

“SCIENTIFIC FRONTIER”

The North-West Frontier, Imperial Intelligence, and
the Geopolitics of Empire, 1849-1901

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6 April, 2016

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MAP



Fig. 1: North-West Frontier Province, ca. 1916. From Sir James Douie, *The Panjab, North-West Frontier Province, and Kashmir* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1916).

INTRODUCTION

The North-West Frontier: Geography, Knowledge, and Power

“Outside of the English Universities no school of character exists to compare with the Frontier; and character is there moulded, not by attrition with fellow men in the arts of studies of peace, but in the furnace of responsibility and on the anvil of self-reliance.”

- Lord Curzon, 1907.¹

Delivering the 1907 Romanes Lecture at Oxford University, Lord Curzon (Viceroy of India, 1899-1905; Foreign Secretary, 1919-1924) argued that the British experience on its imperial frontiers had shaped its national character. The duties of frontier work, he explained, brought up a “modern school of pioneers”—men of scientific learning, linguistic and anthropological training, and manly physical vigor.² The Frontier released young men from the “corroding ease and the morbid excitements of Western civilization,” and in doing so, brought forth the “invincible spirit and unexhausted moral fibre of our race.”³ The frontier “periphery,” as Curzon pointed out, had an importance of its own in shaping the values and political imagination of the “center” of the British Empire. Not only important for the British, Curzon noted, frontiers and protectorates were being forged throughout the world by the likes of France, Russia, and the United States. Deeply teleological in outlook, Curzon’s “Frontiers” lecture suggested a process of information gathering and synthesis, followed by the designation of spheres of influence, in the development of frontiers. “The general tendency is forward, not backward,” Curzon proclaimed, but this process had to be done correctly—in doing so, it would transform the frontier from a historical “cause of war” into the future “instruments and evidences of peace.”⁴ In Curzon’s view, the imperial frontier did not

¹ George Nathaniel Curzon, “Frontiers,” Lecture, 1907 Romanes Lecture at University of Oxford, Oxford, UK, November 2, 1907. Reprinted as a bound volume by Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907.

² Curzon, 57. Curzon’s argument drew from Frederick Jackson Turner’s “The Significance of the Frontier in American History.” He argued that the British Empire also had a Frontier Thesis, in other words.

³ Ibid, 57.

⁴ Ibid, 53-54.

just generate the lifeblood of the British Empire; it was instrumental to the maintenance of imperial security and the perpetuation of the international peace.

The answer why the “Frontier” became so central to the political imaginary of such a staunch imperialist as Lord Curzon lies in the British experience in a specific frontier region—the North-West Frontier, an area which concerned one of Curzon’s major legislative achievements as Viceroy, the creation of the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) in 1901.⁵ The British Empire, then in the form of the East India Company (EIC), acquired the territories that would comprise the North-West Frontier in a series of wars in the 1830s-40s with regional princely states, the largest of which was the Sikh Kingdom of Ranjit Singh.⁶ A series of annexations in the 1840s brought Punjab under British rule, which became incorporated into British India as a province in 1849. These annexations seized an area of approximately 18,000 or so square miles, stretching from the foothills of the Himalayas to the Gomal River, which separates South Waziristan from Baluchistan—an area that came to be known as the North-West Frontier (NWF).⁷ For a variety of factors, which this essay will discuss, the NWF was placed outside the administrative structures of the regular Indian provinces—e.g. systems of land administration, policing, law, and politics.⁸ Rather, British policies were unsystematic, broadly speaking, and depended on indirect forms of rule. These included soft power management of the native Pasthun inhabitants, which the British state conceptualized in terms of tribal groupings, and forms of violence in maintaining the rule of

⁵ David Gilmour, “Curzon, George Nathaniel, Marquess Curzon of Kedleston (1859-1925),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004), online edition, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/32680>, accessed 27 March 2016. A note on acronyms: the North-West Frontier, abbreviated here as NWF, refers to the geographic region described above. The North-West Frontier Province, or NWFP, refers to the administrative structure enacted to govern the geographic region, and appears only after its creation in 1901.

⁶ Malcolm Yapp, *Strategies of British India: Britain, Iran, and Afghanistan, 1798-1850* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 565-570.

⁷ Sana Haroon, *Frontier of Faith: Islam in the Indo-Afghan Borderland* (London: Hurst & Co., 2007), 5-7. These territories, for reference, now comprise the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of modern Pakistan.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

law. Cumulatively, these decentralized policies amounted over time to what Thomas Simpson has described as a process of “frontier-making”—in which dispersed agencies (British and native) “performed and contested” the territories which composed borderlands and frontiers.⁹ Simpson is one of many historians who have recently turned their attention to engaging the North-West Frontier of British India with increased analytical rigor.¹⁰

Much of this scholarship has paid insufficient attention to a process Curzon described as formative to the creation and maintenance of frontiers—information gathering, collation, and synthesis. His description of teams of officers collecting all the “geographical, topographical, and ethnological evidence that is forthcoming” in frontier-making is indeed an apt one for the colonial history of the North-West Frontier.¹¹ The India Office Records (IOR) archives demonstrate the depth of the imperial information-gathering project in the NWF throughout its imperial history. Although the methodologies, emphases, and objects of this knowledge-gathering changed over time—reflecting shifting political and strategic priorities—administrators and military officials wrote about, surveyed, and mapped a territory in parallel to their efforts to traverse, fight in, and administer it. Some patterns, from cursory view, emerge that are broadly consistent with the historiography on information regimes in wider British India during the nineteenth century. For instance, early nineteenth-century attempts at “understanding” the native inhabitants of the region, by and large ethnic Pashtuns, followed early-colonial methodologies in examining text-based

⁹ Thomas Simpson, “Bordering and Frontier-Making in Nineteenth-Century British India,” *The Historical Journal*, 58.2 (June 2015), 513-514.

¹⁰ The most important of these recent works include: Magnus Marsden and Benjamin D. Hopkins, *Fragments of the Afghan Frontier* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011); Christian Tripodi, *Edge of Empire: the British Political Officer and Tribal Administration on the North-West Frontier, 1877-1947* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011); and Hugh Beattie, *Imperial Frontier: Tribe and State in Waziristan* (Richmond: Curzon, 2002). Other outstanding recent journal articles, besides Simpson’s, include Sameetah Agha, “Sub-imperialism and the Loss of the Khyber: The Politics of Imperial Defence on British India’s North-West Frontier,” *Indian Historical Review* 40.2 (December 2013); and Zak Leonard, “Colonial Ethnography on India’s North-West Frontier, 1850-1910,” *The Historical Journal* 59.1 (March 2016).

¹¹ Curzon, “Frontiers,” 50.

sources.¹² These efforts saw, in the post-1857 era, broad shifts towards scientificity, instrumentalizing knowledge with the goal of the maintenance of imperial power. The “tribal genealogy,” which attempted to map the patrilineal descent of tribal groupings, emblemized this trend.¹³ In the realm of geography, early maps of the region tended to follow major river arteries and the paths of explorers, connecting known settlements. The form and function of maps changed with the creation of the Great Trigonometrical Survey (GTS) of the mid nineteenth-century, which aimed to produce a comprehensive archive of the geography of British India. This spurred cartography efforts in the NWF that attempted to reproduce with increasing detail and exactitude the topography of the Frontier territories.¹⁴ Indeed, scholars of British colonialism in South Asia such as Bernard Cohn and Christopher Bayly have noted the close connection between the production of knowledge about human and natural resources and the maintenance of imperial control.¹⁵

Painting the intelligence production efforts of the nineteenth-century NWF in such broad strokes, however, obfuscates as much as it illuminates. This thesis is driven by the assertion that the specific British intelligence institutions and practices active in the North-West Frontier deserve greater attention for their historical particularity. The most significant difference from the rest of British Indian information regimes involved the intimate interlinkages between civilian intelligence (social, political, ethnographic) and military intelligence. The Political & Secret (P&S)

¹² Leonard, “Colonial Ethnography,” 176, 181. See also Rama Mantena, *The Origins of Modern Historiography in India: Antiquarianism and Philology, 1780-1880* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 125.

¹³ These trends, in broad terms, parallel practices of ethnography elsewhere in British India. See e.g. Leonard, “Colonial Ethnography;” and Nicholas Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

¹⁴ Matthew Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997) is a good overview of practices of British practices of mapping.

¹⁵ Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: the British in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); C. A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1870-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Department, the civilian intelligence branch of the Government of India (GOI), was tasked with developing the former; whereas the Indian Army Intelligence Branch, founded in 1873, generated information deemed of tactical or strategic military importance.¹⁶ Yet throughout British rule over the NWF, the distinction between the two often blurred. Political and military intelligence operated in close tandem, both in their production and consumption. The British Indian Army generated and consumed socio-political knowledge about the NWF's inhabitants; similarly, civilian branches of the GOI, such as the P&S and Foreign Departments, regularly read and commented on strategic defense plans regarding the NWF. This merging of different intelligence elements (political-military) in turn points to two significant historical processes recognized but under-studied in the extant historiography. The first is the routinization of violence as a method of political control of the frontier. While estimates vary, British military archives indicate that in the period 1849-1901 British forces launched no less than 40 punitive expeditions against the NWF's native Pashtun inhabitants, most often for offenses such as raiding and theft.¹⁷ This suggests the overlap, even identification, between political rule and violence, a suggestion affirmed by R.H. Davies's statement in 1864 that "the despatch of an expedition into the hills is always in the nature of a judicial act."¹⁸ This of course raises the question, is the political-military union within the intelligence services a symptom of this historical phenomenon, or a root cause?

As Curzon argued, frontier politics shaped imperial policies, an argument which points to a second under-studied historical process: the identification of the frontier as a critically important strategic zone within the empire. A quote, by intelligence officer Henry Brackenbury in 1887,

¹⁶ James Hevia, *The Imperial Security State: British Colonial Knowledge and Empire-Building in Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 2, 54.

¹⁷ William Henry Paget, *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India, Volume II: North-West Frontier Tribes between the Kabul and Gamul Rivers* (Simla: Government Monotype Press, 1908), i-iii.

¹⁸ IOR/L/PS/6/534: Robert Henry Davies, "Printed Memorandum by Robert Henry Davies, Secretary to Government, Punjab, on the relations of the British Government with the Muhammadan tribes of the North-West Frontier between 1855 and 1864 (with appendix and associated correspondence)," October 1864.

demonstrates both the intimate coalition between military and civilian intelligence, as well as this historical process:

The acquaintance we have gained of the ethnographical conditions of the country [NWF] should enable the political authorities, in connection with the soldiers, to determine upon a military-political frontier not to be passed by Russia without war with England.¹⁹

Brackenbury's quote demonstrates how deeply interconnected this matrix of military and political intelligence is: in his formulation, ethnographic knowledge supports the geographical theory of a "military-political frontier," which is itself a policy coordination between army officers and civil administrators. More than that, however, this quote indicates the extent to which the NWF was conceived of as the central defensive zone against the supposed Russian threat. Almost all recent studies of the NWF—even those that take off from, but also call into question, the "Great Game" narrative—have recognized but insufficiently analyzed this designation.²⁰ No geographic area can possibly be *a priori* a geo-strategically important region; rather, states identify them based on defined security priorities, capabilities parameters, research methodology, and other factors. These constitute, of course, a historical process shaped by specific political and material contexts. In the case of the NWF, this process is worth studying for its consequences for the region's history, as well as for the shaping of the British Indian Empire system as a whole.

These ideas again hearken back to Curzon's remarks in 1907 at Oxford University—remarks which belie the "centrality" of the frontier or "peripheral" regions of the Empire. The

¹⁹ IOR/L/PS/18/C57: Major General Henry Brackenbury, "Russian Advances in Asia: memorandum as to the determination of a military frontier line for India," 7 August, 1887, p. 6.

²⁰ See e.g. Tripodi, *Edge of Empire*, 15-16; or Haroon, *Frontier of Faith*, 7-8. Hevia's *Imperial Security State* comes closest to critically analyzing this phenomenon, but ultimately falls short in identifying its articulation in a single article (James Lyall's 1891 "Frontiers and Protectorates") rather than as anchored in the *longue durée*, which this essay argues. Furthermore, as archival evidence presented in chapter 2 will demonstrate, 1891 is an inaccurate chronology of this historical process. See Hevia, 66-67, 224-226.

intelligence services of the British Empire are worth studying, in part, because they connect the local with the imperial: in form and function, they contain both top-down elements (security priorities and personnel set by Whitehall, for instance) and bottom-up processes (individual agent initiative, and the multifarious, quotidian interactions between its officers and native inhabitants). Their intimate connection with multi-level policy in the history of the NWF thus allows its study to contribute to a mechanistic understanding of a seminal analytical question posed by British Empire historian John Darwin: how do *systems* of empire arise out of the “chaotic pluralism” of the daily practices of governance and expansion?²¹

Indeed, this essay’s argument directly addresses that question: that imperial intelligence gathered and collated information about the NWF that was operative on a theoretical as well as instrumental register, and deeply influenced British policy. The creation of the North-West Frontier Province in 1901 consolidated these policies and intelligence-driven models of space, and in doing so constituted a system of empire. The NWFP legislation not only attempted to put into practice theoretical models of the NWF, but also articulated a geopolitics of empire, which I term “Frontier Geopolitics”—replete with its prescriptions of the spatial organization of empire, the practice of imperial security, imposition of political governance, and power projection. The study of intelligence and the NWF is thus illuminating on two levels: analyzing the historical development of intelligence helps produce a deep understanding of the sometimes tortured and often misunderstood history of the NWF; conversely, exploring the case study of the NWF gives us a glimpse into the mechanics of information, imperial power, and the production of systems of empire. More than that, however, studying the imperial security services in the context of the NWF

²¹ Articulated in John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 17; and John Darwin, “Imperialism and the Victorians: The Dynamics of Territorial Expansion,” *The English Historical Review* 112.447 (Jun 1997), 642.

lays bare the consequences of these configurations of state power, which perpetuated a double violence to the region's native inhabitants: actual physical violence, in the form of the punitive expedition; and the epistemic violence of effacing the "multiple and complex self-identifications" and politics of the region's inhabitants.²²

In addressing these issues, this essay draws upon a wide array of archival documents from the India Office Records as well as published primary sources. Previous studies of colonial information systems have either exclusively focused on social/political intelligence (e.g. Bayly or Cohn) or military intelligence (e.g. James Hevia). By contrast, this essay analyzes civil intelligence sources, from the P&S Department, in the context of military intelligence, from the Indian Army archives, and vice versa. Memoranda, intelligence estimates, and analyses comprise the bulk of these sources; from these, this essay will construct a critical narrative of the rise and impact of the British intelligence state in the context of British rule over the NWF. Yet this study would ultimately be incomplete without careful readings of 1) colonial ethnographies and genealogies of the region's inhabitants; and 2) maps created of the region's geography. These sources not only provided instrumental knowledge but also, as this essay aims to show, deeply shaped the British theoretical understanding of the region. In considering maps, in particular, this essay draws on a recent body of literature which considers maps to be value-laden images, rather than inert records of topographical landscapes. In doing so, my analyses of colonial-era maps of the NWF move away from binary oppositions between "true" and "false," "accurate" and "inaccurate," or "objective" and "subjective." Following J. B. Harley's theoretical framework, this essay is driven by the assertion that maps are "never value-free images," and are neither true nor false except in

²² See e.g. Marsden and Hopkins, *Fragments*, 2-3.

the narrowest Euclidean sense.²³ The following analyses of colonial-era maps will thus pay close attention to the selectivity of their content and styles of representation; to the technologies involved in creating such maps; and to the ways in which they structured and conceived of the territory known as the North-West Frontier. In pairing maps with colonial-era ethnographies, this essay builds from Edward Said's idea of "imaginative geographies," or the processes by which representations of subjects come to define conceptual notions of geographic space.²⁴

This thesis is organized into three chapters, each analyzing a historical problem in the development of British intelligence and the North-West Frontier. Chapter one starts with a historical problem unsolved thus far in the NWF historiography: how, and why did the routinization of violence as a method of governing the frontier become instituted? In answering this question, this chapter introduces the British Indian intelligence services and traces their historical development from 1849 to 1876. In doing so, it demonstrates that the knowledge they generated and collated, in the selectivity of their content and in their signs and styles of representation, created and structured the geographic area known as the North-West Frontier into a "Frontier Tribal Area"—an epistemological project which identified the region as socially, politically, and geographically distinct within British India. Chapter two charts the historical development of this epistemological project by narrowing its chronological focus to the period beginning in the 1870s stretching into the 1890s, roughly speaking. It examines the ways in which the intelligence community assessed Russian activity in the 1870s, and re-conceptualized "imperial security" away from a purely military definition towards one involving both statecraft and defense strategy. In considering this debate, this chapter analyzes the historical process by

²³ J. B. Harley, "Maps, Knowledge, and Power," in *The Iconography of Landscape*, ed. Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 277-278.

²⁴ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978), 54-55.

which the British state conceived of the NWF as a “scientific frontier” with a central importance in to imperial security. Chapter three will read the creation of the North-West Frontier Province in the context of these practices of information-gathering discussed in chapters one and two. In doing so, it seeks to overturn the existing interpretation of the creation of the NWFP as a merely administrative reform; considering the history of British intelligence practices reveals the creation of this province as the attempt to put into practice the theoretical models of space and power discussed in chapters 1 and 2. In explicating this historical process, this chapter will offer a case study into the mechanisms by which the “chaotic plurality” of British epistemes and policies on the NWF coalesced into a system of empire, which the North-West Frontier Province legislation attempted to consolidate.

CHAPTER I

Violence and the Foundations of the British Intelligence State, 1849-1878

On a chilly November's day in 1853, a senior British officer, along with two of his aides, was murdered in cold blood in the foothills of the Black Mountain.²⁵ A Customs Department officer, Mr. Carne, had been inspecting a preliminary administrative boundary, created for the purpose of enforcing the British salt monopoly, when a "band of armed Hasanzais" emerged from the forest and shot Mr. Carne and his aide with little warning. The archival record, drafted by Sir Richard Temple and Lt.-Col. William Paget (both army veterans), keenly notes that this murder was in cold blood, because "they were Englishmen, infidels, defenceless travelers, with a little property about them."²⁶

When Jehandad, identified by Paget as their native collaborator, failed to produce the assailants, the British regime decided to take matters into their own hands. "It was evident," Paget writes, "that the whole tribe [Hasanzais] approved of the murder, and sheltered the murderers. British interference became at last necessary, both to vindicate ourselves and support Jehandad."²⁷ Ten regiments of the Indian Army were quickly mobilized, and dispatched into the hills to punish the Hasanzai tribe for what the British presumed to be their collective guilt.

These regiments encountered difficulty in the rough terrain. The enemy held ground that "was a very steep and thickly wooded shoulder of the mountain, rising abruptly for nearly a thousand feet."²⁸ Finding this section impassable, but also worried about routing around lest they

²⁵ A locale in the North-West Frontier, near Torghar, Pakistan. William Paget, "A Record of the Expeditions Undertaken against the North-West Frontier Tribes," Calcutta: Government of India, 1874, 23. IOR/L/MIL/17/13/14.

²⁶ Ibid, 23.

²⁷ Ibid, 23.

²⁸ Ibid, 26.

leave their flank exposed to counter-attack, Colonel Mackeson and his men found themselves pinned down. Furthermore, a column of reinforcement troops had taken a wrong turn on some poorly marked roads. British forces eventually pushed through when the 1st Artillery Brigade showed up with heavy artillery on the 29th of December. Having defeated the armed resistance, the British Indian troops set about their real work: destroying Hasanzai settlements and property. Working 12 hours a day (9 A.M. to 9 P.M.), British troops set about burning villages and settlements, killing livestock, and laying waste to foodstuffs.²⁹ After four days of such destruction, the officers decided that this “had been sufficient punishment for the murder of the two British officers,” and headed back to Punjab having delivered its message to the Hasanzai tribe.³⁰ As Lt.-Col. Paget stated, “the conduct of the Hasanzais then became satisfactory.”³¹

This particular punitive expedition, as the military records show, was neither the first nor the last in the British experience on the North-West Frontier. Rather, the British use of violence gained increasing frequency over the latter half of the nineteenth century; the military records demonstrate almost annual expeditions in the North-West Frontier during this time.³² This frequency points to another historical development, which was its gradual identification, over time, with political governance.³³ As previously noted, R.H. Davies, a senior civil servant in the Punjab provincial government, described punitive expeditions as “in the nature of a judicial act.”³⁴ How and why punitive expeditions proliferated within British systems of ruling the frontier has been insufficiently studied in the historical literature. Hugh Beattie, for instance, downplays their importance in NWF policy, citing a brief lapse in their use 1873-76 as evidence of their decline.³⁵

²⁹ Ibid, 28.

³⁰ Ibid, 30.

³¹ Ibid, 30

³² Paget, *Frontiers and Overseas Expeditions*, Vol. 2, i-iii.

³³ Beattie, *Imperial Frontier*, 185.

³⁴ IOR/L/PS/6/534: Davies, “Memorandum,” 1864.

³⁵ Beattie, *Imperial Frontier*, 186.

He echoes Tripodi in taking for granted, too, imperial-era justifications for this policy in suggesting that however “distasteful” they may have been, they were effective in curbing raiding and disruptions along the Frontier region.³⁶ Neither assertion holds up in the face of the documentary evidence, which demonstrates that after the brief lull Beattie cites, punitive expeditions picked up again in earnest, with 6 in 1877-80 alone, a per year average (~2) greater than that during any period before then.³⁷ As Viceroy Lord Lansdowne admitted in a private letter in 1889, “punitive expeditions have been frequent, but have been attended with very few permanent results.”³⁸ British administrators’ continued reliance on the punitive expedition despite their dubious “effectiveness,” as well as sustained efforts to find policy alternatives, represents a historical problem which bears significance not only for the history of the British intelligence regime, but for the region’s history as a whole.

This chapter begins with the historical problem of the routinization of violence within the British system of governance along the North-West Frontier, since the foundations of the British intelligence regime lay in these early encounters with the Pashtun inhabitants. Indeed, Paget’s account of the Black Mountain expedition described above emphasized multiple information-gathering failures. The British, most of all, failed to understand the opaque geography, which resists the movement of men and material, and obscures traversable routes. Secondly, they grossly misunderstood the native peoples, who betray and rebel against the imperial regime’s chosen collaborator, Jehandad. These two major shortcomings emphasized in the account of the 1853-54 expedition greatly anticipated the form and function of the imperial intelligence regime’s response to the early challenges posed by frontier security. Accordingly, its goals were two-fold: to provide

³⁶ Tripodi, *Edge of Empire*, 50; Beattie, *Imperial Frontier*, 184-185.

³⁷ Paget, *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions*, Vol. 2, i-iii.

³⁸ MSS EUR F111/405: Letter, Lord Lansdowne to Lord Curzon, 1 Oct 1889.

tactical knowledge of the terrain to army officers fighting on the frontier; and socio-political knowledge of the “tribe,” which served both civil administration and military information needs. Yet the historical outcome of this intelligence response greatly exceeded its original mission to provide merely tactical or instrumental knowledge, since the forms of knowledge they generated were not simply inert records of morphological landscapes or passive descriptions of sociological structures of native peoples. Rather, in the selectivity of their content and in their signs and styles of representation, the maps, route-books, and ethnographies they created were a means of conceiving, articulating, and structuring the world of the geographic area known as the “North-West Frontier.”³⁹ In other words, the epistemological project undertaken by British intelligence services in the decades following the 1850s excavated neither an existing socio-political nor geographical landscape per se, but constructed the concept of the “Frontier Tribal Area” as a meaningful, distinct political territory. This designation, together with prevailing ideological assumptions and political events *in situ*, produced and justified a form of frontier administration that closely identified governance with state violence.

Early punitive expeditions, which occurred periodically soon after annexation, crystallized British impulses to “master” the difficult terrain by charting and mapping the region. For example, the 1853-54 expedition described above highlights some of the tactical and logistical challenges British Indian troops faced: hauling military equipment and supplies over rough terrain and sometimes non-existent roads; incomplete maps; and the incompatibility of European-style tactics in fighting in the mountains of the NWF, among others. Thus, as military historian T. R. Moreman argues, early expeditions were “very costly, formal, and ineffective,” often unable to penetrate far

³⁹ The preceding sentences borrow, in their terminology and methodology, from Harley, “Maps, Knowledge, and Power,” 277-278.

enough to achieve their military objectives.⁴⁰ In particular, the language of Paget’s account specified the root cause of many of these problems as the inhospitable geography; his language, as I have quoted, fixated on the terrain and the obstacles it created. Other military officers echoed these concerns. Captain W. James, for instances, criticized the failures of Bengali regiments in these early expeditions: “we require no prophetic skill to calculate the rest – not aware of the style of the enemy’s warfare, of the nature of the country he is about to penetrate [...] it would be a miracle if he avoid a disaster [sic].”⁴¹ Thus, military success depended on geographic knowledge—of the “nature of the country” in which British Indian army regiments are to fight. General V. Fosbery, writing in 1867, suggested that “comparatively few English officers know what Indian mountain fighting means; the remainder, when brought face to face with a brave, numerous, and formidable enemy, on ground very different from the valleys of Aldershot [...] are apt to find the ordinary regulations, manuals, and drill books less that what is necessary for ordinary success.”⁴²

Other generals noted the differential between their own knowledge of the terrain, and that of the “enemy’s,” or native peoples. The jagged peaks, immense rocks, and torn roads of the Frontier effectively concealed the enemy, whose knowledge of the terrain allowed them to hold the most effective defensive positions: “the knowledge of locality [is] in entirely the favour of the enemy. They not only hold the commanding points, but the very habits of their daily life render them particularly adapted to irregular fighting,” Col. J. Adye wrote in 1867.⁴³ Their “very habits of daily life,” Adye continues, allowed them to slip in and out of villages and natural spaces. Sir

⁴⁰ T. R. Moreman, *The Army in India and the Development of Frontier Warfare, 1849-1947* (London: MacMillan, in association with King’s College, London, 1998), 22.

⁴¹ IOR/P/191/44: Correspondence, Maj. Gen. Hutchinson, Offg. Secretary to the Government of Punjab, Military Dept., to Maj. G. Sir R.G. Birch, Secretary to the Govt. of India in the Military Dept., 1 Oct. 1860. Quoted in Moreman, 22.

⁴² Maj. Gen. D.C. Fosbery, “The Umbeyla Expedition”, *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 11.46 (1868), 549.

⁴³ Col. John Adye, *Sitana: A Mountain Campaign on the Borders of Afghanistan in 1863* (London: Richard Bentley, 1867), 34-35.

Richard Temple described in his 1855 *Report* that the Frontier tribes “[intrigue] with the disaffected everywhere” to rebel, offering those disaffected subjects, “[malcontents], and proclaimed criminals” refuge in the wild and ungoverned lands of the frontier.⁴⁴ The Frontier thus became a site of anxiety, a source of disruption, and a place where criminal forces gather to plot and attack. Mapping the region was necessary, in these generals’ beliefs, to pull back this geographical opacity and provide tactical knowledge to their forces.

Exploratory and diplomatic expeditions produced some of the earliest maps of the region. An 1834 map, produced out of Alexander Burnes exploratory expedition to find the source of the Indus River, for instance, shows the routes of the explorers and relative distances between known locations (fig. 2). Yet the geographic details are slim, focusing on the routes of the explorers, as well as the major rivers. These details reflected the concerns of the time: exploration and waterways.

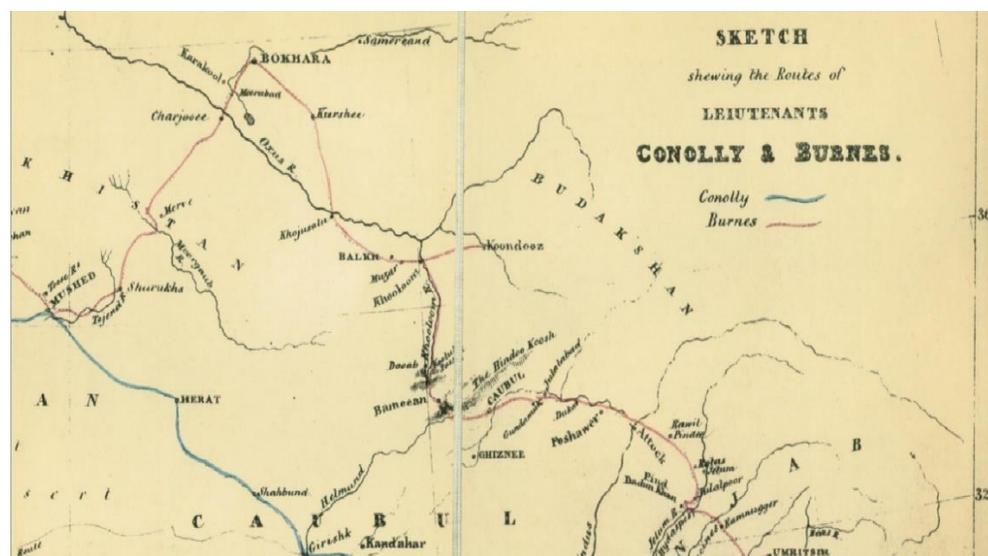


Fig. 2: Detail from 1834 map, published in the article, “Papers Descriptive of the Countries on the North-West Frontier of India:-The Thurr, or Desert; Joodpoor and Jaysulmeer”, *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, Vol. 4 (1834), pp. 88-129.

⁴⁴ H. W. Bellow & Sir Richard Temple, *Our Punjab Frontier: Being a Concise Account of the various tribes by which the North-West Frontier of British India is Inhabited; shewing its present unprotected and unsatisfactory state, and the urgent necessity that exists for immediate reconstruction. Also, brief remarks on Afghanistan and our policy in reference to that country by a Punjab Official* (Calcutta: Superintendent of government printing, 1855), 12.

Later maps demonstrated the impulses articulated by Adye, Fosbery, and other generals in attempting to make these blank spaces known and legible to the British Indian Army. In his study of mapping in British India, Matthew Edney notes that the mid-nineteenth century saw a vast, coordinated scientific project of mapping the subcontinent in the form of the Great Trigonometrical Survey (GTS).⁴⁵ Using techniques developed in the Ordnance Survey of the United Kingdom, a late 18th century project to map the British Isles, surveyors in the Indian Army sought to produce an intimate understanding of terrain, settlements, and outposts in similar, thorough detail. Edney and Timothy Mitchell both note that mapping attempted to produce information useful to the state's management of political economy, for example taxation purposes.⁴⁶ Indeed, precision map-making in the GTS sought to produce comprehensive knowledge of both physical and political geography and within the domain of empire. These impulses took on greater significance in the North-West Frontier since, as the Black Mountain narrative suggests, British administrators considered physical geography and sociological knowledge to be military intelligence. They were the driving force behind vigorous mapping efforts throughout the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century centered on the NWF. The map entitled "The Sulimani Mountains of the Afghan Frontier of British India," expressed these concerns (see fig. 3).

⁴⁵ Matthew Edney, *Mapping an Empire: the Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

⁴⁶ Timothy Mitchell, "Orientalism and the Exhibitionary Order," in *Colonialism and Culture*, edited by Nicholas Dirks, 290-317 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992).



Fig. 3: Detail from IOR/W/L/PS/21/K3: Map, “The Sulimani Mountains on the Afghan Frontier of British India,” 1879.

This map sought to create a comprehensive catalogue of space, translating topography to paper. In creating the map, Major Wilson and his colleagues in the Army Intelligence Branch took advantage of the latest technologies of surveying and map-making. Chief among these was the theodolite, a device made up of a tripod, a telescope, and graduated circles for calculating the horizontal and vertical angles from sightings of a prominent topographic feature visible at a distance.⁴⁷ While the details of surveying are complex and beyond the scope of this essay, in essence Wilson and other surveyors used the theodolites to construct conceptual triangles between prominent features, thus mathematically deducing distances, elevations, and other data.⁴⁸ Teams in the Intelligence Branch spatialized these data and interpolated these triangles in the creation of maps.⁴⁹ The reliance on

⁴⁷ Hevia, *Imperial Security State*, 81-82.

⁴⁸ Edney, *Mapping an Empire*, 105-108.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 115.

advanced mathematics and technological instruments created, in the British imaginary, a discourse of “scientificity”; British surveyors and administrators believed that the maps they created offered objective representations of space. As Thomas Holdich, a senior member of the Trigonometrical Survey team argued, “Every point on a boundary-line, every peak in a mountain system, every landmark of any importance in the countryside, has a value whose correctness can be proved just as easily in a London office as in the open field.”⁵⁰

Yet even as Wilson, Holdich, and others gained confidence in the “scientific,” objective qualities of their surveying, the very technologies they used shaped their understanding of geographic space. The technology’s reliance on prominent topographical features, especially mountain peaks, meant that British maps tended to over-emphasize mountain terrain at the expense of other geographical formations. These tendencies contributed to the exaggerated topography seen in the 1879 map above. This exaggerated topography, in turn, seemed to obscure even as it ostensibly revealed the geography. It reflected and supported emerging discourses that conceived of the NWF as geographically exceptional; British officers of the time increasingly spoke of the “impenetrable” wilderness of the NWF, whose topography—“rough hills” and “robber fastnesses”—they could map but not fully understand.⁵¹ In other words, this map (and others like it) contributed to the solidification of a discourse of geography that treated the NWF as *sui generis*, whose exceptionality was based in part on its extraordinary topography.

Other maps placed the approximate positions of the Pasthun tribes in geographical space, such as the “General Map to illustrate Record of Expeditions against the North-West Frontier Tribes” (see fig. 4).

⁵⁰ Thomas Holdich, “The Use of Practical Geography Illustrated by Recent Frontier Operations,” *The Geographical Journal*, 6.13 (1899), 473.

⁵¹ See e.g. Bellew & Temple, *Our Punjab Frontier*, 15.

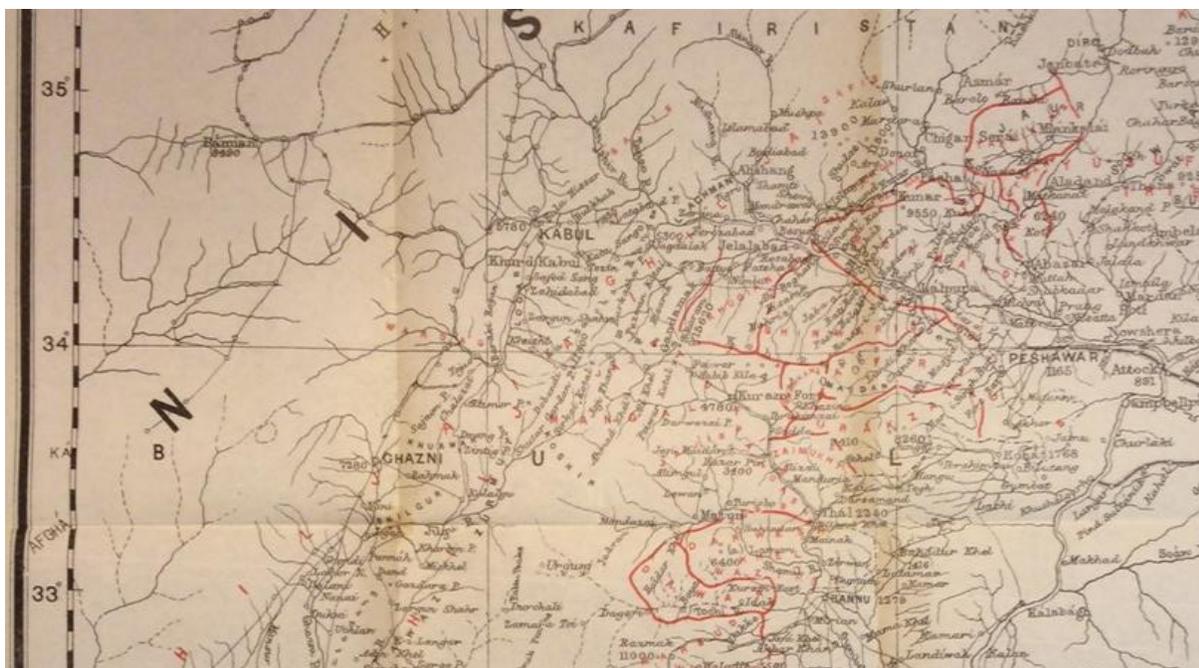


Fig. 4: Detail from “General Map to illustrate Record of Expeditions against the North-West Frontier Tribes,” Trigonometrical Survey Department and the Quartermaster General, Indian Army, 1874.⁵²

Produced as a companion to military intelligence volumes on early expeditions, this map, like Wilson’s 1879 map, produced detailed information on the physical geography (streams and rivers) as well as man-made roads and settlements.⁵³ Yet this map displays one more key detail: the placement of the Pashtun “tribes” onto geographical space (in red). Indeed, the purpose of the map—to illustrate military intelligence reports—informs the construction of the map. The arrangement of the “tribes” onto space reflects the narrative organization of the accompanying volumes: both the 1865 and 1874 *Reports* organized their narratives by the opposing “tribe” any given expedition is facing. Thus, the military or civil officer consulting these reports was meant to reference the corresponding map region. The geographic “archive” represented by this map correlated with the narrative-based “archive” detailing anthropological and tactical knowledge

⁵² IOR/W/L/PS/21/K7; also re-printed in Paget, W. H. “A record of the expeditions undertaken against the North-West Frontier tribes” (Calcutta: Government of India Press, 1874), IOR/V/27/281/7.

⁵³ Printed in in Paget, W. H. “A record of the expeditions undertaken against the North-West Frontier tribes” (Calcutta: Government of India Press, 1874); see also H. W. Bellew, *Our Punjab frontier*, 12.

accrued from experience in the field. On a discursive level, however, this map drew on the extensive archive of ethnographic information that was being generated at the time. By spatially locating ethnic groups, this map reflected and undergirded an idea that the ethnic composition of the North West Frontier was the defining element of that geographic space, identifying it as a “Frontier Tribal Area.” In this way, maps of the region, in the selectivity of their content and their styles of representation, constructed on a discursive level the North-West Frontier as geographically and ethnically exceptional.

Ethnographic description formed the other vector for constructing knowledge about the North-West Frontier. Due to the frequent and sometimes violent encounters between the British state and the region’s Pashtun inhabitants, ethnography became another linchpin of British intelligence activities on the North-West Frontier. While colonial ethnographies of the NWF during the nineteenth-century were complex, and have generated substantial historical study, this chapter will focus on two particular interpretive findings from the ethnographical information generated up to and during the period 1849-1876.⁵⁴ These included 1) identifying the Pashtun “tribe” as a corporate entity; and 2) reading the “character” and socio-political organization of the tribe as a function of their geographical environment. These interpretations are significant for the ways in which they helped to construct the NWF as a “Frontier Tribal Area,” and for their influence on British policies, especially the punitive expedition.

British practices of ethnography interpreted the Pashtun “tribe” as a deeply corporate and communal entity. The origins of such an interpretation stem from before British direct involvement

⁵⁴ Two of the most sophisticated treatments of British ethnographies of the NWF, which this essay draws from, include Leonard, “Colonial Ethnography on India’s North-West Frontier,” and Haroon, *Frontier of Faith*.

in the NWF, in Mountstuart Elphinstone's *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*.⁵⁵ Assessing the Pashtun tribes of the North-West Frontier, then part of the Sikh Kingdom, Elphinstone described them as discrete units whose political authority derived from patrilineal descent.⁵⁶ By collecting tribal genealogies, Elphinstone inaugurated a methodology for collecting information about the Pashtun tribes, which became the dominant one throughout the history of British interaction with the NWF. This text, based on Elphinstone's diplomatic and information-gathering mission to Kabul in 1808-09, became a "hegemonic text," as Benjamin Hopkins argues.⁵⁷ By creating these genealogies, Elphinstone and later officials "rigidified" the "tribe" as the meaningful unit of analysis for the British state.⁵⁸ Furthermore, his and later translations of the *Pashtünwâlî*, or "tribal code," also reinforced this tribe-centered methodology. While Hopkins, Haroon, and others have insightfully analyzed the biases and distortions inherent in these methods of collecting knowledge, these methodologies consolidated several interpretative findings that would have major consequences for British interactions with the Pashtun inhabitants.⁵⁹ Firstly, British officials interpreted the *Pashtünwâlî* as dictating endemic levels of retributive violence within Pashtun society, contributing to a perception that the NWF, as a "Tribal Area," was a deeply chaotic and ungoverned area.⁶⁰ Secondly, the British state, by way of the *Pashtünwâlî* as well as their genealogical tables, considered the tribal *khān* or chief to be responsible for the behavior of his

⁵⁵ Mountstuart Elphinstone, *An account of the kingdom of Caubul and its dependencies in Persia, Tartary, and India: comprising a view of the Afghaun nation, and a history of the Dooraunee monarchy* (London: John Murray, 1838).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 25-26.

⁵⁷ Benjamin Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 14. While some early genealogies have been lost from the archive, later copies and compilations exist, like E.G. Hastings, *Genealogical Tree of the Peshawari Tree of the Kandahari Sardars of the Barakzai Family*, (Lahore: Government Printing and Stationery Office, 1880).

⁵⁸ Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan*, 26.

⁵⁹ For scholarly critiques of the distortions of these practices of ethnography, see e.g. *ibid.*, 14-33; Haroon, *Frontier of Faith*, 26-29; Marsden and Hopkins, *Fragments of the Afghan Frontier*, 2-5. As Haroon points out, even the category of the "tribe" is a somewhat problematic designation.

⁶⁰ Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan*, 26.

tribe as a sovereign, corporate entity.⁶¹ Thus, when a leader like Jehandad failed to produce offenders within his tribe, the British state interpreted such a move to mean the consent, on a tribe-wide basis, to such offenses as the murder of Officer Carne. In this way, British practices of ethnography consolidated the Pashtun “tribe” as a sovereign and corporate entity, effacing the complex and dynamic politics of identification that had been practiced prior to British rule, and pointed towards policies based on communal punishment and violence.

British officials also produced “thick descriptions” of the NWF’s Pashtun inhabitants, which interpreted the “tribal” character of the Pashtun peoples as a function of their geographical environment. Sir Charles Wolseley, an Indian Army veteran, wrote in the *Fortnightly Review* that “The Afridi is a born warrior, and man for man is a far better soldier on his wild, roadless mountain-side than John Hudge, the Dorsetshire hedger and ditcher, or than John Smith the street arab from Whitechapel.”⁶² Wolseley specifically located the warrior spirit or ethos in the physical environment; because the Afridi grows up on the “wild, roadless mountain-side” of the NWF rather than the streets of Dorsetshire or Whitechapel, he learns or absorbs that very wildness into his own character. Indeed, as Wolseley generalized, “the nature of the country or district the negro inhabits has certainly some influence upon his fighting qualities and national character.”⁶³ For officer Ibbetson, the mountain lifestyle of the Waziris engendered restive, wild, and rebellious traits: “For centuries he has been, on our frontier at least, subject to no man. He leads a wild, free, active life in the rugged fastnesses of his mountains; and there is an air of masculine independence about him [...] He is a bigot of the most fanatical type”⁶⁴. Ibbetson paints a picture of a kind of masculinity let loose, allowed to run amok in the “rugged fastnesses” of the mountains. This “masculine

⁶¹ Ibid, 29.

⁶² Sir Charles Wolseley, “The Negro as Soldier”, *Fortnightly Review*, 44.264 (Dec. 1888), 689-703.

⁶³ Ibid, 699.

⁶⁴ Quoted in H.C. Wylly, *From the Black Mountain to Waziristan* (London: Macmillan, 1912), 6-7.

independence” meant that these tribes were ungoverned, outside of the realm of politics and deeply “fanatical”—recurrent tropes of British descriptions of inhabitants of the North-West Frontier.

Extending our time horizon to the end of the nineteenth century allows us to witness the full maturation of these ethno-geographic discourses. One popular policy proposal within the Government of India to the full-scale war (or “Uprising”) in 1897-98 was to forcibly resettle the most “recalcitrant” tribes from their home territories and to lowland, agrarian areas. This proposal found its most insistent proponent in the former P&S political officer G.J. Younghusband, who describes,

Such a system has been tried on a small scale with the most beneficial results in the plains of Yusafzai [...] Here whole villages of quondam outlaws are now disarmed and peaceably living on lands rented to them on favourable terms, and, as generation succeeds generation, are losing the martial instincts and warlike skill of their forefathers in the acquisition of the more civilised but equally absorbing attributes which bring wealth and prosperity.⁶⁵

Combining nineteenth century pseudo-scientific theories of race with a particular strain of Enlightenment thought which held nature and *civitas* in dialectic, Younghusband argued that the geographic environment of these native peoples constitutes subjectivity.⁶⁶ It follows, then, that a change in environment would fundamentally alter the spirit or character of an ethnic group: the

⁶⁵ G. J. Younghusband, “The Permanent Pacification of The Indian Frontier”, *The Nineteenth Century: A Quarterly Review*, 43.252 (Feb. 1898), 252-253.

⁶⁶ While “Enlightenment thought” is hardly a monolithic entity, the nature-civilization dialectic did figure in many major thinkers’ philosophies. For instance, Hegel held that geography was the fundamental basis for history; for Montesquieu, it determined the “spirit” of the laws. Hegel writes, “Man uses nature for his own ends; but where nature is too powerful it does not allow itself to be used as a means [...] The torrid and frigid zones, as such, are not the theatre on which world history is enacted [...] all in all, it is therefore the temperate zone which must furnish the theatre of history. And more specifically the northern part of the temperate zone.” Not only does Hegel normalize the temperate geography, he specifically deems those outside the temperate zones as somehow outside history. In this way, space is construed as constitutive of the subjectivity: non-normative climates (e.g. the desert, the mountains, etc.) produce non-normative subjects who are, in his terms, “outside” of history. See Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History (1822-28)*, reprinted in ed. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader* (Malden: Blackwell, 1997). These ideas are important since they contributed to the formal educations of many career administrators and officers in the Government of India. See e.g. Tripodi, *Edge of Empire*, ch. 1 “Who Were the Politicals?” 21-49.

Yusafzais, he argues, are “losing the martial instincts and warlike skill of their forefathers” as they settle into the agrarian plains.

With hindsight gained from, for instance, Youngusband’s policy proposals at the end of the century, we can more fully understand the historical consequences of the practice of placing Pashtun tribes geographically onto military survey maps, such as the 1874 map discussed above (fig. 4).⁶⁷ Its stated intention, described in the *Record of Expeditions* it accompanied, was to provide tactical knowledge to British officers. Yet its unintended consequences operated on a theoretical rather than instrumental level, which was to not only concretize the “reality” of the tribe, but to closely identify “tribe” with geography. It supported the assignment of subjective “characteristics” by geography; the mountainous terrain which the Pashtun peoples inhabit is, this map implicitly argued, an important element of the British understanding of their socio-political characteristics. Conversely, the ethnographic understanding of the tribal subject defines the geographical space as a “tribal area.” As Edward Said has proposed, representations of subjects can define territory, creating what he termed “imaginative geographies.”⁶⁸ This super-imposition of the native Pashtun “tribes” onto geographic space reflects and supports the ways in which the intelligence services of the British regime institutionalized the identification of the North-West Frontier as a “Frontier Tribal Area” within the British geopolitical imaginary. Thus, ostensibly tactical or instrumental knowledge ended up shaping British understandings of the North-West Frontier on a theoretical level.

This conceptual designation as the “Frontier Tribal Area” in turn shaped policy practices that treated the region as a politically differentiated space. To understand the consequences of this

⁶⁷ This 1874 map demonstrates that the British had practiced “ethno-mapping” even earlier than has been previously identified, by Sana Haroon, who cited an 1889 map by Colonel Thullier as its first example.

⁶⁸ Said, *Orientalism*, 54-55.

designation, it is necessary to return to where this chapter began: with the question of violence. The exceptional, indeed *sui generis* designation of the NWF enabled a specific form of frontier jurisprudence which mobilized of two contradictory legal theories: one that posited the frontier as under British jurisdiction, necessitating direct action; and another that considered the NWF as separate from the legal and political institutions of British India, providing the legal and strategic underpinnings of the routinized use of violence as a form of governance.⁶⁹

The designation of the North-West Frontier as a lawless, ungoverned space, derived from ethnographic understandings of the region, justified direct British intervention in the region, according to administrators like R. H. Davies. Davies argued for the need to impose the rule of law where he feels there is none: “As without physical force in reserve there can be no governing power, so under extreme and repeated provocation its non-employment is not distinguishable from weakness.”⁷⁰ This legal justification derived from British interpretations of the *Pashtünwálî* that suggested that the Pashtun tribes were “ungoverned” except by notions of retributive violence. These interpretations were further supported, as I have demonstrated, by ethnographic thick descriptions which characterized the region’s inhabitants as “wild,” “violent,” and “restive.” Mapping the Pashtun tribes upon the space of the NWF, then, created a discourse of the region as a “lawless” or “ungoverned” land. Given British security interests in this region, Davies argued, it was incumbent on the British state to maintain law and order, by force if necessary. Hence, these military expeditions were always the “delivery of a sentence” or otherwise “in the nature of a judicial act.” Davies alternately described them as “analogous to legal penalties for civil crime.”⁷¹

⁶⁹ For analytical frameworks regarding the relationship between space and theories of jurisprudence, see e.g. Derek Gregory, “The Black Flag: Guantánamo Bay and the Space of Exception,” *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography* 88.4 (2006).

⁷⁰ R. H. Davies, quoted in Paget, *A Record*, 7.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 7.

This language of civil jurisdiction and sovereignty made direct action in an otherwise ungoverned “Tribal Area” an imperative for the British state.

Yet why the punitive expedition as the model for maintenance of British administration of the North-West Frontier? The designation of the NWF as an “area apart” provided the legal, strategic, and political underpinnings to this policy of collective, mass violence. In particular, the geographical and ethnographic forms of knowledge that constructed the frontier allowed it to be characterized as a kind of “space of exception.”⁷² It should be noted that all states use violence as a form of governance; indeed, a sovereign’s monopoly on the legitimate use of violence forms Max Weber’s famous definition of the modern state. Yet these punitive expeditions, which generalized this violence across the peoples and property across its war path, depended on a different legal and political logic, distinct to the British formulation of the North-West Frontier. *Our Punjab Frontier*, Government of India report co-authored by Richard Temple and H. W. Bellow, explicated this logic as it relates to the practice of the punitive expedition:

When an expedition is undertaken, then *if* the enemy were to assemble in force and take up a position and offer battle, they could be attacked and defeated, and their discomfiture might suffice as punishment [...] In civilized warfare, force is directed against the armed enemy and his defensible positions, but not against his country and subjects, who may be morally unconcerned in the hostilities and innocent of offence. *But this is not civilized warfare*; the enemy does not possess troops that stand to be attacked, *nor* defensible posts to be taken, *nor* innocent subjects to be spared. He has only rough hills to be penetrated, robber fastnesses to be scaled, and dwellings containing people, *all of them to a man concerned in hostilities*. *There is not a single man of them who is innocent*, who is not, or has not been, engaged in

⁷² This intentionally bears resemblance to Giorgio Agamben’s formulation of the “state of exception,” which describes the displacement of the normative rule of law by the state of perpetual emergency. This specifically enables, according to Agamben, extra-judicial state violence. See Giorgio Agamben, *The State of Exception*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

offences, or who does not fully support the misconduct of his tribe, who is not a member of the armed banditti.⁷³

First, it is worth noting that when imperial administrators attempted to establish the necessity of direct intervention, they typically used the language of jurisdiction and rule of law, characterizing the punitive expedition as a “judicial act.” Yet when Temple and Bellow attempted to justify the *form* and *function* of intervention (punitive expedition), they switched registers to describe such operations as “warfare,” targeting not subjects of British India, as the language of “judicial act” would suggest, but rather, “enemies” of the state. In this way, the Government of India mobilized two seemingly contradictory legal regimes to enable its method of governing the North-West Frontier.

The mobilization of these contradictory legal theories drew on the construction of the North-West Frontier as a geographically and ethnographically exceptional space. First, the geography of the NWF, in its topographical extreme, precluded the identification of the guilty from the innocent, or the combatant from the non-combatant. In “civilized” warfare, Bellow and Temple argued, the enemy has a defined army and defensive positions, which are distinguished from civilian populations. Yet, in the mountains of the NWF, in its “rough hills,” “robber fastnesses,” and mountain “dwellings,” these become bound up in one another, such that there are no innocent populations and defined armies. The tribes could slip in and out of their villages, and into the rocky terrain, unseen by the British military. Temple and Bellow echo General Wilde, who argued that “these simple and warlike tribes owe their power of resistance to the nature of their country, and the general absence of centralization, making it often difficult to subdue them at a blow, and rendering it necessary to conquer them man by man”⁷⁴. In other words, the very “nature” of the

⁷³ Bellow and Temple, *Our Punjab Frontier*, 15.

⁷⁴ IOR/P/615: Correspondence, Brig. Gen. A. T. Wilde, Offg. Military Secretary to the Government Madras, to the Adj. Gen., 5 May 1869.

landscape itself renders the identification of guilty parties impossible. The ethno-geographical construction of the North-West Frontier, as a mountainous region hiding disaffected, restive, and criminal elements, thus makes it necessary “conquer them man by man”—the generalized violence of the punitive expedition.

Second, the British state justified the punitive expedition based on the ethnographic understanding of the Pashtun “tribe” as a corporate entity. The punishment meted out by the punitive expedition was, in practice, collective: “the *tribe* after chastisement usually professes repentance” (emphasis mine).⁷⁵ Temple valorized the “moral effect” of these punitive expeditions in disciplining and punishing offenders, which in the British imagination were not individual subjects but corporate tribal entities. Even if members of a given tribe did not participate in offences, Bellew and Temple argue, they would nonetheless be guilty by their membership in an offending tribe. Leveraging ethnographic knowledge which conceived of the Pashtun tribe as a corporate entity, Bellew and Temple argue that in a tribe that has committed crimes, “*There is not a single man of them who is innocent, [...] or who does not fully support the misconduct of his tribe.*”⁷⁶ Paget’s account of the Black Mountain expedition, quoted in the opening to this chapter, echoed these ideas when it described, “the whole tribe [Hasanzais] approved of the murder, and sheltered the murderers.”⁷⁷ Violence on a wide-scale—that is, the punitive expedition—thus became the paradigm of proper governance. If an entire tribe was “guilty,” it followed that the entire tribe should be “punished.” In the British legal imaginary, the punitive expedition provided direct intervention in a region presumed to be without structures of governance (the “Frontier

⁷⁵ Bellew and Temple, *Our Punjab Frontier*, 15.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 15; emphases original.

⁷⁷ Paget, *A Record*, 23.

Tribal Area”), while adapting that intervention to what had been constructed as the geographical and ethnographical specificities of that region.

Although punitive expeditions and other military-based aspects of rule were not the only methods of governing the Frontier (and they sporadically occurred elsewhere in British India), they became a defining feature of the region’s colonial history for reasons already mentioned: their frequency, and their identification with political rule. This practice of violence crystallizes the historical consequences of these information-gathering practices: the exceptionality of the NWF did not exist purely within the British geographical-political imaginary, but was institutionalized through the routinized application of violence as a system of governance. The “Frontier Tribal Area” would remain a defining feature of British understandings of the North-West Frontier, even as a perceived “Russian threat” spurred new definitions of the NWF in the latter decades of the nineteenth-century.

CHAPTER II

The “Great Game,” Imperial Security, and the Development of the “Scientific Frontier”

“In the midst of these amusements the arrival of a Russian officer produced a considerable sensation at Cabool.”

- Alexander Burnes, 1841.⁷⁸

In Alexander Burnes’s version of early nineteenth century Anglo-Russian rivalry in Asia, high diplomacy, state officials, and statecraft take center stage. Throughout his 1842 travel memoir *Cabool: A Personal Narrative of a Journey To, and Residence in that City, in the Years 1836, 7, and 8*, Burnes described the specter of Russian diplomats and agents turning up in Afghanistan to thwart his diplomatic efforts with the Afghan Amir.⁷⁹ In Burnes’s imagination, this early nineteenth century rivalry represented great power politics, and the “Great Game” was played by diplomats and officials like himself and Lieutenant Vilkievitch, whose arrival in Kabul Burnes described above. Indeed, Burnes recognized his own status as a pawn in the game: despite his “personal feeling of friendship towards” Vilkievitch, following a Christmas dinner, his “public service required the strictest watch, lest the relative positions of our nations should be misunderstood in this part of Asia.”⁸⁰

Half a century after Burnes’s account, however, imperial foreign policy and geo-strategy had become firmly centered on the North-West Frontier. Lord Lytton, writing in 1877, suggested that “[North-West] Frontier politics” may be “gradually merging” into imperial foreign policy—into a unified “Central Asia Question.”⁸¹ Jumping ahead to Lord Curzon’s 1900 “Minute on Frontier Administration,” calling for the creation of the North-West Frontier Province,

⁷⁸ Alexander Burnes, *Cabool: A Personal Narrative of a Journey To, and Residence in that City, in the Years 1836, 7, and 8* (London: Richard Murray, 1842), 279.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, see e.g. 141, 261.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 280.

⁸¹ IOR/L/PS/18/A151: Lord Lytton, “Re-organisation of the Frontier. Minute by the Viceroy,” 22 April 1877, p. 4.

demonstrates the full development of this idea. Curzon argued that the North-West Frontier region was central to imperial foreign policy and security. As Viceroy, and thus head of the Foreign Department, Curzon felt that having direct control of the regular administration of the NWF was vital to crafting foreign policy at an Indian and Empire-wide level.⁸² All of Indian foreign affairs, he argued, “in the main arise out of, or are connected with, the Frontier tribes and problems.”⁸³ How is it that the NWF—largely ignored by Punjab provincial administrators and regarded as a nuisance by the GOI—came to hold a central position within imperial foreign policy and geopolitical thought? How did it become identified with imperial security on an Indian, even global policy level?

Historians have insufficiently analyzed the causes and mechanisms of this shift in British conceptions of the NWF and imperial security, focusing instead on the role of the Afghan State in these developments.⁸⁴ With regards to the NWF specifically, Sana Haroon has argued that the catastrophe of the Second Anglo-Afghan War made the NWF a more sensible military frontier after Gladstone’s inauguration of a more “cautious, less expensive” foreign policy.⁸⁵ Other scholars have been less clear on the issue, gesturing towards this development as a consolidation of various policy trends in imperial history and a natural response to Russian moves in Central Asia.⁸⁶ While these interpretations are not inconsistent with high imperial policy trends during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, they insufficiently engage with how the “Defense of India” problem was constructed in the first place, and why the NWF, in particular, was identified as the centrally important geo-strategic region in imperial foreign and security policy. Exploring military

⁸² MSS EUR F111/319: Lord Curzon, “Minute by the Viceroy on Frontier Administration,” 27 Aug 1900, pp. 124-125, 130.

⁸³ Ibid, 130.

⁸⁴ See e.g. Martin J. Bayly, “Imperial ontological (in)security: ‘Buffer states,’ International Relations and the case of Anglo-Afghan relations, 1808-1878,” *European Journal of International Relations* 21.4 (Dec 2015).

⁸⁵ Haroon, *Frontier of Faith*, 24.

⁸⁶ See e.g. Beattie, *Imperial Frontier*, 154.

intelligence as part of an imperial security/defense regime engages with the causes and mechanics of this historical process, contributing to a greater understanding of the development of the imperial security regime. British practices of military intelligence constructed the “Defense of India” problem, which posited the idea that the British and Russian Empires were inexorably expanding towards each other. In doing so, they re-oriented the definition of “security” from a purely military one (i.e. “securing” one’s borders against invasion) towards a practice of statecraft which aimed to control this “inevitable” expansion on British, rather than Russian terms. In assessing this problem, intelligence agents, military officers, and civil administrators theorized the notion of a “scientific frontier,” which identified the North-West Frontier as the central geo-strategic zone of British security based on “scientific” assessments of its geographical and sociological characteristics.

Imperial military and civil officials responded to perceived Russian advances in the 1870s by positing the “Defense of India” problem as the central security threat to the British Indian Empire. A series of perceived forward advances undertaken by various Russian forces in the 1860s and 1870s alarmed the British political leadership; in 1868, for instance, a Russian expeditionary force invaded Samarqand, or modern-day Uzbekistan.⁸⁷ Having defeated the kingdom of Bokhara, the Russian Empire created a protectorate out of these territories.⁸⁸ Furthermore, the Russian Empire annexed Kokand and moved forces into position near Herat, in western Afghanistan, in 1876—moves that deeply unsettled the British political leadership.⁸⁹ These developments roughly coincided with the Conservatives’ Parliamentary election victory in 1874, which propelled

⁸⁷ Zarena Aslami, “The Second Anglo-Afghan War, or The Return of the Uninvited,” *BRANCH: Britain, Representation and Nineteenth-Century History*, ed. Dino Franco Felluga. Extension of *Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net*. Web. Accessed 31 March, 2016.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Haroon, *Frontier of Faith*, 7; the Kingdom of Kokand was situated at the intersection of the modern nations of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan.

Benjamin Disraeli to the position of Prime Minister. Disraeli and his Conservative cabinet pushed for a “radical reappraisal” of imperial foreign policy which took on a more aggressive, interventionist character—known in the historiography as Disraeli’s “Forward Policy.”⁹⁰ Intelligence agents’ appraisals of the situation capitalized on these prevailing interventionist sentiments by framing Russian territorial expansion as the central security threat to the British Indian Empire. Even moderates within the British administration, like G. S. Fitzgerald, expressed anxieties about Russian Central Asia policy: despite his belief that Russia harbored no “hostile designs against our empire,” he argued that “the mere fact of her position must entail advance.”⁹¹ Sir Henry Rawlinson, a noted army intelligence analyst and foreign policy “hawk,” took these ideas further, arguing that the British military should similarly pursue a policy of expansion: annex Quetta and adjacent territories, he advised, and turn the Afghan Kingdom into a puppet state.⁹² Doing so, he suggested, would not be seen as aggressive but rather as retaining the “balance of power,” which in his view was necessary to preventing a Russian invasion of India.⁹³ Rawlinson’s became the predominant opinion within the Indian Army Intelligence Branch: that continued British Indian security depended on countering the Russian Empire’s territorial advances in Central Asia.

Lord Lytton synthesized these intelligence assessments in his 1877 “Minute on the Re-organisation of the Frontier,” which re-conceptualized the notion of imperial security. Lytton asserted, contrary to Rawlinson’s belief, that a Russian invasion of India was highly unlikely, given the vast military superiority of the British Indian Army over its Russian counterpart. The real

⁹⁰ See e.g. Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 140; Tripodi, *Edge of Empire*, 51; Beattie, *Imperial Frontier*, 190-191; Aslami, “The Second Anglo-Afghan War.”

⁹¹ IOR/L/PS/20/MEMO31/16: G.S.V. Fitzgerald, “Memorandum on Khelat and Central Asia,” 1 July, 1875, p. 1.

⁹² IOR/L/PS/18/A17: H. C. Rawlinson, “Reorganization of the Western and North-Western Frontiers,” 1 Aug, 1877, p. 3.

⁹³ *Ibid*, 3.

threat, Lytton charged, was something he termed “diplomacy,” but in contemporary usage more along the lines of statecraft or geopolitics: “The undoubted relative weakness of [the Russian] position, whilst it guarantees us, for the present, against any serious danger from Russian arms, obliges us to reckon upon the increasingly aggressive activity of Russian diplomacy all round our Asiatic frontier.”⁹⁴ Russia was not preparing to invade, Lytton implied; it was rather attempting to “diminish” Britain’s “relative superiority” and secure for its own empire “the conditions most advantageous to its own success in such a conflict, should the occasion of it at any time become inevitable.”⁹⁵ In this way, Lytton synthesized intelligence assessments to re-orient the concept of imperial intelligence away from strictly military defense towards statecraft and geo-strategy. The task of imperial security was “to secure such conditions on behalf of British interests,” in opposition to Russian ones.⁹⁶

Intelligence officers took up this task by offering a set of policy prescriptions that coalesced around identifying a geo-strategic frontier zone as the foundation of British imperial power. Fitzgerald, in his 1875 memo discussed earlier, set the groundwork for these theories. The driver of inevitable Russian expansion, he feared, was “the lack of a natural frontier between our territory and the Russians.”⁹⁷ Henry Rawlinson, writing two years later, attempted to articulate a solution to this lack of frontier:

I should probably advocate the retention of a double line of ‘buffers’ between the dominions of Russia and England, the independent States of Bokhara and Kokand, north of the Oxus, forming the Russian ‘buffer,’ while the independent State of Afghanistan, south of the river, yielded the same safeguard against friction to British India.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Lord Lytton, “Re-organisation of the Frontier,” 9.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 10.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 10.

⁹⁷ Fitzgerald, “Memorandum on Khelat and Central Asia,” 1.

⁹⁸ Rawlinson, “Reorganization of the Western and North-Western Frontiers,” 3.

Rawlinson's suggestion of identifying "buffer" states and regions attained remarkable influence within the British political leadership. In fact, it was taken up by the Foreign Department of the Government of India a year later in an 1878 policy memo, which further developed its geographical underpinnings. The Foreign Department agreed with Lytton that a "wild Russian invasion of India is not the danger we foresee and seek to guard against."⁹⁹ Rather, it was concerned with the relative strength of their "present frontier line," which was, in their assessment, "as a military one, singularly weak and faulty, opposed indeed to the first principles of military art."¹⁰⁰ This memo thus built on Lytton's theory of "diplomacy" or statecraft, and grounded it in distinctly geographical terms. In doing so, it argued for a re-orientation away from the model of a frontier line to a model of a frontier zone. It asserted that the weakness of the current system at the time was the lack of access to affairs across the boundary: "while it is extremely difficult for us to get at the tribes beyond our border, it is extremely easy for them to come down on us."¹⁰¹ This difficulty drained imperial resources without providing a real sense of security. A strong military line, then, involves control on both sides of the ostensible border line:

But, taking a larger view, one of the first essentials of a strong military line, as explained by every recognized authority on military art, is that it should give command of the debouches or passes. What gives the fortresses of Cobblentz and Maintz their exceptional value, but that they command *both sides* of a great natural obstacle, the Rhine? What gave the celebrated Quadrilateral its strength but that its fortresses commanded both sides of the rivers, and so gave their holders the power of operating on either side at will?¹⁰²

Drawing on European examples, the Foreign Department reoriented a traditional, boundary-based model of the frontier to a model of the frontier as a geo-strategic zone, containing tactical

⁹⁹ IOR/L/PS/18/A125: The Foreign Department, Government of India, "The Afghan Question," 1878, p. 1.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 1.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 3.

¹⁰² Ibid, 3.

“debouches” or “passes” whose control is paramount to imperial security. Since the Russian and British Empires were destined to continually expand, consuming the “savage” or “semi-barbarous” states in between them, the logic went, the most fundamental task of imperial defense was to determine this boundary on British, rather than Russian terms: “in other words, what is the best boundary line between Russia and ourselves?”¹⁰³

The answer the Foreign Department offered to its own question was, of course, Afghanistan, a policy position that contributed to the British Empire’s second war with Afghanistan (1878-80).¹⁰⁴ The Second Anglo-Afghan War has been covered extensively by the historiography, and demands no further intervention here, except to note a few significant developments. Initial hostilities ended very quickly as superior British forces overpowered the Afghan defense, and the Afghan Amir, Yaqub Khan, quickly capitulated in the Treaty of Gandamak. Although less sweeping than initial British war aims (some in the GOI had called for splitting up the Afghan state and annexing the various territories), this treaty gave the British official control of much of the Khyber and surrounding territories, and allowed a permanent British mission in Afghanistan to control its foreign policy.¹⁰⁵

The assassination of Louis Cavagnari, special envoy to Afghanistan and the lead British negotiator in the Gandamak Treaty, however, instilled deep doubts over the extent to which the British state could control Afghanistan, and whether it would be a reliable “buffer” to the Russian empire. This event also formed a striking echo to a similar assassination in the midst of the First Anglo-Afghan War, that of diplomat Sir Alexander Burnes (quoted at the head of this chapter), and provoked a bitter response from British forces. Viceroy Lord Lytton instructed General

¹⁰³ Ibid, 2.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 8.

¹⁰⁵ Aslami, “The Second Anglo-Afghan War.” Rawlinson presented a more aggressive vision for war sims in his “Reorganization of the Western and North-Western Frontiers,” 2-3.

Frederick Roberts, commander of forces occupying Kabul, to retaliate by demolishing Afghan government buildings and putting to death those suspected of having a hand in Cavagnari's murder. In reality, Roberts interpreted these directives with even more latitude than Lytton had intended and executed dozens, if not hundreds of Kabul residents and flattened entire neighborhoods.¹⁰⁶ During these reprisals, and the subsequent fierce fighting in Kabul and surrounding areas, popular distaste for the war reached a high point in the metropole. For example, Edgar O'Ballance notes that the Liberal-aligned press in London criticized the scorched-earth tactics of General Roberts, in their own words, "for executing Afghans whose only 'crime' had been to fight against an invading enemy."¹⁰⁷

These deep dissatisfactions contributed to Gladstone's election victory in 1880, which led to a reversal of Disraeli's aggressive "forward" policy. Gladstone ran, in part, on a campaign that leveraged popular disapproval of the way the war had been carried out; as Aslami describes, "Gladstone made strategic use of vivid scenes of violence and destruction of Afghan life and property from the war to criticize Disraeli's Forward Policy." By 1880, Gladstone once again became Prime Minister as the Liberal Party swept to victory in that year's Parliamentary elections. Gladstone and the Liberal regime in London quickly dismantled the Disraeli's interventionist foreign policy, and replaced Lord Lytton as Viceroy, along with the kind of policy overreach they had represented to the British political imagination.

The reversal of the "Forward" or interventionist policy and failure to substantially transform Afghanistan into a puppet state, however, did not lessen but rather intensified intelligence attempts to identify the "strategic" or "natural" frontier. In this respect, the Second

¹⁰⁶ Aslami, "The Second Anglo-Afghan War."

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in Edgar O'Ballance, *Afghan Wars: Battles in a Hostile Land: 1839 to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 43.

Anglo-Afghan War represents less of a turning point in imperial statecraft than previously assumed by the historiography; the reversal of Disraeli's and the Foreign Department's plans for Afghanistan did not change the underlying continuity in the theoretical thinking about the need for a "natural frontier" or buffer.¹⁰⁸ The upheaval of the Second Anglo-Afghan War merely ruled out Afghanistan as that frontier, but the central analytical question for intelligence—establishing strategic zones, spheres of influence, and "natural" frontiers against Russian power—remained. A committee of high-ranking generals chaired by the Commander-in-Chief in India and Second Anglo-Afghan War veteran, Sir Frederick Roberts, produced a report in 1885 entitled "The Defence of the North-West Frontier of India," which took up the task of frontier-identification enunciated less than a decade prior. This military intelligence report called for the strengthening of "important strategical points" in preparation for an all-out defensive campaign of India.¹⁰⁹ Essentially a future war-planning exercise, this "Defence" report tackled the question set out in 1875-77 using recently developed military intelligence methodologies: tactical planning for imagined war developments and outcomes, which would in turn articulate a set of strategic priorities for the future.¹¹⁰ Applying this methodological framework to the task at hand, Roberts and his colleagues identified the "strategic [...] northern passes" of the NWF as the linchpin of British Indian defense.¹¹¹ Drawing on the Foreign Department argument that the British Empire should control both sides of a frontier, the report further stressed the importance of "[perfecting] our communication by road and rail" in consideration of the "points which are open to attack, and those from which offensive operations could best be undertaken."¹¹² Indeed, much of the document

¹⁰⁸ For this turning-point thesis, see e.g. Aslami, "The Second Anglo-Afghan War"; or Haroon, *Frontier of Faith*, 7-8.

¹⁰⁹ IOR/L/PS/18/A117: General Sir Frederick Roberts, Commander-in-Chief in India, "The defence of the North-West Frontier of India: Proposals of the Defence Committee, Government of India Military Dept.," July 1886, p. 1.

¹¹⁰ For developments in military intelligence war-planning, see e.g. Hevia, *Imperial Security State*, 4-5.

¹¹¹ Roberts, "The defence of the North-West Frontier of India," 1.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 1.

concerns establishing a system of railways that connect fortified positions with identified strategic passes, e.g. between the Sind-Pishin line and the Khaja Amuran range.¹¹³ Following the theoretical roadmap laid out by Rawlinson, the Foreign Department, and others in 1875-77, then, military intelligence at the highest level re-conceptualized the NWF as a strategic space just a decade later. More than a line of defense, the NWF became, in this new geography of imperial power, a strategic frontier zone whose control depended not solely on military fortification but a flexible, tactile projection of power.

This new geography of power implied a changing relationship with the Pashtun inhabitants. In order to secure the approaches around the strategic Dora Pass, Roberts argued, “we should have political control over the country round Chitral and Gilgit.”¹¹⁴ In other words, the projection of power over the NWF as a geo-strategic space depended on bring the native Pashtun inhabitants into the British sphere of influence. Henry Brackenbury, a major-general serving in the Intelligence Branch of the War Office of the GOI, articulated this idea further, synthesizing it with the theory of geographic space articulated in the “Defence Report”:

The idea of closing the natural barrier which exists by the construction of fortresses and minor forts has been relinquished in favour of developing out internal communications running in the direction of the frontier itself, as well as of preparing them for a forward movement, to be made in friendly relation with the border tribes, to a position in Afghanistan itself, from which the Russian advance, which is so disturbing to India, may be controlled.¹¹⁵

The tactical flexibility of British, in other words, depended on “friendly relation[s]” with the “tribes” of the NWF. Brackenbury and other generals in the British Indian Army envisioned a theory of British power in the NWF that leveraged influence among native inhabitants, or soft

¹¹³ Ibid, 5.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 2.

¹¹⁵ Brackenbury, “Russian advances in Asia,” 6.

power, in gaining strategic mastery over space. This would also replace the British policy of the punitive expedition, which by the 1880s had created many opponents to the policy, due to its high financial and troop burdens. In this way, the socio-political and the geographical became fused in this theory of power: Brackenbury wrote, “the acquaintance we have gained of the ethnographical conditions of the country should enable the political authorities, in connection with the soldiers, to determine upon a military-political frontier not to be passed by Russia without war with England.”¹¹⁶ Brackenbury ends his policy memo by calling for increased information-gathering, collation, and systemization, with the goal of synthesizing these data into a coherent frontier strategy.¹¹⁷ This would allow the British security state to designate a truly “scientific” frontier.

Brackenbury’s call did not fall on deaf ears, as colonial ethnographers and political agents assembled vast amounts of increasingly “scientific” ethnographical and sociological information in the decade or so after the end of the Second Anglo-Afghan War, in service of these geo-strategic aims. This project was driven by the policy motives of deepening political relations with the Pashtun tribes, and furthermore demonstrated the close link between military and political intelligence. As a result of their policy aims, these renewed attempts at “understanding” the region’s Pashtun inhabitants took increasingly systematic and “scientific” forms during this period, in contrast to the ethnographic descriptions and text-based methodologies analyzed in chapter 1. These forms of knowledge aimed to provide British administrators with a reliable understanding of Pashtun political organization; the “tribal genealogy” thus became a centerpiece of British ethnographic knowledge.¹¹⁸ These genealogies rested on, and in turn bolstered the assumption that

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 3.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 6.

¹¹⁸ While some of the early genealogical sketches are no longer extant in the archives, later compilations of these genealogies have survived. See e.g. Quarter Master General in India, Intelligence Branch, *A Dictionary of the Pathan Tribes on the North-West Frontier of India* (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent, Govt. Printing, 1899); or C. M. Macgregor, *Central Asia: A Contribution towards the Better Knowledge of the Topography, Ethnography, Statistics and History of the North-West Frontier of British India, Vol. 1* (Calcutta, 1873).

Pashtun social groupings could be described as ethnically homogeneous “tribes” based on patrilineal descent.¹¹⁹ Influenced, by British or European notions of sovereignty, genealogies of this time increasingly fixated on identifying a male common ancestor, and through his descendants identifying his successors in political power (see e.g. fig. 5).

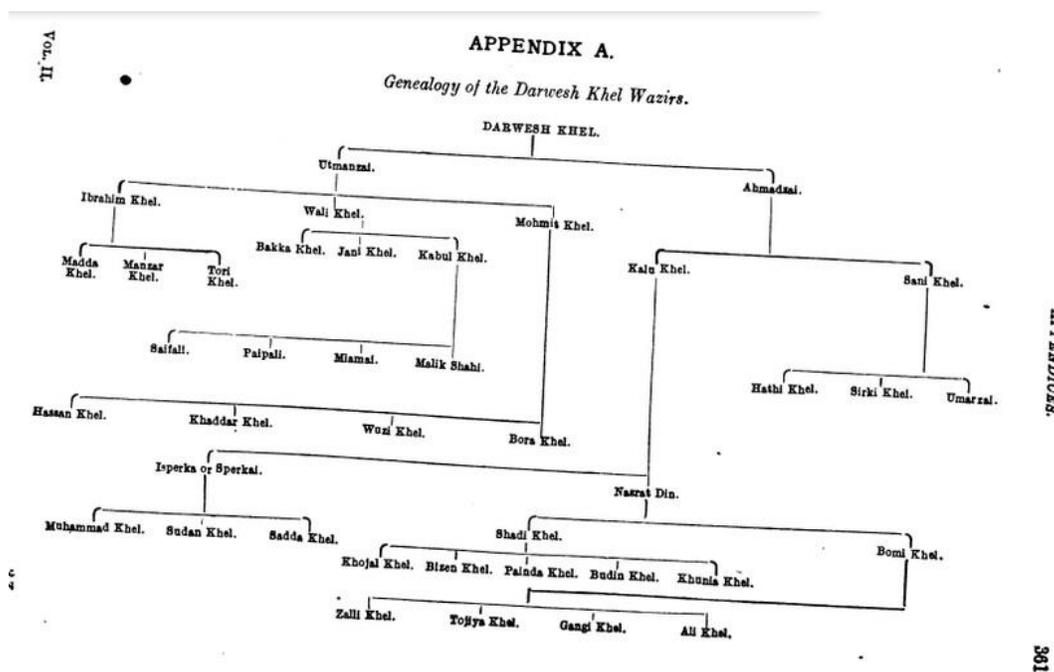


Fig. 5: An example of the genealogies army intelligence agents constructed. “Genealogy of the Darwesh Khel Wazirs”, from *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions*, vol. 2, “North-West Frontier Tribes between the Kabul and Gumal Rivers.”¹²⁰

These tribal tables and genealogies were connected and summarized in the 1899 *Dictionary of the Pathan Tribes of the North-West Frontier of India*, which represents the synthesis and display (for official government and army use) of this ethnographic knowledge. The *Dictionary*, which was widely-distributed among both military and political officials, listed the tribal structure as a six-tier system: the “tribe” was the overarching group structure, which was divided into “clan,” “division,” “sub-division of division,” “section of subdivision,” and “other minor fractions.”¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Macgregor, *Central Asia*, Vol. 1, preface.

¹²⁰ Paget, *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions*, 361.

¹²¹ Intelligence Branch, *A Dictionary of the Pathan Tribes*, i-ii.

Out of these, Haroon, an anthropologist and religion scholar, argues, only “clan” and “tribe” carry any sort of descriptive value, and are themselves somewhat problematic heuristic categories. This classificatory scheme was not, then, an accurate sociological description of existing social networks but rather the willful imposition of a taxonomic framework. In other words, the *Dictionary* actively located human subjects and communities within a European, pseudo-Linnaean order (see fig. 6).¹²² These taxonomic systems produced the means by which the Pashtun inhabitants were drawn out of their own indigenous social and political contexts and rewoven into European-based patterns of unity and order. Genealogies, in this framework, not only validated this sociological ordering but gave a sense of historical authority to the very categories of “tribe” and “clan” themselves.

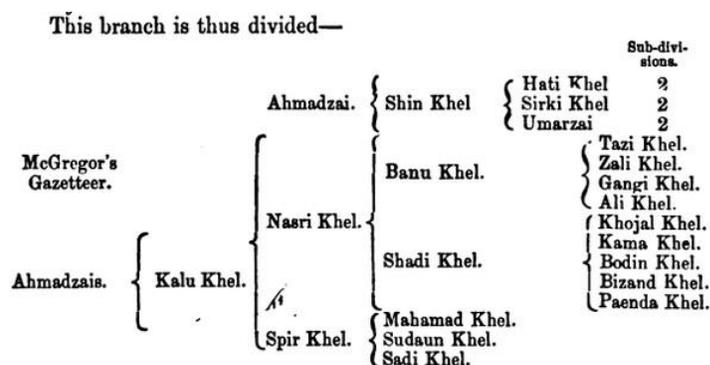


Fig. 6: An example of the kind of pseudo-Linnaean classificatory framework found in the 1889 *Dictionary*, as applied to the Ahmadzai Wazirs.¹²³

The 1874 map discussed earlier (fig. 4), which places these tribes geographically in bold, red print, thus concretized the “reality” of these tribal structures. Their geographical location, in tandem with the wealth of knowledge produced by the intelligence services—community size, organization, physical settlements, military strength—made the tribe “real” within the British political

¹²² That is, in reference to Carl Linnaeus’s classification categories for biological organisms. This model became a dominant epistemological framework in late nineteenth-century European scientific practice. See e.g. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 31

¹²³ Intelligence Branch, *A Dictionary of the Pathan Tribes*, 37.

imaginary. As such, they became the meaningful socio-political entity through which British administrators politically engaged with the native Pashtun peoples until decolonization. The need to identify “sovereign” figures within the Pashtun tribes—with whom to negotiate treaties, for instance—had the further effect of consolidating social hierarchies which had been more subtle or diffuse.¹²⁴

Throughout the 1880s and 1890s, the British Indian state set into motion a series of policy practices aimed at putting the theory of the “strategic frontier zone” into practice. Road, rail, and telegraph construction proceeded rapidly during the 1880s, while Indian Army forces were being consolidated in key fortified areas, according to the recommendations of the 1885 “Defence” report. These moves attempted to reduce troop level while increasing tactical maneuverability throughout the region, consistent with military intelligence prescriptions. Construction efforts extended existing railway lines to the foot of the Khyber Pass at Fort Jamrud, and in the late 1880s completed the Sind-Pishin line, called for by Gen. Roberts, connecting Quetta to this infrastructure system.¹²⁵ Records show that, between 1884 and 1900, over 100 million rupees were spent on railway construction alone; several million more also went to road construction during this time—figures which reveal the scale of the new program of power projection across the region.¹²⁶

Similarly, the Political & Secret Department, the civilian foreign intelligence arm of the GOI, instituted practices aimed at bringing the native Pashtun inhabitants under British influence. These policies were intended to replace the model of the punitive expedition with loose forms of political management. Lytton’s successor Lord Lansdowne instituted a decentralized, *ad hoc*

¹²⁴ Haroon, *Frontier of Faith*, 26-27.

¹²⁵ IOR/W/L/PS/21/H22: Map, “Afghanistan, showing exact position at present date (Aug 1895) in respect to [demarcation] of the Indo-Afghan frontier.”

¹²⁶ IOR/V/24/3311: “Punjab Public Works Administration Report: Public Works Department Buildings and Roads Branch, Punjab, 1878-1900.

policy of tribal governance, largely centered on paying off genealogically-identified tribal “heads” for facilitating British policies, such as protecting roads and telegraph lines.¹²⁷ An important subset of these policies involved raising militias comprised of native Pashtuns, or “tribal levies.” Not only did this address British concerns over securing their growing infrastructure network, but it also had a “civilizing” effect, according to imperial officials.¹²⁸ Regarding the establishment of the Khyber Rifles, one such “tribal levy,” Brigadier General Sir W. S. A. Lockhart wrote that it “would provide, with regular employ and duties, 500 men, who might otherwise be disposed to plundering and disorder.”¹²⁹ Describing the delegation of duties under this system, Lockhart noted that “the tribal headmen take actual charge of the corps and its recruiting and ordinary management. The British Political officers merely assist by advice and by their general influence.”¹³⁰ These policies, while limited in the scale of their implementation, represented a major turning point in British policy practices towards the native inhabitants on the NWF in the 1880-97—influence without direct administration, and, the hope went, punitive expeditions. While the British state failed in the latter aim, these policies nonetheless represented the culmination of decades of genealogical and ethnographic information-gathering, aimed at identifying tribal groupings as well as the ostensible leaders that governed them, for the sake of expanding British control in the region.

The Durand Agreement of 1893 attempted to protect these nascent efforts by consolidating a British sphere of influence on the North-West Frontier. Lansdowne and other imperial officials hoped that demarcating a formal boundary line with the state of Afghanistan would achieve this policy goal. In 1893, Sir Henry Mortimer Durand signed the eponymous agreement with the

¹²⁷ IOR/L/PS/18/A130: W. Lee-Warner, “Memorandum on North-West Frontier Affairs,” 11 Oct 1897, 1-2.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹²⁹ IOR/L/PS/18/A79: Brigadier General Sir W. S. A. Lockhart, “Indian Frontier Policy,” 12 Mar 1888, p. 6

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

Afghan Amir Abdur Rahman Khan, demarcating the western boundary of the Afghan state.¹³¹ The region beyond that—between this Durand Line and Punjab Province—would henceforth be recognized as a British sphere of influence. This treaty agreement is notable for its attempt to put the “scientific frontier” into practice; by delimiting a clear British sphere of influence, imperial officers were cleared to construct a frontier zone out of the “Tribal Areas” as they saw fit. They would, per the Foreign Department’s recommendations, have political control to both sides of any military frontier they chose to designate. The delineation of the line, as Haroon notes, was based on British state genealogies of the Pashtun tribes, thus attempting to maintain their tribal territorial integrity.¹³² In doing so, it further institutionalized the “Tribal Area” as a discrete geographic entity. The Durand Agreement thus combined a geographical and ethnographic model of the region as a “Tribal Area” with theories of strategic frontiers and spheres of influence.¹³³ This treaty thus gestured towards a geopolitics of empire centered on the North-West Frontier, and contained some of the conceptual origins of the North-West Frontier Province.

Actual practices of “managing” the Pashtun tribes, however, did not meet lofty British expectations. The failure of Robert Bruce’s *maliki* system in Waziristan demonstrated the distortions at the heart of many of the British intelligence assessments of the region. This system attempted to institutionalize “indirect rule” by placing Political Agent Robert Bruce in Waziristan full-time to actively manage tribal politics, following ratification of the Durand Agreement. Bruce aimed to exert influence through *maliks*, or men genealogically identified as having authority within tribal groupings.¹³⁴ In return for this management, the Mahsud and Waziri tribes would

¹³¹ This also forms the contemporary border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, although the latter has not formally recognized it as such.

¹³² Haroon, *Frontier of Faith*, 17.

¹³³ Despite these attempts at scientificity, contemporary and early twentieth-century observers noted that parts of the Durand Line had not yet been surveyed in 1893. See e.g. Percival Sykes, *History of Afghanistan* (London: Macmillan, 1940), 176.

¹³⁴ Tripodi, *Edge of Empire*, 79.

receive generous allowances and military protection. The hope that these methods would render violence a relic of the past quickly faded as four Mahsud men murdered a British official visiting from Bengal Province in July of 1893.¹³⁵ Attempting to break from the use of the punitive expedition, Bruce pressed his *malik* contacts hard to produce the murderers.¹³⁶ When British officials apprehended the four men, chaos ensued as the *malik* collaborators were murdered by unknown assailants for turning in the men. When British military participation escalated the violence in the form of a bloody punitive expedition, a disappointed and disgusted Bruce withdrew from the field, and the entire operation was scrapped.¹³⁷ As a project, it demonstrated the constructedness of British concepts of “tribe” and tribal leadership, which in the British imagination were much more fixed and authoritative than they evidently were.

In sum, the forms of knowledge produced by British military intelligence, and the theories of power projection they inaugurated, bore out Lord Lytton’s description in 1877 of the gradual “merging” of “Frontier politics” into “one great Central Asian question, and so into the Imperial policy of the British Government.”¹³⁸ In applying the methodologies of military intelligence of the day, Indian Army intelligence identified Russian expansion as the single greatest security threat to the British Empire—not invasion, per se, but the slow, inexorable expansion of empires leading to crisis and the possible weakening of British power. Planning for possible war scenarios led army and intelligence officials to the identification of spheres of influence and frontier “buffer” zones centered on the NWF. In this case, again, purportedly tactical knowledge profoundly reshaped and restructured the NWF in the British *theoretical* imagination—this time, as the consummate geo-strategic space. The implementation of these intelligence concepts focused on exerting new forms

¹³⁵ MSS EUR F163/15: Mr. Pison, “Mahsud and Waziri Operations,” 14 November 1903.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ Tripodi, *Edge of Empire*, 80.

¹³⁸ Lord Lytton, “Re-organisation of the Frontier,” 4.

of control over space, moving away from strictly military models to more tactile methods like trans-frontier mobility and soft power over native inhabitants, ostensibly turning away from previous violent interactions. Yet Bruce's failures in Waziristan, and the continued use of the punitive expedition as a form of political governance, belie the awkward and uneasy praxis of theoretical models which did not, as in chapter 1, excavate "scientific," factual characteristics about the geography or the Pashtun inhabitants, but rather disciplined these elements within discourses of scientificity. Indeed, these two models of geographic space—the Frontier "Tribal Area" and the Frontier geo-strategic zone—existed side-by-side, clumsily, until the upheaval of full-scale war on the NWF in 1897-98 again shook up the status quo.

CHAPTER III

The Creation of the North-West Frontier Province: An Argument

On 26 July, 1897, although they did not realize it then, the British Empire was hit by the largest Frontier uprising in its colonial history to date. Religious upheaval had brewed just beyond British defensive lines that summer, according to a British Cabinet post-mortem, stirred up by Saidulla, or the “mad fakir.” Secretary of State for India Lord George Hamilton described how Saidulla had prophesied jihad, or holy war, for weeks leading up to the 26 July, and it was on this day that “an army of well-armed fanatics” conducted coördinated assaults on British positions in Malakand and Chakdara.¹³⁹ Hamilton’s report described “fighting [...] without intermission” as “hordes” of religiously stirred Afridi tribesmen continued the attack for five days, until a column of reinforcement troops, led by Major-General Sir Bindon Blood, relieved the besieged British forces.¹⁴⁰ From there, violence spread, as the metaphor goes, like wildfire: British positions throughout the NWF were attacked in quick succession, to the disbelief of high-ranking officials. An appreciation of the situation at hand only set in with the loss of the Khyber Pass and surrounding territories on 25 August, 1897. Shock, humiliation, and loss of- British prestige—these were the terms used to describe the loss of an area said to be the centerpiece of the NWF.¹⁴¹

As military operations and battles raged into the spring of 1898, British officials contemplated the necessity of reform. Hamilton, in the aforementioned Report, articulated many policy proposals that would go on to receive considerable attention: they largely centered on reducing the numerical strength of regular troops on the Frontier, which had had difficulty

¹³⁹ IOR/L/MIL/17/13/21: “Papers regarding British relations with the neighbouring tribes on the North-West Frontier of India and the Punjab Frontier Administration. Parliamentary Paper (HoC) 1901, XLIX, Cd 496,” letter, Secretary of State for India George Hamilton to Viceroy of India Lord Elgin, 28 January 1898, pp. 6-7.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁴¹ Curzon, “Minute by the Viceroy on Frontier Administration,” 125.

containing the situation in the depths of the NWF in 1897; and to not annex further territories beyond the Punjab administrative boundary and the Durand Line.¹⁴² In other words, officials at the highest level of government (Whitehall) worried that policy overreach had caused the Uprising, and proposed reforms aimed at curbing British involvement beyond Punjab's provincial borders. Yet events on the ground forced the central administration's hand in key respects. Sameeta Agha, in writing a "micro-history" of events on the Khyber Pass, notes how tactical decision making on a local level by military commanders profoundly shaped wider military and strategic outcomes.¹⁴³ In essence, British forces were militarily more than capable of repelling Afridi and Orakzai belligerents in July of 1897, but commanders like Udny and White, Agha demonstrates, deliberately took the loss in order to pursue other strategic priorities—especially the expedition in Tirah, the single largest British troop mobilization on the Frontier in its entire colonial history.¹⁴⁴ This expedition, to the satisfaction of commanders Udny and White, led to British annexation of Tirah, in direct opposition to Secretary of State Hamilton's calls for restraint and retreat. The chaos of the '97-'98 Uprising and immediate aftermath, then, produced a state of flux in the imperial policy-making system.

Into this political confusion stepped Lord Curzon, appointed Viceroy of India in 1899. Almost immediately, Curzon introduced a spat of reforms centered on British methods of indirect rule over the tribes (especially levies), and in 1901 created the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP). Curzon consolidated the frontier districts of Punjab with "tribal" territories across Punjab Provincial lines into a separate province, under the administration of a Chief Commissioner. In this way, Curzon capitalized on the latitude given to him by the political moment after the Frontier

¹⁴² Letter, SOS for India Hamilton to Viceroy Lord Elgin, January 1898, pp. 13-14.

¹⁴³ Agha, "Sub-imperialism and the Loss of the Khyber," 307.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 308, 318, 325-326.

Uprising to implement legislation creating a separate frontier province. The creation of the NWFP was the realization of a policy goal held by the GOI and Whitehall since 1877, which was the direct control over frontier matters, unmediated by the Punjab provincial government. In this respect, the creation of the NWFP represents a major policy achievement for Curzon's regime.

Interpretations over the path from the Uprising to Curzon's NWFP have differed in both methodology and analytical weight given to the 1901 legislation creating the province. Sana Haroon argues, somewhat vaguely, that its creation was motivated by Curzon's desire to "consolidate" control over the North-West Frontier, without being "compromised" by the budgetary concerns of the Punjab Government.¹⁴⁵ She focuses, in other words, on the fiscal considerations in NWF policies. Tripodi, out of the few historians who have directly commented upon the province's creation, offers the most sophisticated analysis. Tripodi focuses on efforts to reform the British state's relationship with the native tribes in the wake of the Frontier Uprising, reforms Curzon largely helped shape.¹⁴⁶ In bringing both Punjab administrative and "trans-frontier" (not administered) districts under a single province, Curzon solidified direct GOI influence over these quotidian processes of indirect rule.¹⁴⁷ Regardless of the differences, both interpretations focus heavily on the administrative reforms inherent in the province's creation, which had the effect of streamlining hierarchies of rule.

This chapter takes off from, but ultimately calls into question this interpretation. It does so on methodological grounds which should by now become obvious: that this act of re-shaping the political geography of the NWF did not occur in a historical vacuum, solely to tweak administrative structures, but represented the culmination of over fifty years of information-gathering practices

¹⁴⁵ Haroon, *Frontier of Faith*, 24-25.

¹⁴⁶ Tripodi, *Edge of Empire*, 93-96.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 95-96.

of the frontier into a particular configuration of power. The historical significance of the enactment of this configuration of power lies less in its administrative innovations than in its constituting, on a practical as well as theoretical level, a *system* of empire. It consolidated the North-West Frontier into a unified and discrete political entity, which manifested intelligence assessments of the region as a distinct space, or “Frontier Tribal Area.” In doing so, it enacted legislation which systematized previous attempts at indirect rule and “tribal management.” This consolidated the “Scientific Frontier,” merging local practices of political governance with wider theories of strategic defense and power projection. An understanding the epistemological context of the NWFP thus redefines it not as a series of policy remedies but a system or model of imperial power—the expression of a Frontier Geopolitics.

The roots of the North-West Frontier Province lay, in part, in Lord Curzon’s personality, experiences, and worldview, and for this reason a brief biography of his person is in order. Born George Nathaniel Curzon in 1859 to an aristocratic family, Curzon developed a precocious intellect early in his life. At the elite Eton College, the young Curzon cut a controversial figure: admired for his intellectual talent, but disliked for his arrogance and stubbornness. It was here, crucially, that he attended a lecture by Sir James Stephen on Asia, which “infected him with a passion for the mystery of the East and for Britain’s dominion of India.”¹⁴⁸ Indeed, this passion led him to undertake a seven year period of travels around the world following his studies at Oxford, journeying to Russia and central Asia in 1888-9, Persia the following year, East Asia in 1892, and, crucially, Afghanistan via the North-West Frontier in 1894. As much for leisure and personal fulfillment as they were foundational to his career, his travels immersed him in learning and scholarship. For instance, his exploration of the source of the Oxus built on previous

¹⁴⁸ Gilmour, “Curzon, George Nathaniel,” *Oxford DNB*.

geographical survey work undertaken by John Wood, and produced one of the most detailed maps of the regions of the NWF and beyond in the nineteenth-century (see fig. 7).¹⁴⁹

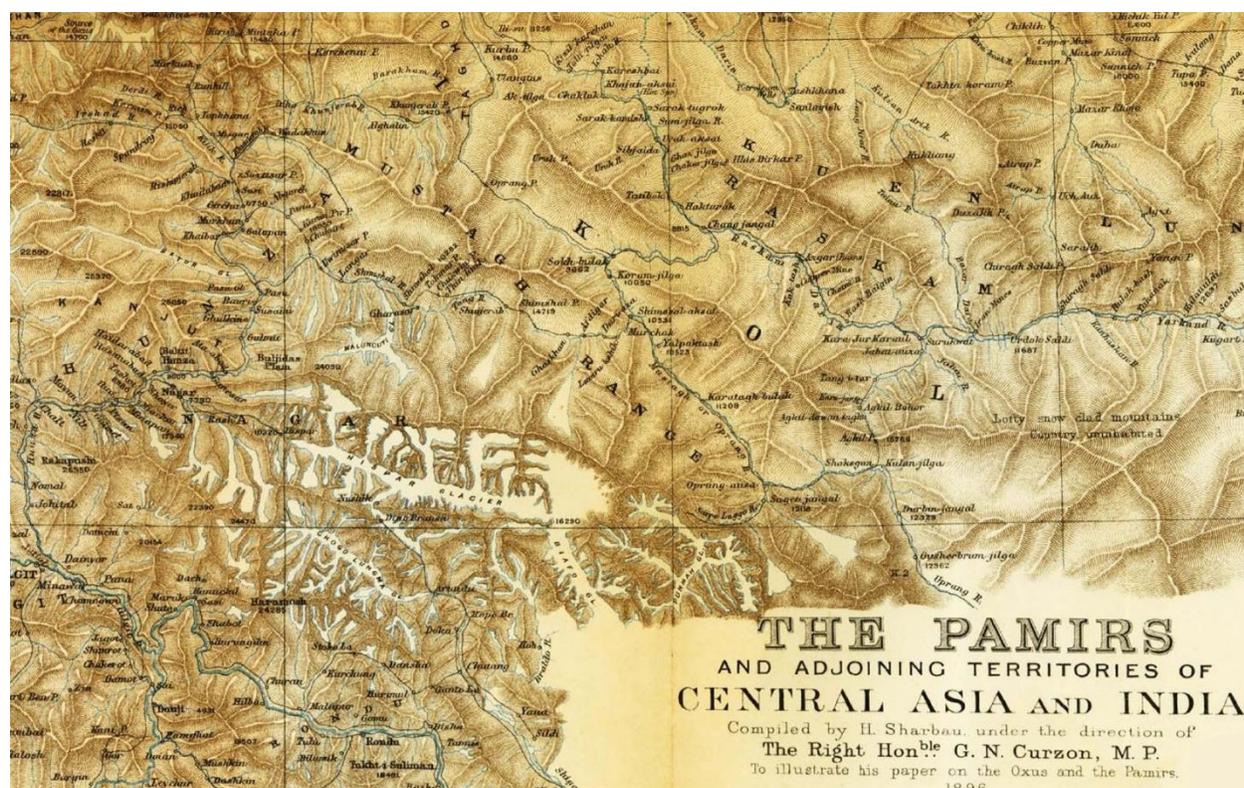


Fig. 7: Map from George Nathaniel Curzon, *The Pamirs and the Source of the Oxus* (London: The Royal Geographical Society, 1896).

The Royal Geographic Society gave him one of its highest honors, in 1896, for these researches. These studies, in total, formed a “vast and comprehensive project to study the problems of Asia and their implications for British India,” as well as contributed to his pride in and commitment to the British imperial project.¹⁵⁰ They furthermore demonstrated a keen scholarly interest in the geography and politics of Central and South Asia.

These studies formed the source base for three formidable monographs he wrote upon his return to England—*Russia in Central Asia in 1889*, *Persia and the Persian Question*, and

¹⁴⁹ John Wood, *Journey to the Source of the River Oxus* (London: John Murray, 1874).

¹⁵⁰ Gilmour, “Curzon, George Nathaniel,” *Oxford DNB*.

Problems of the Far East—which cemented his reputation as the politician with the foremost knowledge of the Empire’s position in Asia. In this way, Curzon positioned himself not as a firebrand Conservative MP, but an Asian foreign policy expert, a reputation that earned him a post as under-secretary for India (1891). He built enough clout within the Conservative establishment that their election victory in June 1895 saw Curzon appointed as under-secretary of state at the Foreign Office, and *de facto* government foreign policy spokesman. Not merely a mouthpiece, Curzon used his substantial knowledge to influence decision-making, in particular in Central and South Asian policy. In 1895, he persuaded the Foreign Office to retain military occupation of Chitral on the NWF, arguing that a withdrawal would lead to Russian occupation of the area. His achievement in the Cabinet convinced Prime Minister Salisbury to nominate him to be Viceroy of India, replacing a retiring Lord Elgin. His unwavering commitment to imperial security won over, additionally, the support of the Conservative establishment: writing in *Russia in Central Asia*, Curzon argued,

Whatever be Russia’s designs upon India, whether they be serious and inimical or imaginary and fantastic, I hold that the first duty of English statesmen is to render any hostile intentions futile, to see that our own position is secure and our frontier impregnable, and so to guard what is without doubt the noblest trophy of British genius, and the most splendid appanage of the Imperial Crown.¹⁵¹

In other words, Curzon was a scholar and a geographer deeply concerned with imperial security and geopolitics, and his travels and studies formed the backdrop to his tenure as Viceroy. Accordingly, Curzon made North-West Frontier policy a priority during his tenure as Viceroy.

In arguing for the creation of the NWFP, Curzon applied his scholarly experiences and analytical thinking to the rich information archive produced in the nineteenth-century, one that

¹⁵¹ George Nathaniel Curzon. *Russia in Central Asia in 1889 & the Anglo-Russian Question* (London: Longmans, 1889), 13-14.

provided preëxisting models of socio-political space. His seminal 1900 “Minute on Frontier Administration,” submitted as the legislative proposal for the creation of the NWFP, articulated his vision and justification for the new province. Curzon began by affirming the importance of frontiers, the policy for which the GOI “cannot ever safely divest itself.”¹⁵² If any part of the “frontier arch” of British India was attacked, the “borders of the Empire” as a whole would “be the immediate focus of military and political danger.”¹⁵³ In this way, Curzon understood the nature of frontiers as not entirely military; echoing Lytton’s concept of “diplomacy,” Curzon also recognized frontiers as politically important and as key elements of statecraft. Of India’s borders, the NWF was the most important—the “keystone of the frontier arch,” as Curzon put it. Drawing on a quarter century of intelligence designation of the NWF as a strategically and politically important region, Curzon asserted that all of the foreign policy issues he faced as Viceroy, “in the main arise out of, or are connected with, the Frontier tribes and problems.”¹⁵⁴ Frontier work thus fell not under daily administration but imperial statecraft, making its transfer from the control of the Punjab provincial government to the GOI an imperative, since the province did not formulate foreign policy. Frontier districts (like Chitral) had already been under direct GOI jurisdiction; the task ahead was simply the “logical completion of the system”—the transfer of the *entire* North-West Frontier to GOI rule, which was “the real controller of its destinies.”¹⁵⁵

This argument of “logical completion” depended on ethnographical and geographical theories of a unified and distinct frontier region. The staggered and disorderly processes of territorial acquisition in the previous 15 years had yielded an outcome in which certain districts, like Dir, Swat, and Khyber fell under central Government rule, whereas other, older Frontier

¹⁵² Curzon, “Minute on Frontier Administration,” 125.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 125.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 130.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 144.

districts, like Peshawar or Bannu remained under Punjab control. In territories like North and South Waziristan, which had been awkwardly incorporated into British India through the Durand Agreement, jurisdictional issues had caused continued confusion in the 1890s. In viewing such an arrangement as inconsistent with ethnographic and geographic fact, Curzon was indebted to the intelligence processes of ethnography and thick description analyzed in chapters one and two, which conceived of the NWF as a discrete, bounded, and *sui generis* space—the “Frontier Tribal Area.” In Curzon’s NWFP vision we can understand the full significance of this designation: “Now of these districts it should be remembered that they do not belong either geographically, ethnologically, or historically to the Punjab. They are inhabited by entirely different peoples. They exhibit a different mode and standards of life,” Curzon wrote.¹⁵⁶ Curzon’s words demonstrated the purchase these discourses of “tribe” and region had, not only on policy practices like the punitive expedition, but on strategic decision-making and theories of rule. This text, more than any other in this region’s history, rendered explicit the attempt to transform a theoretical model of the NWF—as a discrete, ethno-geographic and geopolitical entity—into a palpable configuration of power, in the form of the NWFP.

This configuration of power—the NWFP—formed a system of empire. The administrative reforms Tripodi, Haroon, and others have picked up on actually served a deeper strategic goal, which was to reorganize the geo-spatial configuration of empire along the theoretical models described by intelligence services in the 1870s and 80s. In other words, the NWFP legislation sought to translate these models of space into actual policy practice, and in doing so, leverage the “Frontier Tribal Areas” as a pillar of imperial geopolitics. The specific structure of the NWFP attests to these aims. Curzon’s NWFP legislation envisioned a hybrid province, in which the

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 143.

districts that had been part of Punjab Province remained under direct British administration, whereas the districts in between the old Punjab Provincial border and the Durand line became subordinated under systems of indirect rule. The division between these two sub-provinces was the “administrative boundary:” Political rule within the boundary involved a great deal of continuity with systems of rule under Punjab Province. The five administered districts of Dera



Fig. ###: detail of the “Administrative Boundary,” from “Map to Illustrate Frontier and Overseas Expeditions, Vol. 2”

Ismail Khan, Bannu, Kohat, Peshawar, and Hazara were separated from Punjab Province, and their Deputy Commissioners made to report to a new Chief Commissioner of the NWFP, based in Peshawar. On the other side of this “administrative boundary” the NWFP created a system of tribal agencies: South Waziristan, North Waziristan, Kurram, Khyber, and Malakand, collectively known as the Tribal Areas. Together, these five fully administered districts and the adjacent Tribal Areas constituted the newly formed North-West Frontier Province.¹⁵⁷

The British state instituted forms of indirect rule in the Tribal Areas that relied heavily on the employment of tribal levies, a massive expansion and systemization of the *ad hoc*, preliminary programs of the 1880s and 90s, such as Robert Bruce’s *maliki* system. For the first time, these tribal levies became standardized, with militias raised in each

district, and extra numbers in areas deemed strategically important, like the Khyber Pass.¹⁵⁸

Furthermore, Curzon sought to expand the role of the Political Officer—a corps of P&S agents charged with liaising with the Pashtun tribes, among other tasks. These agents, Curzon envisioned,

¹⁵⁷ Curzon, “Minute on Frontier Administration,” 139; See also IOR/V/26/247/1: North-West Frontier Enquiry Committee, “Report and Minutes of Dissent,” 1922, pp. 34-35; Haroon has a good summary of these administrative changes in *Frontier of Faith*, 23-24.

¹⁵⁸ Curzon, “Minute on Frontier Administration,” 138-140.

would be the enactors of imperial policy on a local level, “managing” tribal politics and advancing British interests using political savvy and financial incentives.¹⁵⁹ Curzon’s NWFP policy thus drew on the major ethnographic developments of the 1880s and 90s, which posited that the inhabitants of the region could be classified and categorized. These tribal divisions, in Curzon’s view, could be “scientifically” managed if indirect rule was similarly systematized through the NWFP, and fully backed by the Government of India. In this way, Curzon hoped, British policy could overturn Robert Bruce’s failures the decade prior through a divide-and-manage approach. These policies resembled a form of governmentality, which aimed to manage tribes as populations not through the model of the punitive expedition, but through a series of incentives by which the tribes would, in theory, govern themselves.¹⁶⁰

Geo-spatially, these forms of rule created a layered frontier, the praxis of theoretical models which called for the frontier or series of “buffers” as the centerpiece of imperial security. Curzon points to such a model in his “Minute,” but the most concise description of this system of “frontier geopolitics” can be found in Curzon’s 1907 Lecture at Oxford: “The result in the case of the Indian Empire is probably without precedent, for it gives to Great Britain not a single or double but a threefold Frontier, (1) the administrative border of British India, (2), the Durand Line, or Frontier of active protection, (3) the Afghan border, which is the outer or advanced strategical Frontier.”¹⁶¹ The NWFP thus articulated a broader system of empire and imperial security than the administrative reforms inherent in it. The administrative border, which bisected the NWFP, delineated the realm of British direct rule. Between the administrative border and the Durand Line, which marked the limit of British sovereignty, a combination of political and military commanders

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 146.

¹⁶⁰ See e.g. Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-1978* (New York: Picador, 2009).

¹⁶¹ Curzon, “Frontiers,” 41.

instituted policies of indirect rule based on a “scientific frontier”—a military-political zone whose purpose was strategic defense. Beyond that, Afghanistan was a protectorate of the British Empire, whose invasion would trigger war with Britain. The result was a concentric, geo-spatial model of empire—a theory of geopolitics centered on the frontier, or a “Frontier Geopolitics.” In this way, the configuration of power in the NWFP articulated a theory and practice of empire on a wider, systemic scale.

A mechanistic understanding of how these systems of empire coalesce from the “chaotic plurality” of everyday governance thus emerges. Intelligence services, while ostensibly providing tactical knowledge to British officials—whether in the context of tribe-state relations, or for imperial defense—created theoretical models of space, which included the “Frontier Tribal Area” discussed in chapter 1, or the “Scientific Frontier” discussed in chapter 2. Yet in close-reading the creation of the NWFP, this chapter sketches out the factors which contribute to these models coalescing into broader *systems* of rule: historically-contingent events such as the Frontier Uprising, as well as the significance of Curzon’s person as an operative force, both created the conditions in which the chaotic plurality of theories of space and methods of rule could crystallize into a coherent model of the geopolitics of empire.

Conclusion

The North-West Frontier, Intelligence, and the Praxis of Empire

British administrators and military officials, over the second half of the nineteenth-century, undertook a vast information-gathering project on the North-West Frontier of India. These information-gathering practices—ethnography and geography—were in their intention purely instrumental, aimed at providing administrators and military officers tactical advice to achieve their stated goals. Yet these forms of knowledge were not—indeed, could not—be natural excavations of an existing social, political, and geographic landscape. Rather, as this essay has demonstrated, the information intelligence services produced about the North-West Frontier was operative on a theoretical, as well as instrumental, register. In the selectivity of their content and in their signs and styles of representation, the maps, route-books, and ethnographies intelligence services created were a means of conceiving, articulating, and structuring the world of the geographic area known as the North-West Frontier. Responding to various political contingencies, they conceived of the North-West Frontier first as a “Frontier Tribal Area,” and later, in response to a new conception of imperial security that emerged in the 1870s, as a “Scientific Frontier.”

These designations, in turn, exerted subtle but deep effects on British policies on the North-West Frontier—most notably, the routinization of violence as a form of political control, through the punitive expedition. Here, this essay’s intervention is both historiographical *and* methodological: in tackling the understudied historical problem of violence and political governance, it demonstrates the complicity of various forms of knowledge, especially maps, in the implementation of state violence. These findings substantially challenge existing analytical frameworks for such sources, such as those suggested by Hevia, Bayly, or Harley, which view

them solely in the context of their relationship to the maintenance of imperial power.¹⁶² This essay's critical study of mapping and other information-gathering practices on the North-West Frontier demonstrates that they did not merely seek to maintain state control, as scholars have theorized; rather, they enabled what I have termed a "double violence" enacted towards the NWF's native inhabitants. They participated in and undergirded the imperial state's epistemic violence against the region's inhabitants, which rendered them "fanatical," "restive," and "wild" subjects within a "lawless" or "ungoverned" space. This epistemic violence in turn provided discursive and legal justification for the British regime's practices of physical violence, like the punitive expedition. These findings explicate the historical problem of why routinized forms of violence persisted even until decolonization, despite vigorous and sustained efforts to find policy alternatives, such as the reforms inherent in the creation of the NWFP.¹⁶³

The NWF's designation as a "Scientific Frontier," as chapter two demonstrates, drove many of the efforts to find policy alternatives. Yet these efforts at policy change remained decentralized, *ad hoc*, and often reactive, until the 1897-98 Frontier Uprising, which proved to be the catalyst for wide-scale reform in NWF policy. Lord Curzon's proposal for the creation of the

¹⁶² See e.g. Hevia, *Imperial Security State*; Bayly, *Empire and Information*; Edney, *Mapping an Empire*; or Harley, "Maps, Knowledge, and Power."

¹⁶³ With the advent of combat aircraft during WWI, aerial bombardment began to supplement the punitive expedition in "disciplining/punishing" the NWFP's native inhabitants. Given the rudimentary state of such technology, aerial bombardment necessarily resembled what contemporary observers might term "carpet-bombing," even as Royal Air Force officials sought to characterize them as more precise than other methods. A few scholars have identified the contemporary U.S. drone warfare policy in Pakistan's FATA (contemporary NWFP) as a legacy of these practices of aerial bombardment. While tangential to this essay, this argument deserves critical attention if only for certain similarities between British and American practices of intelligence and violence: indeed, it is a militarized CIA that conducts these trans-border strikes, even as "regular" military divisions (USAF, JSOC) conduct drone operations in other parts of the world. Furthermore, both practices depended on certain discourses of geographical space, for example treating the region as *sui generis*. See e.g. Vazira Fazila-Racoobali Zamindar, "Altitudes of Imperialism," *The Caravan: A Journal of Politics & Culture*, 1 August, 2014, Web; Priya Satia, "Drones, A History from the British Middle East," *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 5.1 (Spring 2014); Derek Gregory, "From a View to Kill: Drones and Late Modern War," *Theory, Culture & Society*, 28.7-8 (Dec 2011); or Manan Ahmed, "Waziristan, U.S." *Chapati Mystery*, 26 March, 2014 Web.

North-West Frontier Province crystallized existing models of geographical and political space into a discrete configuration of power. Through a close reading of Curzon's "Minute" as well as corresponding legislation, this essay has demonstrated that the NWFP constituted more than a series of administrative reforms, but articulated a theory and practice of a geopolitics of empire based on a tri-modal frontier. Taken together, the case study presented in these three chapters of this essay also contribute to a mechanistic understanding of how systems of empire emerge from the plural and multiform practices of governing the empire on a quotidian basis.

Indeed, the relationship between local practices and broader, imperial systems—between the frontier "periphery" and imperial "center"—has formed a crucial theme throughout this essay. Lord Curzon tied these elements together in the NWFP legislation, by leveraging local practices of soft power over the Pashtun tribes for a wider theory of the geopolitics of empire, centered on the frontier. Following his tenure as Viceroy of India, he returned to England to serve as Chancellor of Oxford University, during which time he gave the "Frontiers" lecture mentioned in the opening of this essay. The themes in that lecture pointed to greater ambitions for imperial service, which he would realize during the World War I and inter-war years. Ascending to the Lloyd George's War Cabinet (1916-1919), and later to the post of Foreign Secretary (1919-1924), Curzon became intimately involved in the re-shaping of empire in the inter-war period, including acting as lead British negotiator in both the secretive Sykes-Picot Agreement in 1916 and the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923.¹⁶⁴ These treaties partitioned the geographic space of the former Ottoman Empire, designated protectorates, and delimited frontiers. Curzon's creation of the North-West Frontier Province thus formed the backdrop for his influential efforts to re-configure and maintain the British Empire system as a whole in the uncertainty of the inter-war years. Furthermore, his

¹⁶⁴ John Darwin, "An Undeclared Empire: The British in the Middle East, 1918-39," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 27.2 (1999), 162, 166; Gilmour, "Curzon, George Nathaniel," *Oxford DNB*.

trajectory, from Viceroy of India to his central role as Foreign Secretary in the early interwar years, gestures towards a genealogy of the shaping of the British Empire system during this time. In the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries, the British Empire would increasingly grapple with such issues as: the meaning of “security;” the theory and practice of “protectorates,” “spheres of influence” and “frontiers;” and the role of the intelligence apparatus in the making of empire.¹⁶⁵ The British colonial history of the North West Frontier is a significant case study in such a genealogy, for its demonstration of the historical processes—and consequences—of imperial intelligence, security, and the geopolitics of empire.

¹⁶⁵ See e.g. Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: the League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Thomas Martin, *Empires of Intelligence: Security Services and Colonial Disorder after 1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); or Darwin, “An Undeclared Empire.”

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