *n.* 207

Laithwaite, Sir Gilbert, 222
Landi Kotal, 31, *n.* 53, 196
Lawther, Barry C. A., 137
Linlithgow, Victor Alexander John Hope, 2nd Marquess, *n.* 170, 187, 192, 196, 221–6, 232, 238–40, 245, 250
Lloyd George Ambrose, 1st Baron, 207
Lockhart, Sir Rob McGregor MacDonald, 27
Low, Alastair Petrie, 243–4, 256, 258

MacMunn, Sir George Fletcher, 32, 183–4, 187
Maconachie, Sir Richard Roy, *n.* 110, 175–8, 180, *n.* 189–90
Maffey, Sir John Loader, 19–20, *n.* 50, 52–5, 57–8, 67–72, 74, 80, *n.* 97, *n.* 212, 238, 273
Mahsuds, 16, 23–4, 38–46, 49–51, 53–5, 110, 184–5, 202–4, 206, 219, 232, 238–9, *n.* 246, 260–1, 263, 266
Malakand (Agency), 3, 16, 22, 24, 147, 182–3, 191, 195–6, 203–4, 222–3, 232–8, 262–3
Mallam, George Leslie, 43, 119–121, *n.* 136, 232–8, 241–7, 251–3, 255–9, 263, 265, 270–1
Mardan (Subdivision and District), 23–4, 119–20, 238, 265
Masculinity, Gender, and Sexuality, 17–18, 33, 44, 131, *n.* 157, 158–9, 183, 188, 192, 206
Masters, John, 33
Mayo, Katherine, 32, 183
Messervy, Sir Frank Walter, 272
Metcalfe, Sir Herbert Aubrey Francis, 23, 94, *n.* 95, 97–101, 103–6, 112–13, 116, *n.* 118, 179–80, 214
Mirza, Iskander Ali, 264, 271
Mohmand (People and Territory), 16, 21–4, 128, *n.* 153, 196–8, 203–4, 208–12, 225
Molly Ellis Case, 1923, 197, 199
Monro, Sir Charles Carmichael, 42
Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms (Government of India Act, 1919), *n.* 29, 35, 46, 56, 59–61, 63–4, 70–5, 78–80, 85, 130–1, 164, 169, 171, 182, 186–7
Montgomery, Sir Archibald Armar, 50
Morley-Minto Reforms (Indian Councils Act, 1909), 28, 74, 76, 79–80, 169
Mountbatten, Louis Mountbatten, 1st Earl, 267–8

Muslim League, *see* All-India Muslim League
Muspratt, Sir Sydney Frederick, 50, 123

Nadir Shah (Khan), 123, 128, 175–8, 228
Nathiagali, 136, 266, 270
Nehru, Jawaharlal, 6, 118, 142, 144–5, 147, 149, 152, *n.* 155, 164, 216–17, 254, 259, 261–5, 267–9
Nehru, Motilal, 75, 144–5
Nehru Report, 1928, 75, 79, 173–4
Noble, Thomas Alexander Fraser, *n.* 146, 257, 265
Non-Cooperation Movement, *n.* 29, 41, 47, 49, 65, 71, 80, 224
Non-Violence, 4, 88, 93, 96–100, 103–6, 117, 120, 132, 153, 155–61, 217, 236
North-West Frontier Enquiry Committee, 1922 (Bray Committee), 67–72, 76, 79–80
North-West Frontier Subjects Committee, 1931 (Haig Committee), 135–136

O'Dwyer, Sir Michael, 62, 182
One Unit Scheme, 270–1
Operation Curzon (1947), 273
Orakzai, 16, 22, 24, 128

Packman, Kenneth, 261, 263
Paget, William, 17–18
Pan-Islamism, 5, 34, 40, 48, 62–7, 78, 231–2
Parsons, Sir Arthur Edward Broadbent ("Bunch"), 34, 54, 243
Partition of India, 2, 5, *n.* 192, 267–73
Patel, Vallabhbhai Jhaverbhai, 103–7, 141
Pathans, 64, 69, 75, 76–8, 80, 106, 175, 223, 247, 257, 264, 267, 269, 273
  British Perceptions of, 1–4, 6–7, 11–20, 25, 29–30, 34–5, 44, 49, 60, 70, 78, 80–1, 85–6, 93–4, 97–100, 112–13, 115–16, 131, 134, 137–8, 140, 148, 157–9, 169, 178–9, 182–3, 195, *n.* 217, 221–5, 227, 234–8, 241–3, 245–6, 251, 254, 259, 266–7
  Nationalism and Cultural Reform, 88–95, 203–5
Pears, Sir Steuart Edmund, *n.* 50, 53–4, 111, 117–19, 121, 131, 134–6, 138, 204–5
Peel, William Robert Wellesley, 1st Earl, 50–1, 54–6, 71, 198–9
Persian Gulf, 23–5, 121
Peshawar (City), 12, 15, 35, 63, 67, 77–8, 85–6, 92, 94–119, 127, 132, 137, 139, 142–43, 146, 148, 150–2, 155, 198, 203, 213, 232, 249, 257, 262
Peshawar (District), 5, 13, 16, 22–4, 61, 63, 65, 78, 85, 88–90, 93–5, 113, 115–16, 119–21, *n.* 124, 128, 131–4, 139, 145–6, 148, 150–1, 155–160, 163–4, 184, 204
Postwar Development Plan for the North-West Frontier Province, 241, 244–5, 253, 255–9, 263, 270
Pownall Sub-Committee, *see* Sub-Committee on the Defence Problems of India, 1938
Press and Media, 50, 55, 101, 104, 107, 111–12, 117, *n.* 125, 152, 157, 159–61, 182–3, 195, 197, 205, 208–10, 212–13, 261
Punjab, 11, 16, 19, 22, 28, 47, 57, 62, 68–71, 73, 96, 103, 120, 130, 138, 195, 247
Punjab "School" of Administration, 28, 62

Qaiyum, Nawab Sahibzada Sir Abdul, 72, 162
Qissa Khwani Massacre, 1930, 86, 96–109, 113, 115, 117, *n.* 118, 127, 137, 141–42, 152, 203

Ranjit Singh, Maharajah, 11, 16
Rawlinson, Sir Henry Creswicke, 48
Rawlinson, Henry Seymour, 1st Baron, 47–51, 53–5, 57, 123, 172, 198

Razmak (Waziristan), 49–51, 197, 201, 206, 223–4, 231, 238, 240, 248–9, 252, 263, 272
Reading, Rufus Daniel Isaacs, 1st Marquess, 1, 49–50, 52, 54–6, 68, 71, 199–200, 261
Red Shirts, *see* Khudai Khidmatgars
Riwaj (custom), 29, 88, 233–8, 243, 255
Roberts, Frederick Sleigh, 1st Earl, *n.* 20, 48
Robinson, James Arthur ("Robbie"), 219–20
Roos-Keppel, Sir George Olaf, 44–5, 61, 63, 72, 180, 221, 243
Rowlatt Act, 1919, 60–3, 91
Royal Air Force, 6, 18, 33–4, 51, 58, 62, 132, 139, 151, 194–5, 197–201, 204, 206–12, 231, 239, 261, 266
Royal Central Asian Society, 126
Royal Garhwal Rifles, 102–3, 105, 108–9, 111
Russia (Pre-1917), 15, *n.* 20, 48

Sahib, Dr. Khan (Khan Abdul Jabbar Khan), 88, 120, 139, 146–7, 150–1, 164, 203, 210–11, 215–17, 222, 226, 230, 256, 258–60, 263–5, 267–71
Salisbury, James Gascoyne-Cecil, 4th Marquess, 87
Sandeman, Sir Robert Groves, 20, 27, 184
Sandeman System, 20, 27, 39, 184–5, 214
Sarda Act, *see* Child Marriage Restraint Act
Selwyn, John Augustus, 99–100
Shafi, Sir Mian Muhammad, 54–5, 211
Shami Pir (Syed Mohammad Sadi), 231
Shootings, 6, 62–3, 85, 96–107, 115, 117–18, 127, 132, 142, 152–3, 158, 203, 268
Simon, Sir John Allsebrook, 74–5, 77–8, 91, *n.* 190
Simon Commission, *see* Indian Statutory Commission
Simla Debate (1935), 211–12
Slade, Madeleine, 217
Soviet Union (Russia), 1–2, 5, 11, 34, 39–40, 43–4, 72, 78, 81, 86–7, *n.* 91, 94, 110, 113–14, 122–6, 137, 172, 174–81, 185, 189–93, 224, 227–32, 239, 250–51, 274
Stewart, Sir Findlater, 189
Sub-Committee on the Defence Problems of India, 1938 (Pownall Subcommittee), 192, 228
Sulaiman, Sir Shah Muhammad, 100, 106
Swat, *n.* 14, 16, 22, 24, *n.* 124, 196, 233, 236–7, 243
Swat, Wali of (Miangul Abdul Wadud), *n.* 14, 196, 236–7

The Times (London), 50, 55, *n.* 74, 209
Tirah (Territory), 15, 22, 24, 197, 230, 243
Tochi (Waziristan), 22, 50
Torture, 6, 139, 141, 154–61, 165, 194, 202, 204, 233
Tribal Control and Defence Committee, 1931 (Howell Committee), 205–8, 222–3, 245
Trivedi, Sir Chandulal Madhavlal, 161
Tuker, Sir Francis, 224, 245–6
Tuker Committee, *see* Frontier Committee, 1944–1945
Turangzai, Haji Sahib of (Fazal Wahid), 123–4, 208

United Provinces, 57, *n.* 97, 144–7, 149

Wahabis (Hindustani Fanatics), 123–4
Walton, Sir John Charles, 177, 179
Wana (Waziristan), 22, 24, 43, 49, 197, 201, 206, 223–4, 238, 240, 248–9, 252, 272
Wavell, Archibald Percival Wavell, 1st Earl, 28, 245, 259–61, 267
Wazirs, 16, 24, 37, 39, 41–4, 46, 49–50, 54, 175–7, 184, 202–4, 219, 239

Waziristan, 3, 11, 16, 21–4, 27, 34, 37–46, 48–58, 61, 67, 71, 95, 110, 121, 123, 127–8, 136, 178, 184–5, 187, 190, 195, 197–207, 211–25, 230–3, 237–41, 243–50, 252–3, 255–6, 261–3, 266, 272–3
Willingdon, Freeman Freeman-Thomas, 1st Marqess, 27, 134, 136, 143–6, 149–54, 158–9, 161, 163, 165, 180–1, 189–92, 201, 207–8, 222

Younghusband, Sir Francis Edward, 218
Yusufi, Allah Bukhsh, 140–1
Yusufzai (People), 233–38

Zetland, Lawrence John Lumley Dundas, 2nd Marquess, 224, 229