

The Uprising of 1897: An Appraisal of the Tribals Attempt against the Mighty British Power on the North-West Frontier of British India

Sultan-i-Rome

The history of the North-West Frontier of India is one long record of strife with the wild and war-like tribes that inhabit the difficult mountainous region which is the Borderland between British India and Afghanistan.

F. M. Roberts

The year 1897 witnessed the most serious conflagration which has ever disturbed the North-West Frontier.

*Administration Report on NWFP
from 9th November 1901 to 31st March 1903.*

Since their occupation of the trans-Indus Pukhtun area in 1849, the English faced stiff and persistent opposition and resistance of the tribesmen of the neighbouring tribal area from the Black Mountain to the border of Balochistan. The tribal belt not only became a refuge of outlaws and rendezvous for the discontented elements but also a base of operations against and centre of raids upon the directly English occupied territory. The, annexation of Punjab and the trans-Indus Pukhtun area was, therefore, 'followed by a series of encounters with almost every tribe along the whole of the North-West Frontier.'¹ James W. Spain opines:

The military and political history of the Pathans is more than anything else a story of revolt. They revolted against Mogul [Mughal], against dynasties of their own race, and against the Sikhs. Most of all they revolted against British India. Revolt, the theory, practice, and fruits of it, was the Pathans' principal

* This article will form part of the author's book on the history of the North-West Frontier Province.

¹ H.C. Nevill, *Campaigns on the North-West Frontier*, reprint (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2003), p.14.

contribution to the history of British rule in the north-western corner of India.²

The Imperial Gazetteer of India, Provincial Series, North-West Frontier Province has listed forty-eight expeditions against various tribes, from one end of the tribal area to the other, from 1849 till 1896.³ Before 1890 the tribesmen were armed very indifferently so they depended for their success on the *arme blanche* instead of firearms. They, however, improved in their weapons a little bit by 1890, and hence adopted somewhat new techniques of warfare.⁴ In the struggle and protracted war between the English and the Pukhtun tribesmen, 'in 1897' not only 'occurred the most formidable outbreak the British arms have ever been called upon to suppress on the North-West Frontier of India.'⁵

The causes

James W. Spain writes under the title 'motivation of the 1897 rising' that:

Contemporary British opinion was divided on the causes of the 1897 rising. Some officials were convinced that the outbreaks all over the Frontier had been coordinated and planned as a major effort to drive the British from the area. Others believed that the incidents were spontaneous and unconnected. Some ascribed them to a spirit of religious fanaticism. The more far-sighted saw them as a reaction to the British forward movement into Tribal Territory in the 1890's.⁶

The following, however, are the factors that contributed to and caused the uprising of 1897.

Visit of Durand mission and demarcation of frontier

The root cause of the uprising was the visit of the Durand mission to Afghanistan in 1893, the conclusion of the Durand Line agreement and the consequent demarcation of the Durand Line, which divided the tribal area and the tribesmen. The agreement and the consequent boundary line between British India and Afghanistan not only divided the Frontier

² James W. Spain, *The Pathan Borderland*, reprint (Karachi: Indus Publications, 1985), p.174.

³ See *Imperial Gazetteer of India, Provincial Series, North-West Frontier Province* [henceforward *Imperial Gazetteer of India, NWFP*], reprint (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1991), pp.80-82.

⁴ H.C. Nevill, *op.cit.*, pp.11-12.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.209.

⁶ James W. Spain, *op.cit.*, p.179.

tribesmen but also brought most of them under the British sphere of influence. This caused and generated the fear of the loss of their independence, at the hands of the English, and hence caused resentment throughout the Frontier.

H.C. Nevill admit that ‘considering the matter from their own point of view,’ the tribesmen ‘foresaw no result from the [Durand Line] agreement but the eventual loss of their jealously guarded independence, and opposed the demarcation of the boundary line from the very beginning.’⁷

Turko-Greek war and role of Turkey

The Turko-Greek war, which though was fought outside India in Europe and had no direct relation with the tribesmen, contributed to the uprising as an agent from Turkey (then at war with Greece) reached Kabul early in May 1897 and under his influence the Afghan Amir told the leading *mullas* to go and preach a holy war.⁸ The spirit of religious war was in the air and not only Turkish emissaries ‘left Constantinople for India’ but correspondence between the *mullas* of the Frontier and that of Delhi also took place.⁹

Turkey emerged victorious in the war. Being a success of a Muslim power against a Christian one it was taken as good omen for a similar success of the Muslims in the tribal area against the English Christian power. Therefore, the religious figures, who tried to raise a revolt against the English, tried to use the success of the Turks—in the Turko-Greek war—for their own ends. Hence ‘they made capital out of the result of the Turko-Greek War,’¹⁰ which thus contributed to the uprising.¹¹ Thus, it was, at first, for assisting the Turks that *jihad* and

⁷ H.C. Nevill, *op.cit.*, p.209.

⁸ Robert Warburton, *Eighteen Years in the Khyber, 1879–1898*, reprint, 3rd impression (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp.290-91. Also see F.A.K. Harrison, ‘The British Interest in the North West Frontier,’ *Peshawar University Review* (Peshawar), Vol. 1, No. 1 (1974-75), p.52; Charles Miller, *Khyber: British India’s North West Frontier, The Story of an Imperial Migraine* (London: Macdonald and Jane’s Publishers Limited, 1977), p.260.

⁹ T. Hungerford Holdich, *The Indian Borderland: 1880-1900*, 1st reprint in India (Delhi: Gian Publishing House, 1987), p.340. Also see Arthur Swinson, *op.cit.*, (London: Hutchinson & Co (Publishers) Ltd., 1967), p.233.

¹⁰ H.C. Nevill, *op.cit.*, p.210.

¹¹ Also see H. Woosnam Mills, *The Pathan Revolt in North West India*, reprint (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1996), p.5; Winston S.

fighting against the Christian powers was preached but the ‘fervour of that preaching lost nothing subsequently by the success of Turkey against Greece,’¹² as the success was tried to be exploited for a war against the English.

Forward policy

After dealing with and analyzing the other causes and explanation, Collin Davies puts a question that ‘how far then did the prevailing discontent have its origin in fanaticism, and to what extent did it result from the forward policy of Lords Lansdowne and Elgin?’¹³ Elaborating the forward policy factor, Davies writes that ‘from the distant north, where the snows of Rakapushi keep watch over Hunza and Nagar, to the confines of Balochistan,’ the Britons extended their ‘authority in many directions over the debatable area, known as independent territory.’ Therefore,

To the border Pathan there appeared the vision of a great mailed fist, the fingers of which, in the ’nineties, seemed to be closing around him. Isolated forts garrisoned by British troops commanded the trade routes running through his territory, or frowned down upon his native hamlet or terraced fields. Dazzling white roads wound their way like serpents towards his fastnesses in the mountains. In the wake of demarcation commissions had sprung up long lines of white boundary pillars, enclosing his country and threatening that independence which was his proudest boast. It is therefore my considered opinion, after sifting all the available evidence, that the 1897 disturbances

Churchill, *The Story of the Malakand Field Force: An Episode of Frontier War*, reprint (London: Leo Cooper, 2002), p.26; H.C. Wylly, *The Borderland: The Country of the Pathans*, reprint (Karachi: Indus Publications, 1998), p.312.

¹² T. Hungerford Holdich, *op.cit.*, p.340.

¹³ C. Collin Davies, *The Problem of the North-West Frontier, 1890-1908: With a Survey of Policy Since 1849*, 2nd edn., revised and enlarged (London: Curzon Press, 1975), p.97. For detail about the forward policy see *ibid.*, pp.71-98; James W. Spain, *op.cit.*, pp.116-19; Winston S. Churchill, *op.cit.*, pp.209-16; *The Cambridge History of India*, Vol. 6, *The Indian Empire, 1858—1918*, with chapters on the development of Administration 1818—1858, edited by H.H. Dodwell, and the *Last Phase 1919—1947*, edited by R.R. Sethi (Delhi: S. Chand & Co., 1964), pp.456-60; Richard Isaac Bruce, *The Forward Policy and its Results or Thirty-Five Years work amongst the Tribes on Our North-Western Frontier [of India]*, 2nd edn. in Pakistan (Quetta: M/S Nisa Traders, 1979).

were mainly the result of the advances which had taken place in the 'nineties. Although many of these advances were justified from a military point of view, they nevertheless were looked upon as encroachments into tribal territory.¹⁴

Administration Report on the North-West Frontier Province also testify to the forward policy and move a cause of the uprising by stating that 'there can be no doubt that the suspicions of the tribes' was 'excited by the extension of British influence and the establishment of British garrisons in what' was 'formerly independent territory. The demarcation of the Durand Line was regarded as a step to annexation.'¹⁵

Successful operation of Afghans in Kafiristan

The Afghans, under Amir Abdur Rahman, invaded Kafiristan. The operation was successful as most part of Kafiristan was occupied and named Nuristan, as a separate province. A section of the high command of the colonial authorities in India believed that this success inspired the tribes—being success of the Muslims against non-Muslims—and induced them to listen to the *mullas* call for *jihad* for the next attempt so as to exterminate the British government from India.¹⁶

Role of the Afghan amir and *sipah salar*

As detailed in chapter 5, the Afghan Amir apprised the viceroy of his apprehensions and the would-be consequences of taking away of him the Frontier tribal area and of the benefits of the tribesmen giving and leaving under him and hence the area shall not to be taken away of him

¹⁴ C. Collin Davies, *op.cit.*, pp.97-8. Also see *The Cambridge History of India*, Vol. 6, *op.cit.*, p.461; Charles Miller, *op.cit.*, p.259.

¹⁵ *Administration Report on the North-West Frontier Province from 9th November 1901 to 31st March 1903* (henceforward *Administration Report NWFP from 9th November 1901 to 31st March 1903*) (Peshawar: Printed at the North-West Frontier Province Government Press, 1903), p.10; *Administration Report on the North-West Frontier Province for 1921-22* (Peshawar: North-West Frontier Province Government Press, 1923), p.10. Also see Lal Baha, *NWFP Administration under British Rule, 1901-1919* (Islamabad: National Commission on Historical and Cultural Research, 1978), pp.5-8; Winston S. Churchill, *op.cit.*, pp.24-5; H.C. Wylly, *op.cit.*, pp.311-12; J.G. Elliott, *The Frontier, 1839—1947: The Story of the North-West Frontier of India*, with Preface by Olaf Caroe (London: Cassell & Company Ltd, 1968), p.153; *The Cambridge History of India*, Vol. 6, *op.cit.*, p.465.

¹⁶ See H. Woosnam Mills, *op.cit.*, p.5.

and brought under the English sphere of influence,¹⁷ but the English authorities did not agree. The Amir, therefore, did his best to incite the tribesmen and ignite the Frontier so that to create troubles for the English so as to compel them to give the tribesmen under his sphere of influence or at least to make them believe that his viewpoint and stand was correct and justified.

Moreover, ‘inspired by the Amir himself and written to his command,’¹⁸ the Amir published a pamphlet/book, entitled *Taqwim-uddin*, which stressed upon the need of *jihad* and defending the frontier of the Muslim territories.¹⁹ Another act of the Amir that ‘increased rather than diminished’ the ‘uneasy feeling, and, to give topical significance to the book’ was his conference, at his court, with the religious men of influence from all parts of his country.²⁰ H. Woosnam Mills assert that ‘these religious men—*mullahs* as they are known in India—are the levers by which the fanaticism of a frontier tribe is set in motion, as the British Government has over and over again found to its cost.’ Mills further writes that ‘why did Abdur Rahman hold a conference of these men? If it was to enjoin them to preserve peace on the frontier, where was the necessity? Was not the frontier in peace? These were the pertinent questions asked.’²¹ The Amir, moreover, ‘for years’ was ‘a personal friend of the Hadda Mullah, one of the chief apostles of [the]

¹⁷ Also see Sultan Mahomed Khan, (ed.) *The Life of Abdur Rahman: Amir of Afghanistan*, with a New Introduction by M.E. Yapp, Vol. 2, reprint in Pakistan (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1980) pp.158-60; Sultan-i-Rome, ‘The Durand Line Agreement (1893):- Its Pros and Cons,’ *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan* (Lahore), 41:1, (July 2004), pp.8-9.

¹⁸ H. Woosnam Mills, *op.cit.*, p.2.

¹⁹ See H.C. Nevill, *op.cit.*, p.212; *ibid.*, p.2; T. Hungerford Holdich, *op.cit.*, p.339; H.C. Wylly, *op.cit.*, p.312; Arthur Swinson, *op.cit.*, p.233. Also see *The Cambridge History of India*, Vol. 6, *op.cit.*, p.465; Charles Miller, *op.cit.*, p.260. The name of the book has also been stated as *Tarhib-ul-Jehad* in A.H. McMahon and A.D.G. Ramsay, *Report on the Tribes of the Malakand Political Agency (Exclusive of Chitral)*, revised by R.L. Kennion (Peshawar: Government Press, North-West Frontier Province, 1916), p.49; A.H. McMahon and A.D.G. Ramsay, *Report on the Tribes of Dir, Swat and Bajour [Bajawar] together with the Utman-Khel and Sam Ranizai*, reprint, edited with an Introduction by R.O. Christensen (Peshawar: Saeed Book Bank, 1981), pp.108-109.

²⁰ H. Woosnam Mills, *op.cit.*, p.2. Also see Arthur Swinson, *op.cit.*, p.233; Charles Miller, *op.cit.*, p.260.

²¹ H. Woosnam Mills, *op.cit.*, p.2. Also see Robert Warburton, *op.cit.*, p.291.

insurrection.²² Besides, he ‘described him as a ‘light of Islam’,’ and ‘directed his officials to cherish and honour him.’²³

Besides, the Afghan *sipah salar* at Asmar, namely Ghulam Haidar Khan, had his relations with the anti-British elements and assured them of assistance in case of their rising against the British, as, A.H. McMahon and A.D.G. Ramsay asserts, it was certain that the unrest ‘received the active support of the Afghan Sipah Salar Ghulam Haider and other Afghan officials.’²⁴ T.H. Holdich contends that ‘those who say that Ghulam Haidar (the ‘Red Prince’ of the Kunar) was acting in direct hostility to the Amir’s good intentions towards us [the English] are strangely ignorant of the length of the Amir’s arm and the weight of his blow.’ He, however, has added that ‘Ghulam Haidar went, perhaps, a little too far—and paid for his temerity.’²⁵ And in J.G. Elliott words:

Two months later Ghulam Haidar Khan, the Afghan Army Commander, died. It is not possible to say just how much he always acted on the exact orders of his master but for many years, from the Dorah Pass to the Kabul river, he was behind much of the unrest that occurred among the tribes living on the British side of the Durand Line.²⁶

In this backdrop and scenario, although the Amir, at ‘a strong remonstrance from the Government of India,’ denied ‘sympathy with the revolting tribesmen’ and ordered that his subjects should neither give assistance of any kind to the tribesmen who revolted against the English nor do give ‘asylum to any armed refugees,’²⁷ and denied any responsibility and disavowed the tribesmen and their actions,²⁸ his and his *sipah salar*’s role in causing the uprising cannot be underestimated. Even some Afghan soldiers fought on the tribesmen side at Shabqadar and later at Bedmani.²⁹ The Afghan Amir and *sipah salar*, thus, not only

²² H.C. Wylly, *op.cit.*, p.313.

²³ Winston S. Churchill, *op.cit.*, p.89.

²⁴ A.H. McMahon and Ramsay, *op.cit.*, p.49; *op.cit.*, p.108. Also see Robert Warburton, *op.cit.*, pp.291-96; *op.cit.*, *The Frontier*, p.195; *The Risings on the North-West Frontier: (Compiled from the Special War Correspondence of the ‘Pioneer.’* (Allahabad: Printed and Published at the Pioneer Press, 1898), pp.66, 150, 157.

²⁵ T. Hungerford Holdich, *op.cit.*, p.339.

²⁶ J.G. Elliott, *op.cit.*, p.161.

²⁷ H.C. Nevill, *op.cit.*, p.212.

²⁸ H. Woosnam Mills, *op.cit.*, p.3; J.G. Elliott, *op.cit.*, p.170.

²⁹ See H. Woosnam Mills, *ibid.*, p.3. Also see *The Risings on the North-West Frontier*, pp.150-51.

had great deal in the affair but also ignited it by inciting the sentiments of the tribesmen and promising them help, respectively.

Factors and events of local nature

There were some factors that though were of local nature but contributed to the uprising. For example the colonial government raised the tax on the rock salt exported from Kohat district, 'from eight annas to two rupees a *maund*.'³⁰ As the salt was one of the tribesmen principal sources of income, the increase aggrieved them or at least was exploited by the *mullas*.³¹ Similarly, the colonial authorities annoyed the tribesmen when they refused 'to return to the Afridis some captive women who had fled from the tribesmen to take refuge in the settled districts.'³² Being a matter of honour for the Afridis, the refusal not only generated resentment but also added to the gravity of the situation. In H. Woosnam Mills words:

The explanation or local causes put forward for the rising of the Afridis were three in number, *viz.*, the increase in the salt tax, the fact that their women who ran away to Peshawar were not sent back by our Government, and their objection to our presence as far as the tomb of Akhund in Swat. To these might be added a fourth, the fear that a military road would be built along the Khyber Pass which they themselves would have to construct.³³

The first incident of the uprising at Maizar was mainly caused by a local factor, i.e. so far not paying the fine assessed against the concerned tribesmen for the murder of a Hindu, a year before, and the coming of the British personnel to the area in such a scenario.³⁴ Besides, 'the tribesmen doubtless believed that if they could kill the British officers at once the sepoys would be demoralised, and they could be cut off to a man. *Success would mean the capture of two mountain guns, 300 rifles and a large quantity of ammunition, not to mention the baggage animals and camp equipage* [*italics mine*].'³⁵ The discontent of the

³⁰ James W. Spain, *op.cit.*, pp.176-77. Also see C. Collin Davies, *op.cit.*, p.95.

³¹ See C. Collin Davies, *op.cit.*, pp.94-96; Robert Warburton, *op.cit.*, pp.289, 297-98.

³² James W. Spain, *op.cit.*, p.177. Also see C. Collin Davies, *op.cit.*, pp.94-95; Robert Warburton, H. Woosnam Mills, pp.289, 297-98.

³³ H. Woosnam Mills, *op.cit.*, pp.8-9.

³⁴ James W. Spain, *op.cit.*, p.177.

³⁵ H. Woosnam Mills, *op.cit.*, p.20.

Orakzais at the establishment of the forts on the Samana range was also a local cause,³⁶ besides its being part of the forward policy and move.

Retaining Malakand and Chakdara and road to Chitral

Amanul Mulk, Mehtar of Chitral, established friendly relations with Britons and they established garrison at Chitral. At his death in 1892, a war for the seat started in Chitral between his sons. To fish in the troubled waters Amanul Mulk's brother, Sher Afzal, invaded Chitral with the assistance of Umara Khan of Jandol, which resulted also in the siege of the British garrison in Chitral. The British authorities asked Umara Khan to relieve the garrison but to no avail. They therefore decided to march upon Chitral from two sides: from Peshawar and Gilgit.³⁷

The relief force from Peshawar was to proceed through Swat and Dir due to which a proclamation was issued to the people of Swat and Bajawar informing them of the object of the relief force to Chitral and that if they do not molest the British forces passing through their territories, their country will not be occupied.³⁸ Disregarding the proclamation the people of Swat blocked the passage of the British forces and fought against them in Malakand. The British forces however succeeded in making their way, entered Swat for the first time and relieved their garrison in Chitral.³⁹ The colonial government, however, decided, on 8 May 1895, 'to retain a garrison in Chitral, and, to ensure its safety, proposed the construction of a road from Peshawar through Swat.'⁴⁰

Although the Liberals in England 'considered the construction of the new road to be contrary to the spirit of the proclamation of March, 1895' and as such 'it not only constituted a deliberate breach of faith with the tribes, but, in their opinion, it was also likely to lead to the annexation of tribal territory, the very thing' they had pleaded

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.9.

³⁷ For detail see G.J. Younghusband and Francis Younghusband. *The Relief of Chitral*, with Map and Illustrations, reprint (Rawalpindi: English Book House, 1976), pp.1-29.

³⁸ H.C. Nevill, *op.cit.*, pp.166-67; C. Collin Davies, *op.cit.*, pp.85-86; H. Woosnam Mills, *op.cit.*, p.4; Younghusband and Francis Younghusband. *op.cit.*, p.26; *The Cambridge History of India*, Vol. 6, *op.cit.*, p.464.

³⁹ For detail see Younghusband and Francis Younghusband. *op.cit.*, pp.83-128; *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India*, Vol. 1, *Tribes North of the Kabul River*, 2nd edn. Published in Pakistan (Quetta: Nisa Traders, 1982), pp.42-78, 521-48; H.C. Nevill, *op.cit.*, pp.164-96.

⁴⁰ C. Collin Davies, *op.cit.*, p.86.

themselves ‘not to do.’⁴¹ But the Conservatives did not pay any heed to these apprehensions. The construction of the road was decided and for its safety and safe passage of relief forces to Chitral, Malakand and Chakdara were retained and garrisons stationed there. Although this was not considered a breach of the proclamation as the tribes disregarded the proclamation and resisted the British advance and, moreover, the viceroy telegraphed to the secretary of state for India, on 24 September 1895, to the effect that the tribes did not regard the occupation of Malakand ‘as infringement of the proclamation’ and that they had petitioned for retaining British troops ‘to protect them, to help them in protecting road, and to maintain internal peace,’⁴² these steps, with the passage of time, were resented by the people considering them as a prelude to further annexations and expansion. The resentment and fear of further expansion and annexation generated by the road to Chitral through Lower Swat and retaining Malakand and Chakdara—factors both of local nature and forward policy—contributed to the uprising in Swat.⁴³

Links with India and Afghanistan

Those who were in the forefront of the uprising or who proved the lever or who instigated the people and lead them against the English forces and positions had their links and connections both in India and Afghanistan, with the anti-British elements, which proved a stimulus for the uprising.

The Sartor Faqir’s links in India and Afghanistan is evident from his travel to both India and Afghanistan and remaining there for a long time.⁴⁴ The presence of the Faqir’s companion in the fighting—who was said to be ‘a Mulla from India’ and ‘was killed at his side’⁴⁵ in the course of the fighting—speaks of the Indian factor and his being assured of help by the Afghan *sipah salar*, at Asmar, as mentioned above, is a testimony of the Afghan factor. Moreover, it was Hajabuddin, the Hadda Mulla—basically hailing from Hadda in Afghanistan but now shifted to the independent Mohmand territory—who lead the Mohmands who attacked

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.87. Also see H. Woosnam Mills, *op.cit.*, p.4; *op.cit.*, *The Story of the Malakand Field Force*, p.22; *The Cambridge History of India*, Vol.6, *op.cit.*, p.464.

⁴³ Also see Winston S. Churchill, *op.cit.*, pp.22-25.

⁴⁴ See A.H. McMahan and Ramsay, *op.cit.*, p.49; *op.cit.*, p.109; H. Woosnam Mills, *op.cit.*, p.34; Arthur Swinson, *op.cit.*, p.233.

⁴⁵ A.H. McMahan and Ramsay, *op.cit.*, p.50; *op.cit.*, p.111.

the British subjects and position at Shabqadar. Interestingly, the Hadda Mulla was friend of both the Afghan Amir and the *sipah salar*.⁴⁶

It has been suggested that the rising ‘was a scheme preconcerted from both Kabul and India’ and that it ‘was intended to be a simultaneous one along the border.’⁴⁷ Winston Churchill too speaks of the Indian and Afghan factor by stating that ‘secret encouragement came from the South—from India itself. Actual support and assistance was given from Cabul [Kabul].’⁴⁸ Davies contends that, although it is difficult to ascertain with any degree of certainty the extent to which the discontent in India affected the Frontier tribesmen, ‘correspondence did take place between frontier mullahs and those of Delhi.’⁴⁹ The Sartor Faqir’s having ‘with him a young boy of about thirteen years of age whom he represented as the sole surviving heir to the throne of Delhi’⁵⁰ and whom he ‘proclaimed king of Delhi,’⁵¹ at his starting for Malakand and Chakdara, also testify to the links with and importance of India in the affair.

Role of the mullas, religious fervour and fanaticism

The *mullas* and religious fervour were the main forces that helped in inducing and enticing the tribesmen for taking arms against the infidel alien power. This aspect has already been explained in the previous sections to a greater extent: whether it was the Afghan Amir’s publication of a book on *jihad* and his calling a council of the religious *ulama*, the impact of the Turko-Greek war or of the Afghans’ successes in Kafiristan and the local religious figures call for and in the name of *jihad* and so forth. The religious factor and fervour was the main lever. In McMahan and Ramsay words: ‘The information gleaned slowly, but surely placed it beyond doubt that the rising was a purely religious affair, and that it was a scheme preconcerted from both Kabul and India.’⁵²

The religious leaders also propagated that the subsidies paid by the colonial government to various tribes had been ‘the price of that peace which force of arms was powerless to ensure’ in the tribal belt.⁵³ It

⁴⁶ See H.C. Wylly, *op.cit.*, p.313; Winston S. Churchill, *op.cit.*, p.89.

⁴⁷ A.H. McMahan and Ramsay, *op.cit.*, p.50: *op.cit.*, p.112.

⁴⁸ Winston S. Churchill, *op.cit.*, p.25.

⁴⁹ C. Collin Davies, *op.cit.*, p.94.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.97; Eknath Easwaran, *A Man to Match his Mountains: Badshah Khan, Nonviolent Soldier of Islam*, with an Afterword by Timothy Flinders, reprint (California: Nilgiri Press, 1985), p.49; Charles Miller, *op.cit.*, p.266.

⁵¹ *Imperial Gazetteer of India, NWFP*, p.23.

⁵² A.H. McMahan and Ramsay, *op.cit.*, p.50: *op.cit.*, p.112.

⁵³ H.C. Nevill, *op.cit.*, p.210.

was the religious leaders, such as Sartor Faqir, Hadda Mulla and Aka Khel Mulla (Mulla Sayyad Akbar), who were not only behind but lead the uprising and whose exertions led to the uprising. These religious leaders were held in such esteem by the people or they were so powerless before them that when William Lockhart let the Chamkanis know about the terms of which he wanted to extract a treaty of them, their reply contained that ‘friendship and enmity are not in our choice; whatever orders we may receive from the Fakir Sahib of Swat, the Mulla Sahib of Hadda or the Aka Khel Mulla, and from all Islam, we cannot refuse to obey them; if we lose our lives, no matter.’⁵⁴

The answers to the questions posed by Robert Warburton to the Afridis in course of the punitive campaign—that ‘What made you come down?’; ‘The Mullahs brought us down.’ ‘Why did you obey the Mullahs, and why did you not turn them out of your country?’ ‘They were too powerful for us.’... ‘Then why did you attack the posts?’ ‘The Mullahs forced us,’⁵⁵—speaks of the *mullas* role in the uprising.

Concluding the chapter dealing with the causes of the uprising, Davies states that ‘the chief part played by fanaticism was the way in which the frontier mullahs used it to stir up the latent passions of the turbulent tribesmen. Without the force of fanaticism and the sinister influence of Afghan intrigues, the risings would hardly have been so widespread, so united, or so simultaneous.’⁵⁶ To that effect fanaticism or religious fervour and zeal certainly played great role in the affair. It, however, has rightly been said that ‘contemporary opinion, especially that of officers and officials in the war zone, favoured fanaticism as the chief cause of the outbreak, but they have ever been ready to *confuse fanaticism with the natural desire of the tribesmen for independence* [italics mine].’⁵⁷ Munawwar Khan, too, has pointed to the ‘chivalry and

⁵⁴ *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India*. Vol.2, p.67 quoted in C. Collin Davies, *op.cit.*, p.97.

⁵⁵ Robert Warburton, *op.cit.*, p.298. For the degree the *mullas* held influence in the tribal area also see *ibid.*, p.299; T.L. Pennell, *Among the Wild Tribes of the Afghan Frontier: A Record of Sixteen years close Intercourse with the Natives of the Indian Marches*, with an Introduction by Earl Roberts, and with 37 Illustrations & 2 Maps (London: George Bell & Sons, 1909), pp.114-25; Andre Singer, *Lords of the Khyber: The Story of the North-West Frontier* (London: faber and faber, 1984), pp.158-73.

⁵⁶ C. Collin Davies, *op.cit.*, p.98. Also see Winston S. Churchill, *op.cit.*, pp.25-27.

⁵⁷ *The Cambridge History of India*, Vol.6, *op.cit.*, p.466.

bravery' of the tribesmen as 'fanaticism to the British historians.'⁵⁸ And H.G. Raverty also states that 'all are 'fanatics,' 'rebels, or 'dacoits,' who fight against us according to some people.'⁵⁹

The events

The situation on the North-West Frontier of British India did not remain normal due to the aforesaid causes and factors, despite having no evident signs of discontent and disturbance. Therefore, 'by the summer of 1897....the whole north-west frontier from the Gomul [Gomal] river to the hills south of Chitral was in a condition of seething irritation.'⁶⁰ In the outwardly contented and calm but inwardly discontented and volatile situation 'only a spark was needed to set the whole Frontier in a blaze' and 'the train was lit at Maizar'⁶¹ in the shape of an attack on the party of the political agent, Mr. Gee, and his camp.

The Wazirs rising at Maizar

It was on 10 June 1897 that H.A. Gee, political officer in the Tochi valley, accompanied by an unusual larger military escort, came to Maizar above Datta Khel in the Madda Khel Wazir country. The purpose of Gee's visit to the area 'was to fix on a site for the most westerly levy post in the valley, and also to meet, by arrangement, the Madda Khel Maliks there and discuss the question of the distribution of a fine which was outstanding against the tribes.'⁶² The fine worth rupees 2,000 was imposed on the tribes 'for the murder of a Hindu writer attached to the levy post at Sheranni.' But 'the inhabitants of the group of villages known as Maizar objected to the payment of their share of the fine, on the ground that the whole burden be borne by the guilty parties.'⁶³

Originally the visit was fixed for 9 June but was delayed for a day due to the rain, which provided the tribesmen the time to lay plans for attack on Gee's party. A suitable place for camping was selected and despite noticing no unusual move on the tribesmen part and having no

⁵⁸ Munawwar Khan, 'Swat: Second Instalment,' *Peshawar University Review* (Peshawar), Vol.1, No.1 (1974-75), p.67.

⁵⁹ Henry George Raverty, *Notes on Afghanistan and Balochistan*, Vol.1, 2nd edn. published in Pakistan (Quetta: Nisa Traders, 1982), p.251 n.

⁶⁰ T. Hungerford Holdich, *op.cit.*, p.338.

⁶¹ Olaf Caroe, *The Pathans: 550 BC-AD 1957*, reprint (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1976), p.387. Also see Akbar S. Ahmed, *Millennium and Charisma among Pathans: A Critical Essay in Social Anthropology* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976), p.105.

⁶² H. Woosnam Mills, *op.cit.*, p.11. Also see H.C. Wylly, *op.cit.*, p.466.

⁶³ H.C. Nevill, *op.cit.*, p.214. Also see H.C. Wylly, *op.cit.*, p.466.

suspensions of them, the authorities took ‘all the usual precautions’—required ‘when camping in a hostile country’—by ordering their men ‘to keep their arms with them and not to pile them, and guards, pickets and sentries placed where considered necessary.’ After this, Mr. Gee, with an escort and accompanied by some of the Malaks, visited Dotoi. At his return, Gee was told that ‘the question of the fine’ has been settled amicably by the tribesmen themselves. The tribesmen served the Muslim sepoy of the escort with food and ‘there was not the slightest suspicious of the unfriendliness on the part of the tribesmen.’⁶⁴

‘Colonel Bunny ordered the pipers,’ after *tiffin*, ‘to play for the villagers to listen to, and they played one tone.’ ‘Just as they began another’ a man waved ‘a drawn sword on a tower in the Drepilare *kot*.’ The villagers quickly ‘cleared off towards the village. A single shot was fired, apparently as a signal, and a fusillade at once commenced, directed at the British officers, who were together under a tree, and the Sikhs. This was taken up on all sides, the sepoy in the meantime falling in at once and taking up positions.’ Disasters quickly befell on Gee’s party. ‘Lieutenant Seton Browne was hit in the leg at the second or third shot, and Colonel Bunny, the commander, was mortally wounded.’ The British guns, however, opened fire, almost immediately after, and ‘did great execution among a party of men who attempted to rush them.’ The ‘officers stood to their posts, but as they were in an exposed position the two British officers afforded an easy mark for the men in the *bagh*. Captain Browne was hit at about the fifth shot and Lieutenant Cruikshank shot dead almost directly after.’⁶⁵

All this happened ‘within five minutes of the first shot.’ As the tribesmen’s fire did not slacken and the colonial guns had expended their ammunition, their forces made a movement ‘back towards the *kotal*, the guns limbering up and going first up the lane.’ At the retirement of the infantry, the tribesmen came out in great numbers from all sides. Although ‘a stand was made round the corner of the *bagh* to allow the wounded men to retire,’ a ‘further disasters befell the little force.’ As the tribesmen directed the fire ‘at the British officers Lieutenant Higginson was shot through the arm and Surgeon-Captain Cassidy in the knee.’ The tribesmen ‘were, however, successfully held in check by a mixed party of 1st Sikhs and 1st Punjab Infantry, and the latter retired up to the *kotal* when everything was over.’ The retreating forces successively took up positions ‘on the six ridges which stretch from Maizar to the plain above Sheranna, a distance of about two miles, and though the Waziris

⁶⁴ H. Woosnam Mills, *op.cit.*, pp.11-12. Also see H.C. Nevill, *op.cit.*, p.215.

⁶⁵ H. Woosnam Mills, *op.cit.*, p.12.

followed up in a most determined fashion and occupied all availing positions on the hills around, the retirement was perfect.' However, 'Lieutenant Higginson was shot in the arm a second time while crossing the hills.' Although 'all the British military officers were now wounded, two of them mortally, yet they all continued to carry out their duties and lead their men.'⁶⁶

The survivors of the Briton party started to withdraw and the tribesmen 'constantly enveloping the flanks.'⁶⁷ The tribesmen made the most determined attempts, throughout, 'to get to close quarters and annihilate' the Briton party's men. Their number, estimated 500 at the first onset, raised subsequently 'to probably much over 1000.'⁶⁸ After reaching reinforcement on the English side, at the evening, the tribesmen retired. Hence the remainder of the withdrawal of the Briton force was unmolested, completed with reaching of the rear-guard to the camp at 12.30 a.m.⁶⁹

Interestingly, the Khiddar Khels helped the British side by bringing 'water for the wounded during the retreat' and 'during the following two days' bringing the 'bodies of all killed.'⁷⁰ Thus ended the first of the series of the uprising with having about '100 killed and many wounded' on the tribesmen side and 26 killed (including 3 British officers) and 35 wounded (including 3 British officers) on the British side.⁷¹

While dealing with the 'explanations of the Maizar disaster,' H. Woosnam Mills also asserts that 'there is ample evidence to show that the whole business was carefully planned beforehand, and that the headmen were parties to the treacherous attack on Colonel Bunny's party.' And that 'probably the wires were pulled by men who knew when the Political Officer meant to visit Maizar, what the strength of his escort would be, and the probable time of its arrival at the village.'⁷² Whereas, James W. Spain contends that it was 'for one of the few times on record, the tribesmen grossly violated their own code of honor,' as they attacked

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.12-13. Also see H.C. Nevill, *op.cit.*, pp.216-17.

⁶⁷ H. Woosnam Mills, *op.cit.*, p.13.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.14. Also see H.C. Nevill, *op.cit.*, p.218.

⁶⁹ H.C. Nevill, *op.cit.*, pp.217-18; H.C. Wylly, *op.cit.*, pp.467-68.

⁷⁰ H. Woosnam Mills, *op.cit.*, p.14.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp.14-15, 19. For detail about the Maizar outrage see *ibid.*, pp.10-23; *The Risings on the North-West Frontier*, *op.cit.*, pp.1-17; George Macmunn, *The Romance of the Indian Frontiers*, 1st edn. published in Pakistani (Quetta: Nisa Traders, 1978), pp.189-93; H.C. Nevill, *op.cit.*, pp.213-18; H.C. Wylly, *op.cit.*, pp.466-68.

⁷² H. Woosnam Mills, *op.cit.*, p.20.

the party after welcoming and feeding as guests.⁷³ The Maizar incident, however, proved the spark that let the fire, which soon spread to other parts of the tribal area and put it ablaze.

The Swat rising

In the aforementioned backdrop, the Sartor Faqir⁷⁴ appeared in Upper Swat the next month, July 1897. He established himself at Landakay and, besides claims of having magical powers and unseen support, proclaimed that 'his mission was to turn the British off the Malakand and out of Peshawar.'⁷⁵ In spite of all the prevailing excitements and developments, he was regarded as a mad man by the colonial authorities and their local allies due to which the authorities gave little importance to his movement, at first.⁷⁶ But later, towards the end of the month, the gravity of the situation could no longer be ignored and hence the troops stationed in Malakand were alerted and asked to be ready 'for action at the shortest notice.' On 26 July 1897 the situation became so grave that the authorities at Malakand summoned the Guides force from Mardan.⁷⁷

On the 26 July, the Sartor Faqir started his march down from Landakay. He announced that he would sweep away the British forces from Malakand and Chakdara in eight days.⁷⁸ At first only a few boys followed him, 'one of whom he proclaimed king of Delhi.'⁷⁹ But the response to his appeals proved marvelous as people began to join him when he proceeded towards Malakand. Most of the people were carried away by the popular enthusiasm and by nightfall a resolute body of tribesmen was on the move to attack Malakand, while another party turned its attention to Chakdara.⁸⁰

At 9.15 p.m. the news of the tribesmen's approach at Malakand were brought to Major Deane, the political agent. Before the tribesmen's commencing their attack the alarm was sounded and a detachment of the 45th Sikhs was sent to stop their advance.⁸¹ The tribesmen, however, compelled the British force to fall back and in a determined attack, on

⁷³ James W. Spain, *op.cit.*, p.177. Also see J.G. Elliott, *op.cit.*, p.240.

⁷⁴ For some detail about the Sartor Faqir see Sultan-i-Rome, 'The Sartor Faqir: Life and Struggle against British Imperialism,' *op.cit.*, (Karachi), Vol. 42 (Part 1, January 1994), pp.93-105.

⁷⁵ PP Encl. 28, 8 August 1897, quoted in Akbar S. Ahmed, *op.cit.*, p.108.

⁷⁶ See A.H. McMahan and Ramsay, *op.cit.*, p.49: *op.cit.*, pp.109-10.

⁷⁷ H.C. Nevill, *op.cit.*, pp.223-24.

⁷⁸ H. Woosnam Mills, *op.cit.*, p.35.

⁷⁹ *Imperial Gazetteer of India, NWFP*, p.23.

⁸⁰ H. Woosnam Mills, *op.cit.*, p.35.

⁸¹ A.H. McMahan and Ramsay, *op.cit.*, p.50: *op.cit.*, pp.110-11.

the north and centre camps, they carried a detached post at the serai without resistance. They also 'succeeded in entering the camp occupied by the sappers and miners, and carried off a considerable quantity of ammunition before they could be ejected.' On 27 July, the Guides arrived from Mardan, but the tribesmen were now attacking all along the line. They were repulsed on other places except at the serai where they succeeded to set it on fire and compelled the garrison to retreat to its main position. On 28 July, the 24th Punjab Infantry made a successful counter-attack.⁸² Besides, by 28 July mobilization of troops in India was ordered.⁸³ The tribesmen, however, again made attacks, chiefly against the centre, and the troops were practically besieged. They occupied all the heights and continued firing all the day mostly at the camp. At the night they again commenced fighting and 'displayed their usual energy on the centre.'⁸⁴

The Sartor Faqir's standard 'became the rallying point for thousands of fighting-men from the Upper Swat, Buner, the Utman Khel country, and even more distant parts.'⁸⁵ The tribesmen, who barely exceeded 1000 men on the first night, rapidly increased in number to some 12000 or more at Malakand and more than 8000 men at Chakdara.⁸⁶

During the night of 29 July the tribesmen attacked the flanks, especially the left. At the forenoon of the 29 they began to trouble the colonial forces on all sides, and in the afternoon they renewed their attacks all along the line. At the night of the 29-30, they rushed up to the *sangars* (parapets of rock and stones, thrown up as a barricade or fortification) in different parts as that was the night of the appearance of the new moon and of Friday, and they 'evidently meant to fulfil their promise of making their biggest effort on that night.'⁸⁷ On 30 July though relief in the form of 35th Sikhs and 38th Dogra arrived on the government side, 'the wire between Malakand and Dargai was cut, and the levy posts burnt.'⁸⁸ On the night of 31 July, the tribesmen made another all-night attack with great force and 'time after time charged right up to the *sangars*.'⁸⁹

⁸² H.C. Nevill, *op.cit.*, pp.225-27.

⁸³ A.H. McMahon and Ramsay, *op.cit.*, p.50: *op.cit.*, p.111.

⁸⁴ H. Woosnam Mills, *op.cit.*, p.47.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.35.

⁸⁶ A.H. McMahon and Ramsay, *op.cit.*, p.50: *op.cit.*, p.111; *Imperial Gazetteer of India, NWFP*, p.23.

⁸⁷ H. Woosnam Mills, *op.cit.*, pp.48-49.

⁸⁸ A.H. McMahon and Ramsay, *op.cit.*, p.50: *op.cit.*, p.111.

⁸⁹ H. Woosnam Mills, *op.cit.*, p.51.

Early in the morning of 31 July the tribesmen gave an easy time to the left and centre of the British forces, but they concentrated on their right and sent a detachment to cut off the approach of the new British troops.⁹⁰ After the arrival of more troops on 31 July to help the British-side, the Bunerwals came to assist the tribesmen.⁹¹ During the night of 1 August, the tribesmen attacked the right and left of the British positions. However, the British forces succeeded to relieve Malakand and a relief column was ordered to move out to Chakdara. When the relief forces stepped into the valley the tribesmen ‘swarmed down from the heights’.⁹² The relief forces were strongly resisted on their way especially at Batkhela and Amandara.

Like Malakand, the attack on Chakdara was also made on the night of 27 July. At 10.15 p.m. the alarm was sounded and the garrison manned their posts. The tribesmen attacked from the west, but due to incessant firing from the posts they gave up, and after a short while resumed their attack from the northeast. They made strenuous efforts to scale the walls with ladders but were repulsed. Their next attempt was on the eastern side, but it was not sustained for long as they had to withdraw before the daylight. At the same night the tribesmen also cut the telegraph wires and prevented communication with Malakand. On the 27 July they commenced their most determined attack and ‘time after time standard-bearers, backed up by swordsmen, would charge straight up to the walls of the fort, only to fall riddled with bullets.’⁹³

Their attack was resumed on the night of 28 July as well and they surrounded the fort on all sides. They came up close to the wall but were again repulsed. After some hours they returned back with ladders and attacked the northeast corner of the fort. However, having failed in their attempts, they went back to the hills before daylight. On the evening of that day they again advanced to the attack with 200 standard bearers. They worked their way up under the walls of the fort but all their attacks were repelled by steady fire from the walls. On 29 July, they made a concerted attack against the signal tower and in spite of a very heavy fire, both from the tower and fort, they succeeded in reaching the doorway itself, and attempted to put it to fire.⁹⁴

The tribesmen made more attacks from 30 July to 1 August. They ‘loopholed the walls of the hospital, which was situated between

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ A.H. McMahon and Ramsay, *op.cit.*, p.50: *op.cit.*, p.111.

⁹² H. Woosnam Mills, *op.cit.*, p.52.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp.56-58.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.58-59.

the fort and the signal tower,' and were thus able 'to command the interior of the fort.' On August 2, they made one more bid for victory and the situation became most critical for the hard-pressed British garrison. However, the relief forces reached to its rescue from Malakand, and it was saved.⁹⁵

Heavy fighting, thus, continued both at Malakand and Chakdara (relieved on August 1 and 2, simultaneously), never ceased actually, and the tribesmen engaged the mighty British arms for a full week to fight 'against untold odds.'⁹⁶ However, getting discouraged at the failure of their attempts to turn the British off the Malakand and Chakdara, the tribesmen 'disappeared as quickly and as strangely as they had come, leaving behind them several hundred of their own and British dead.'⁹⁷ Strangely, Rajmohan Gandhi speaks of the attacks of the Afridis on the forts of Malakand and Chakdara in 1897,⁹⁸ which is erroneous. The Afridis are away in the Khaibar Agency and it were the people of Swat who made the attacks and were later joined by the people of the neighbouring areas.

The Mohmands rising

The dust of the fighting at Malakand and Chakdara was yet not settled down and the colonial authorities were planning of punitive expeditions against the tribes involved, that the series of the risings spread down to the Peshawar border. The news of the preparations of an attack by the Mohmands, under Najmuddin alias Hadda Mulla (above eighty now), on the British controlled territory reached the colonial authorities early in August 1897. The army officials wanted to take precautionary measures but were bared by the civil authorities, as they gave no importance to the news. Materializing their plan, in the afternoon of 7 August 1897 some four to five thousand Mohmands, under the command of Hadda Mulla, entered the British control territory in the Peshawar district some eighteen miles from Peshawar city. H. Woosnam Mills asserts that

⁹⁵ H.C. Nevill, *op.cit.*, p.230.

⁹⁶ H. Woosnam Mills, *op.cit.*, p.35. For detail about the fighting at Malakand and Chakdara see *ibid.*, pp.36-63; H.C. Wylly, *op.cit.*, pp.132-37; Winston S. Churchill, *op.cit.*, pp.33-72; George Macmunn, *op.cit.*, pp.193-203; *The Risings on the North-West Frontier*, pp.29-51; *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India*. Vol.1, pp.366-81; Arthur Swinson, *op.cit.*, pp.234-40.

⁹⁷ James W. Spain, *The Way of the Pathans*, 7th Impression (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1994), p.67.

⁹⁸ See Rajmohan Gandhi, *Ghaffar Khan: Nonviolent Badshah of the Pakhtuns* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India (Pvt.) Ltd., 2004), pp.36, 38.

‘never before in the annals of the British in India has such a daring move been made by the tribesmen. The public mind which had been deeply concerned over the disturbances in the Tochi and Swat Valleys, became distinctly apprehensive when the disorder spread to Peshawar.’⁹⁹

At entering the British controlled territory the tribesmen attacked and destroyed Shankargarh, a village inhabited by Hindus and Sikhs and an old Sikh cantonment bazaar. Having received information of the intending attack and sensing the impending danger, the inhabitants of Shankargarh had already left the village save two or three persons who consequently lost their lives in the attack. After destroying the village and burning its bazaar, the tribesmen attacked Shabqadar and made a determined attempt to capture the fort.¹⁰⁰ But standing on a mound and having 50 feet high walls, the fort was ‘practically impregnable to any force without artillery.’ Therefore, the ‘garrison of forty Border Police,’ who were manning the fort, held it out for twelve hours till next morning when relief forces arrived from Peshawar, which caused the tribesmen to withdraw.¹⁰¹ They, however, sustained a loss of there were some forty to fifty persons in the action. Nevertheless, further fighting and casualties because the British forces pursued the tribesmen.

The Afridis and Orakzais rising

Next came the turn of the Afridis and Orakzais as campaign for similar rising got strength among them as a result of endeavours of Aka Khel Mulla namely Mulla Sayyad Akbar.¹⁰² In the middle of August 1897 the British authorities received reports about negotiation between the Afridis and the Orakzais on the British posts in the Khaibar Pass, Kurram valley and the Samana ridge. The difficulty and delay in arranging the simultaneous rising of the Orakzais and Afridis provided time and opportunity to the colonial authorities to take defensive and precautionary measures. They, therefore, strengthened their garrisons in the forts of Jamrud and Bara, reinforced the troops in Kohat and sent Brigadier-General A.G. Yeatman-Biggs to command the troops in the

⁹⁹ H. Woosnam Mills, *op.cit.*, p.87.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.87-88.

¹⁰¹ H.C. Nevill, *op.cit.*, p.255. For detail about the Mohmand rising see *ibid.*, pp.255-56; H. Woosnam Mills, *op.cit.*, pp.87-103; H.C. Wylly, *op.cit.*, pp.244-47; *The Risings on the North-West Frontier, op.cit.*, pp.65-74; Winston S. Churchill, *op.cit.*, pp.88-91; George Macmunn, *op.cit.*, pp.206-10; *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India. Vol.1*, pp.472-78; J.G. Elliott, *op.cit.*, pp.166-70.

¹⁰² See H. Woosnam Mills, *op.cit.*, pp.106-107, 125; James W. Spain, *op.cit.*, p.178.

Kohat district. The tribesmen, however, at length struck the first blow on 23 August by an overwhelming attack on Ali Masjid and Fort Maude. Ali Masjid was abandoned by the British garrison without struggle but the garrison of some forty men at Fort Maude held out their position 'for a time till they, too, fell back on a force sent out from Jamrud to the mouth of the Khaibar Pass' and both the 'forts were burnt to the ground.'¹⁰³ And thus on 23 August the whole of Khaibar Pass from Ali Masjid to Landi Khana went into 'the possession of the Afridis.'¹⁰⁴

'Flushed with their initial success, the tribesmen then retraced their steps up the [Khaiber] pass and appeared before Landi Kotal at noon the next day.' Despite some defection, the garrison of 370 men of the Khaibar Rifles at Landi Kotal, defended the position till about 10 a.m. on 25 August 'when the gate of the fort was treacherously opened and the assailants rushed in.' At this, some of the garrison deserted and 'some were allowed to escape after giving up their arms, but others succeeded in fighting their way through, and reached Jamrud in safety, bringing their rifles with them.' After looting the fort and setting the quarters of the troops on fire, 'the tribesmen dispersed to their homes.'¹⁰⁵ Though some of the Khaibar militiamen of the garrison at the pass defected, 'others held out until overwhelmed' but ironically the British officers withdrew 'at an early stage,' which 'did little to increase tribal respect for British standards of behavior.'¹⁰⁶ H. Woosnam Mills admit that 'the fall of such impregnable fortresses as Ali Masjid [Masjid] and Landi Kotal, and the securing of the [Khaibar] Pass was universally held to be the worst blow' the British 'prestige could suffer on the north-west frontier.'¹⁰⁷

On 26 August, the day after the dispersal of the Afridis from Landi Kotal, the Orakzais assumed the offensive. They not only 'seized the Ublan Pass, some six miles northwest of Kohat,' but also 'threatened the British post of Muhammadzai, situated near the foot.' At the dawn of 27 August, a force under General Yeatman-Biggs moved out of Kohat and, in spite of heavy firing from the tribesmen, succeeded to gain the summit about 8 a.m. Despite the fleeing down of the majority of the tribesmen to the northern slopes of the pass, their snipers, concealed among the rocks, came out to harass the British forces at their retirement, which caused several casualties. And as the Orakzais hard pressed the

¹⁰³ H.C. Nevill, *Op.cit.*, pp.261-62.

¹⁰⁴ H. Woosnam Mills, *op.cit.*, p.107.

¹⁰⁵ H.C. Nevill, *Op.cit.*, p.262.

¹⁰⁶ James W. Spain, *Op.cit.*, p.178.

¹⁰⁷ H. Woosnam Mills, *op.cit.*, p.108.

police posts at Lakha and Saifaldara, the force at Hangu led an expedition to the Samana ridge to relieve them. The task was accomplished without much fighting but the retirement of the troops was marked by persistent harassment by the tribesmen.¹⁰⁸

On 30 August, a force started for Sadda, under Colonel Richardson, so as to rescue the Kurram valley post, threatened by the tribesmen. The situation, however, became serious—before reaching of the troops on 5 September—as ‘a force of some 3,000 Afridis and Orakzais was in the neighbourhood, more were expected to arrive.’¹⁰⁹ On 1 September 1897, ‘the post of Balish Khel, three miles north-west of Sadda, was attacked as a preliminary to an assault on the latter.’ The Afridis pressed hard their assault and the garrison in the post was in critical situation. The garrison, however, was saved by the arrival of help in the shape of fifty men of Malik Khel of the Turi tribe of the Kurram valley, from Sadda, at whose arrival the Afridis drew off. However, during the night of 16-17 September, the tribesmen made an attack on Sadda, which, though caused some casualties, ultimately failed due to the ‘discipline of the troops, and their allotment to the defensive perimeter.’¹¹⁰

On the Samana range front, news of a large Orakzais force intending attack on the Shenowri border police post, below Fort Gulistan, arrived at Fort Lokhart on 26 August. Despite heavy firing from Gulistan fort all the night at the invading tribesmen, at the dawn of 27 August the big hills above Gulistan were held by the tribesmen. Reinforcement on the British side however arrived from Hangu, which saved the situation. On 29 August the tribesmen raided and burnt the Kahi police post. Since 27 August the tribesmen practically invested Fort Gulistan and on 3 September, at 2 p.m., ‘they made a determined attack on the horn work’ and succeeded in reaching close to the fort. Although ‘the attack continued with slight intermission till noon next day’ the defence was gallant. The colonial authorities issued orders to General Yeatman-Biggs, commander of the troops at Hangu, to send out supplies to Fort Lokhart and clear the Samana range of the tribesmen. The relief force, therefore, left Hangu on 7 September.¹¹¹

However, according to H.L. Nevill it was on 11 September that General Yeatman-Biggs, commander of the troops at Hangu, marched out to intercept the movement of a large force of Afridis and Orakzais

¹⁰⁸ H.C. Nevill, *Op.cit.*, pp.263-64.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p.264.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.264-65.

¹¹¹ H. Woosnam Mills, *op.cit.*, pp.123-24.

‘marching down the Khanki Valley towards the eastern end of the Samana Ridge.’ He, though, ‘succeeded in turning the tribesmen back,’ however, returned ‘to Hangu for want of water.’ Taking advantage of the situation, on 12 September the tribesmen succeeded in capturing the small post of Saragarhi situated on the Samana ridge between Lockhart and Gulistan forts. Although the garrison of twenty-one men held out their position ‘from nine o’clock in the morning till 4.30 in the afternoon against odds which from the first were clearly overwhelming’ the tribesmen at last succeeded in scaling ‘the walls and all was over,’ as eventually the whole of the garrison lost their lives. Twenty of the tribesmen, however, also fell at the hands of one soldier from the guard-room, who himself lost his life when the room was set on fire.¹¹² Interestingly, the whole attack on Saragarhi was visible to the garrisons of Lockhart and Gulistan forts but they did nothing to save the situation on the ground that the tribesmen ‘were in such force that it was quite impossible to do anything to save the situation.’¹¹³

Simultaneously with Saragarhi, the tribesmen had already invested Fort Gulistan. So, at the fall of Saragarhi, they ‘pressed forward with great daring’ to Fort Gulistan. The garrison however again saved the situation by a gallant act of some of its members who came out of the fort and fought the tribesmen, which not only raised the spirit of the garrison but a large number of the tribesmen ‘at once returned to their homes.’ The contest, however, continued. On 13 September, the garrison asked for reinforcement but by evening the tribesmen, surrounded the post, continued firing on the garrison all the night. On 15 September, the besieged garrison heard the welcome sound of the firing of the relief column and the tribesmen ‘then made a supreme bid for victory, but at noon Saragarhi was recaptured by General Yeatman-Biggs, and the tribesmen round Gulistan melted away.’¹¹⁴ After the relief of Fort Gulistan, the tribesmen ‘evacuated the neighbourhood of the Samana Forts’ and the, colonial authorities seized the opportunity to improve ‘the defences and communications.’¹¹⁵

¹¹² H.C. Nevill, *op.cit.*, pp.267-68.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p.269.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.270-71.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.273. For detail about the Afridi and Orakzai rising see *ibid.*, pp.261-73; H. Woosnam Mills, *op.cit.*, pp.103-44; *op.cit.*, *The Borderland: The Country of the Pathans*, pp.313-18, 380-88; *The Risings on the North-West Frontier*, pp.107-142; George Macmunn, *op.cit.*, pp.215-24; T. Hungerford Holdich, *op.cit.*, pp.345-50; Arthur Swinson, *op.cit.*, pp.242-44.

The Mahsuds

James W. Spain states that ‘strangely, the Mahsuds, usually ready to fight at the slightest provocation, played little part in the 1897 rising.’¹¹⁶ Olaf Caroe, however, explains this point by stating that ‘the southward spread of the conflagration was checked by the fact that the first outbreak had occurred — prematurely from the point of view of the tribes — in the Tochi.’ Because of this, ‘controlling operations were well under way there before Tirah rose,’ due to which ‘the troops in Tochi were able to interpose a screen between Tirah and the Mahsuds, who indeed were in chastened mood after an expedition in 1894, three years before.’¹¹⁷ They, however, rose next year in 1898, in the leadership of Mulla Powindah, and remained active against the British for three years.

Causes of failure

As is evident from the above mentioned events, in the summer of 1897 most of the tribesmen on the North-West Frontier of India took arms against and made attacks on the British forces, posts and positions. Nevertheless, they did not succeed in ousting the British from the tribal area and their attempt failed, at least to that effect, with their withdrawing. While dealing with and describing the events and fighting, the English writers, e.g. H. Woosnam Mills and Winston S. Churchill,¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ James W. Spain, *op.cit.*, p.178.

¹¹⁷ Olaf Caroe, *op.cit.*, pp.387-88.

¹¹⁸ Interestingly, it is stated and believed that Winston Winston S. Churchill, later the renowned prime minister of England, was present in the Malakand war. At the time of the Malakand war, Mr. Churchill was not in India. He came later to India to join the Malakand Field Force but not as a member of the force because there was no vacancy on the staff of Sir Bindon Blood, commander of the Malakand Field Force, he, therefore, was advised by Bindon to come to the Frontier as a correspondent. Consequently Winston S. Churchill approached editor of the *Allahabad Pioneer*, who showed his willingness to use his articles about the Malakand Field Force and ‘would pay for them, too, though not a princely sum.’ He also asked his mother, Lady Randolph, for making such arrangement with a London newspaper, upon which she ‘arranged with the editor of the *Daily Telegraph* to use his work and to pay for it at the rate of L 5 a column’ (John Marsh, *The Young Winston S. Churchill* (London: World Distributors, 1962), pp.47-48. For details see *ibid.*, pp.44-50. Also see J.G. Elliott, *op.cit.*, p.159; Charles Miller, *op.cit.*, p.268). He, thus, came to India and accompanied the Malakand Field Force later as war correspondent. He was not with the Malakand Field Force at the time of the punitive expedition in Swat even as a correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Pioneer* and accompanied it in its operation in Bajawar and against the Utman Khels. His account of the

repeatedly speak of the gallantry, courage and bravery of the colonial forces. They are justified for such expression as, Zia Gokalp points out, 'to be biased in favour of our own community or the communities which are of the same religion or race, or which are allied with us against our enemies, is not something that is within our own will. It is especially difficult to rid ourselves of all bias in our feelings for our own people.'¹¹⁹ And as Ghani Khan states, the stone 'is the only thing that may be described truthfully as unbiased.'¹²⁰

However, the tribesmen—each one of whom, in Ghani Khan words, 'will wash his face and oil his beard and perfume his locks and put on his best pair of clothes when he goes out to fight and die'¹²¹—too possessed and showed the same rather more gallantry, courage and bravery which is not only evident even from Mills, and Churchill's own writings at occasions but from other English writers' writings as well. H.L. Nevill's comments seems to be more relevant to the situation when he says:

At Malakand and Chakdara, and in a minor degree at Nawagai, the same reckless impulse is to be seen which hurled the Mahdists against the British squares at Abu Klea, El Teb, and Omdurman, for the sake of a martyr's crown. To some extent the North-West Frontier tribes of India present an anomaly to the world in their methods of warfare. At times they show all the characteristics of well-armed but unorganized adversaries, at others the latent fire of the untamed barbarian blazes forth, and no epithet but savage can be applied to the class of warfare which is the result. The desperate and repeated attacks on the garrisons of Malakand and Chakdara are conspicuous examples

Malakand war and the punitive expedition in Swat is not an eye witness account but one written on the basis of what he heard later from others. His account and narration, moreover, possesses fancies and fantasies and suffers from factual errors and absurdities. For example he states about the Pukhtuns that 'their wives and their womankind generally have no position but that of animals. They are freely bought and sold and are not infrequently bartered for rifles' (Winston S. Churchill, *op.cit.*, p.6). And about the men hailing from the religious class or group, besides other things, he state that 'no man's wife or daughter is safe from them' (*Ibid.*, p.7).

¹¹⁹ Zia Gokalp, *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization: Selected Essays of Zia Gokalp*, translated and edited with an Introduction by Niyazi Berkes (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1959), pp.113-14.

¹²⁰ Ghani Khan, *The Pathans: A Sketch*, reprint (Islamabad: Pushto Adabi Society (Rgd.), 1990), p.50.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p.51.

of the savage side of the methods of war practised by the Muhammadan tribes inhabiting the north-western borderland of India.... Before Malakand and Chakdara the tribesmen were religious maniacs for eight days, and advanced to the attack with a bravery which fully entitled those that fell to any reward that such a death may bring.¹²²

Similarly, T.H. Holdich states that ‘so fierce was the fanatical fervour of that half-armed mob that General Meiklejohn has told me that he saw unarmed boys and men actually turning on the cavalry and attacking them with sticks and stones.’¹²³ He, moreover, observe that ‘it would not be difficult to quote writers who brand our transfrontier neighbours—Swatis, Mohmands, Afridis, and Wazirs alike—as cowards. They must know now that in calling them cowards they erred. It is perhaps one of the most useful lessons that we learnt from this boundary war—the lesson of respect for the people who fought well for their independence.’¹²⁴

Keeping these facts and observations in view, the tribesmen failed in achieving their cherished desire and goal not because of lack of courage, bravery and manliness on their part but due to a combination of other factors which are as under.

Lack of planning for and non-acquaintance with long-drawn war

The tribesmen took arms, on the whole, at the instigation of their religious leaders and attacked the British positions. But contrary to their expectations they failed in achieving their goal and objective in the first assaults or within a few days. They, moreover, were neither acquainted with nor trained for and accustomed to long drawn wars. As all of them took the field without planing for a long drawn war and on the other side either resistance of the colonial forces proved stubborn or reinforcements reached to their rescue, they were destined to fail in such a scenario.

No discipline and organization

There was no proper discipline and organization in the rank and file of the tribesmen. They took the field as a tribal *lashkars*. Although ‘lake of organization has always been the keynote of those guerilla tactics which have baffled again and again the armies of civilized nations,’¹²⁵ the tribesmen, though knew the tactics, however, lacked ‘the higher branches

¹²² H.C. Nevill, *op.cit.*, pp.249-50.

¹²³ T. Hungerford Holdich, *op.cit.*, 344.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.350.

¹²⁵ H.C. Nevill, *op.cit.*, p.276.

of the art of war—the domain of strategy.’¹²⁶ Napoleon said that ‘in war men are nothing—the man is everything.’ Hence, ‘discipline and combination have always been the foundation of the success of civilized armies against irregular foes, and both require the presence of a master-hand.’¹²⁷ J.G. Elliott asserts that ‘the tribesman was by civilized standards reckless of human life,’ and points out ‘but he lacked collective discipline and would not stand against a determined charge, particularly if made by cavalry.’¹²⁸ As the tribesmen lacked both discipline and combination and the presence of a master-hand their zeal, courage and bravery proved of no avail.

The Faqir’s false claims

When the Sartor Faqir appeared in Landakay in July 1897, so as to rise the people against the British, he made strange claims such as having ‘an invisible army from heaven at his side’ for his assistance, ‘the power of making himself invisible and feeding multitudes with a few grains of rice.’¹²⁹ Besides supernatural and unseen support, he claimed to have been visited by all deceased Faqirs who told him that the mouths of the British guns and rifles would be closed and that their bullets would be turned to water; and that he had only to throw stones into Swat river each one of which would have effect of a gun on the British forces.¹³⁰ The Sartor Faqir’s these and such like other claims and exhortations impressed upon the tribesmen minds to a greater extent. They, therefore, talked of even magnificent cavalry, artillery and infantry, concealed in the hills, and of sweeping away the English by the time of the sight of the new moon.¹³¹ Nothing of the sort, however, was witnessed in the course of the fighting which made the tribesmen apprehensive and desperate and played its role in their dispersal and going back from the war front.

False promises of Afghan amir and sipah salar

Despite his denial of any role in the affair, the Afghan Amir, Abdur Rahman, has a role in causing the uprising one way or the other. Besides,

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ J.G. Elliott, *op.cit.*, p.110.

¹²⁹ A.H. McMahon and Ramsay, *op.cit.*, p.49; *op.cit.*, p.109. Also see Arthur Swinson, *op.cit.*, p.232.

¹³⁰ PP Encl. 28, 8 August 1897, quoted in Akbar S. Ahmed, *op.cit.*, p.108. Also see H. Woosnam Mills, *op.cit.*, p.36; A.H. McMahon and Ramsay, *op.cit.*, p.49 *op.cit.*, p.109; Charles Miller, *op.cit.*, p.266.

¹³¹ Winston S. Churchill, *op.cit.*, p.29; H. Woosnam Mills, *op.cit.*, p.36.

his *sipah salar* at Asmar, Ghulam Haidar Khan, played an important role in causing the uprising at least by instigating the tribesmen, especially the religious leaders who lead the rising. He wrote to the Sartor Faqir on 20 July 1897 to commence a *jihad* and ‘promised to afford him help.’¹³² The tribesmen, therefore, expected the Afghan Amir’s and his *sipah salar*’s, Ghulam Haidar Khan, moral and material support. But the Amir showed a *volte-face* at the critical juncture and denounced and disavowed the tribesmen and their action and asked his subjects neither to assist nor give a refuge to the tribesmen involved in the rising.¹³³ He, moreover, abhorred the role of the *sipah salar* and asked him not to give the promised help to the tribesmen. This state of affairs not only put the tribesmen in awkward position for want of arms and ammunition and moral support but also affected them psychologically.

No arrangements for provision and supply of food and ammunition

The tribesmen took the field everywhere without making arrangements for the supply of food and ammunition in case the fighting takes the shape of war instead of battle. Contrary to their expectations, the British forces resistance was tough and the colonial government arranged for reinforcements without wasting time. On the other side fresh contingents from both the neighbouring and remote areas joined the tribesmen, especially at Malakand and Chakdara, but most of them were unarmed and those who possessed arms shortly exhausted ammunition. In such a situation, viz. lack of rather no arrangement for the provision and supply of ammunition and food for those fighting, they could not continue fighting the mighty British arms for long.

The Faqir’s precipitation of matters and non-simultaneous rising

While dealing with the point whether the uprising of 1897 was a coordinated effort and planned to be simultaneous all-along the Frontier, Robert Warburton states:

It was not difficult or impossible from Jellalabad and Asmar to be in touch with Sayad Akbar in Tirah, the ‘Hadda Mullah’ at Jarobi, and the ‘Mad Fakir’ in Swat; so that if a combined move in all three quarters was required, it might, under favourable

¹³² A.H. McMahon and Ramsay, *op.cit.*, p.50: *op.cit.*, p.112.

¹³³ Also see *op.cit.*, *The Pathan Revolt in North West India*, p.3; *The Risings on the North-West Frontier*, pp.150-57.

circumstances, have been executed nearly simultaneously within a period of seven days.¹³⁴

And referring to the non-simultaneous uprising he asserts:

It may be accepted, therefore, that there is no proof of any attempt having been made to raise the border from Maizar round northwards to the Swat Valley in one combined movement against us. The 'Mad Mullah' made his attack, and when he found that he could not succeed he applied to the priest of Hadda for help, and that gentleman in his turn sent messengers to Sayad Akbar, asking him to co-operate and make a diversion with a joint lashkar of Afridis and Orakzais.¹³⁵

Nevertheless, A.H. McMahon and A.D.G. Ramsay assert:

The information gleaned slowly, but surely placed it beyond doubt that the rising was a purely religious affair, and that it was a scheme preconcerted from both Kabul and India to raise the Muhammadan tribes on our border; that agitators had been sedulously working on the feelings of the tribesmen on the Peshawar border, in Buner, Bajaur [Bajawar], Swat and the Afridi and Mohmand country; that the *fakir* [Sartor Faqir] so far from being mad was a man of some acuteness, and on first starting was well supplied with funds. It further came to light that the rising...was intended to be a simultaneous one along the border, but that the *fakir* precipitated matters.¹³⁶

McMahon and Ramsay's assertion not only negate Warburton's one but also hints to another dimension. Hence, had the uprising been simultaneous throughout the tribal area, the situation would have been more critical for the British government for they were then to arrange for reinforcements on all the fronts at a time. This would have been divided their forces on and attention-to different fronts and not only facilitated the tribesmen but made their task easy to greater extent. But the Sartor Faqir's haste and precipitation of matters foiled the plan of a simultaneous uprising all along the tribal area and indirectly contributed to failure of the tribesmen cherished goal.

Besides, as all the attempts—from the Wazirs at Maizar to Swat and from Swat down to Mohmands, Afridis and Orakzais—were made not simultaneously but turn by turn, it made the task of the British easy. This has also been pointed out in a report of the *Pioneer*—while writing

¹³⁴ Robert Warburton, *op.cit.*, p.295.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.296.

¹³⁶ A.H. McMahon and Ramsay, *op.cit.*, p.50: *op.cit.*, p.112.

about the attempt of the Mohmand headed by Hadda Mulla—by stating that:

The raid was doubtless designed to effect a diversion in favour of the Swatis, still suffering from their failure to capture the Malakand and Chakdara. If the Hadda Mullah had timed his effort so that Shabkadr [Shabqadar] should be attacked on the same day as the Malakand, he would have done a clever stroke of business, and widespread uneasiness would have been caused all along our Peshawar frontier. As it was, our troops (as already shown) had swept the Lower Swat clear of tribesmen, and two full brigades in the Malakand were now ready to operate in any direction, while a reserve brigade had been formed at Mardan which could move at a few hours' notice into the Peshawar Valley.¹³⁷

Similar situation also has been explained above in dealing with the case that why the Mahsuds, always ready for fighting against the British, did not rise at the time and is reproduced here as well. James W. Spain states that 'strangely, the Mahsuds, usually ready to fight at the slightest provocation, played little part in the 1897 rising.'¹³⁸ Olaf Caroe, however, explain this point by stating that 'the southward spread of the conflagration was checked by the fact that the first outbreak had occurred — prematurely from the point of view of the tribes — in the Tochi.' Because of this 'controlling operations were well under way there before Tirah rose,' due to which 'the troops in Tochi were able to interpose a screen between Tirah and the Mahsuds, who indeed were in chastened mood after an expedition in 1894, three years before.'¹³⁹ The non-simultaneousness, thus, proved a significant factor in the failure.

Lack of proper coordination among the tribesmen and the leaders

There was some sort of coordination, communication and link among the leaders of the uprising and their supporters from abroad. Therefore, simultaneous uprising all along the Indian border was planned but the uprising, however, was yet not started per plan that the Maizar attack and fighting happened and then the Sartor Faqir precipitated the matters. It, therefore, slackened the coordination and communication among the tribesmen as well as the leaders of the uprising. There, moreover, were no arrangements for communication and links between them in the course of the uprising and fighting unlike the British side. The lack of

¹³⁷ *The Risings on the North-West Frontier, op.cit.*, pp.66-7.

¹³⁸ James W. Spain, *op.cit.*, p.178.

¹³⁹ Olaf Caroe, *op.cit.*, pp.387-88.

proper coordination, communication and links between them thus resulted at the eleventh hour unplanned, uncoordinated and non-simultaneous uprising, divided their force and made faulty their war and fighting strategy.

British supremacy in arms, ammunitions and communication system

British was continental and global power having mighty armed forces. Despite having been brave, courageous and warriors and possessed valour and zeal, the tribesmen have no match for the British in arms, ammunitions and communication system, which were, in fact, required of them for fighting such a formidable enemy. The British supremacy in arms, ammunitions and communication system thus became a vital factor in the failure of the tribesmen in their attempt against such a strong power.

Regular, trained, and disciplined forces on the British part

Despite having plus points as warriors—pointed-to earlier—and fighting on their home-ground and in large number, the tribesmen neither possessed regular armed forces trained on modern lines nor artillery required at least for assaults on the British garrisons stationed and posted in forts and piquets, mostly on hills and hills tops. They were full of fervour, zeal and determination and were large in number but a divided and unorganized huge mob. H.L. Nevill admits the skills they displayed in making night operations by stating:

It is a well-known fact that night operations are not generally popular among irregular warriors, probably because this class of warfare requires a high standard of discipline and combination, which is the prerogative of well-trained troops. Nevertheless, the record of events in 1897, in or near the Swat Valley, affords numerous instances in which night attacks on a considerable scale were planned and carried out by men possessing neither organization nor recognized leader.¹⁴⁰

He, however, subsequently points out that ‘at the same time the results of these same night attacks are instructive, for without exception they are all examples of the reward for vigilance and discipline on the part of regular troops in face of superior numbers.’¹⁴¹ It, therefore, was the advantage of having regular, trained and disciplined forces on the British part that countered the tribesmen’s superiority in number and caused their failure despite their fighting, to a greater extent, in such a

¹⁴⁰ H.C. Nevill, *op.cit.*, p.250.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

manner which could not be expected of irregular forces and tribesmen. On the British side, it, thus, ‘was a fresh victory of organization over sheer mass power.’¹⁴²

The consequences, results and effects

The tribesmen though failed in achieving their goal, the consequences, results and effects of the uprising were of no less significance and could not be underestimated.

Year of diamond jubilee turned into troublous one

The year 1897 was the year of the Diamond Jubilee of the then British Queen, Queen Victoria, coming into power and hence its celebration in royal manner was arranged for. On 22 June 1897, the Queen, therefore, ‘touched her fingers to the brass transmitting key in the telegraph room at Buckingham Palace and started to click out a message to the 372 million subjects of the British Empire. It was the morning of her Diamond Jubilee—sixty years on the British throne.’¹⁴³ It, moreover, was the year of the Silver Jubilee of the English success against the Indians—in the Indian War of Independence 1857—and also the 49th year of the English direct occupation of the Frontier settled areas. However, the Frontier tribesmen, by their uprising in the summer of the same year, not only turned the year of the Diamond Jubilee, and also the Silver Jubilee, into ‘surely one of the most troublous years in all Indian history’¹⁴⁴ but also shocked the fabrics of the mighty British Empire.

Punitive expeditions

The wave of the uprising came to end in September 1897, but it was not an end of the fighting and troubles between the colonial authorities and the tribesmen. Because as a result, the colonial authorities deemed it necessary to send punitive expeditions—despite the punitive expeditions being condemned by ‘Lord Lytton in his memorable minute of 22 April, 1877,...as ‘a system of semi-barbarous reprisals’, which had not always

¹⁴² Joseph Hell has used the quoted words for the victory of the Muslims over the non-Muslim confederates in the battle of Ditch or *Ahzab*: fought in 5A.H./627C.E., which also is true about the success of the British against the Frontier tribesmen in the uprising of 1897. See Joseph Hell, *The Arab Civilization*, trans. by S. Khuda Bakhsh, reprint (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1969), p.29.

¹⁴³ Easwaran, *A Man to Match his Mountains*, p.25. For some detail about the Jubilee and its importance, and the prowess and strength of the British Empire see *ibid.*, pp.25-27.

¹⁴⁴ T. Hungerford Holdich, *op.cit.*, p.338.

proved successful, even in the most limited sense¹⁴⁵—against the tribes who took part and remained involved in the affair so as to pacify and take them to task.

At receiving the news of the Maizar outrage, the Government of India decided to dispatch a force of two brigades—as the Tochi Field Force—under the command of Major-General G. Corrie Bird, ‘with as little delay as possible into the Tochi Valley, to exact punishment from the treacherous tribesmen.’¹⁴⁶ Despite some difficulties, involved in sending the punitive expedition, ‘at length all preparations were made, and the concentration of the force at Datta Khel was completed by July 19.’ The next day, the brigade occupied Sheranni and the attached cavalry proceeded to Maizar. The tribesmen, nevertheless, had already deserted both the places. The forces spent the next sixteen days in ‘destroying the towers and hamlets in the neighbour-hood.’ The tribesmen, nevertheless, made sniping at night and some attacked the convoys. The news of the rising in Swat made the tribesmen aggressive afresh, but the forces accomplished the task, despite the difficulties, as the Madda Khel came to terms on 15 November 1897. And in January 1898 the Tochi Field Force was broken.¹⁴⁷

Realizing the serious nature of the outbreak in Swat, the Government of India lost no time and, on 30 July 1897, the governor-general in council sanctioned the formation of the Malakand Field Force, under the command of Sir Bindon Blood, for holding Malakand and the adjacent posts and for punishing the tribes involved.¹⁴⁸ Early in August immediate formation of a reserve brigade was also decided upon to support the field force. Though both Malakand and Chakdara were relieved and saved by 2 August, ‘the task of punishment and prevention of further combination [of the tribes] was taken in hand at once.’¹⁴⁹ The field force under Major-General Sir Bindon Blood led the first punitive expedition in the Swat valley. In spite of facing stiff resistance at various places, up the valley, and of the Malakand Field Force heavy losses—especially the death of H.L. MacLean and Lieutenant R.T. Greaves near Kotah and Naway Kalay above Landakay¹⁵⁰—the forces reached

¹⁴⁵ *The Cambridge History of India*, Vol.6, *op.cit.*, p.452.

¹⁴⁶ H.C. Nevill, *op.cit.*, p.218.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.219. For detail about the punitive measures in the Tochi valley see *ibid.*, pp.218-19; H. Woosnam Mills, *op.cit.*, pp.23-32; *The Risings on the North-West Frontier*, *op.cit.*, pp.18-27, iii-vii.

¹⁴⁸ See H.C. Nevill, *op.cit.*, p.231; H. Woosnam Mills, *op.cit.*, pp.64-65.

¹⁴⁹ *Imperial Gazetteer of India, NWFP*, p.23.

¹⁵⁰ For the gallantry displayed in the course of an encounter with the tribesmen near Kotah and Naway Kalay, above Landakay, Lieutenant-Colonel Adams

Mingawara on 19 August. From here reconnaissance were made up the valley to Manglawar, Charbagh and Gulibagh. After a stay of four days at Mingawara and accomplishing the task the force returned to Malakand.¹⁵¹ Similar punitive expeditions were sent against all those tribes who took part in the fighting at Malakand and Chakdara.

After the punitive expedition into Swat, Sir Bindon Blood wanted to advance into Buner so as to deal with the Buner people 'before turning his attention to the north and west.' However, in view of the situation in Peshawar neighbourhood, the Government of India preferred forward move 'in a westerly rather than an easterly direction.' He, therefore, was ordered to proceed to Bajawar to assist the Mohmand Field Force under General Elles against those followed the Hadda Mulla, in the attack on Shankargarh and Shabqadar.¹⁵²

The task of a punitive expedition into Bajawar was assigned to Sir Bindon Blood and Mohmand Field Force, under General Elles, was also formed for the purpose. Proceeding from Swat, the forces under Bindon Blood made the first move into that direction. On 8 September 1897 the vanguard arrived at Panjkora river and on 13 September Bindon Blood at Khar. The tribesmen did their best, at occasions and different places, to obstruct the advance and operations of the British forces. The British forces, therefore, faced resistance and difficulties and not only their progress was very slow but they sustained considerable casualties as well. Interestingly, the Mohmands submitted peacefully but the Mamunds gallantly opposed and fought the British forces. The forces under Sir Bindon Blood and General Elles continued their operations and

and Viscount Fincastle were awarded Victoria Cross but Lieutenant Maclean remained deprived due to his death in the course of fighting (*Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India*, Vol.1, p.386; Winston S. Churchill, *op.cit.*, p.81; George Macmunn, *op.cit.*, p.205). A later 'announcement (1907) in the *London Gazette*' however stated 'that Lieutenant Maclean would also have received the Victoria Cross had he survived, and the decoration' was 'handed to his relatives' (*Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India*, Vol.1, p.386 n.1].

¹⁵¹ For detail about the punitive expedition in Swat see *op.cit.*, *The Pathan Revolt in North West India*, pp.64-86; *The Risings on the North-West Frontier*, pp.45-47, 52-63, viii-xvi; Winston S. Churchill, *op.cit.*, pp.73-86; *op.cit.*, *The Borderland: The Country of the Pathans*, pp.137-42; *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India*, Vol.1, pp.381-88.

¹⁵² H.C. Nevill, *op.cit.*, p.233.

the tribesmen their resistance till at last a settlement was made on 18 October 1897 and the troops were withdrawn.¹⁵³

When the punitive measures in Bajawar ended, an expedition was made against the Utman Khel for their taking part in attack and fighting at Malakand. The expedition continued between 23 November and 6 December 1897 and the Utman Khel submitted peacefully. The colonial authorities now took the task of taking to book the tribes inhabiting Buner and those between Buner and the Indus for which Buner Field Force was organized. Before the punitive expedition, the tribesmen concerned were asked to comply with the terms of the colonial authorities and surrender peacefully. Although the tribes inhabiting the tract between Buner and the Indus submitted forthwith, the Bunerwals refused to comply with the terms of the British. The British, therefore, concentrated her forces at Kunda, on 1 January 1898, and the eastward march begun the next day. The Bunerwals held all the passes leading to their country and did their best to hold the field against the British forces but by 17 January 1898 both theirs and the Chamlawals submission was complete and on 19 January the British forces returned to British territory.¹⁵⁴

After relieving Gulistan, preparation for the despatch of the Tirah Field Force against the Orakzais and Afridis was begun. Though the punitive operation delayed due to waiting for the arrival of troops from the Malakand and Mohmand field forces and the difficulty in arranging for the provision of transport and supplies, the march into Shinawari was started on 11 October 1897. On 18 October the British forces, making their first success, took Dargai but did not occupy and moved forward to Khanki valley. The need to possess Dargai for securing the road to the Khanki valley, however, was felt and after a

¹⁵³ For detail see *ibid.*, pp.233-43; 256-61; H. Woosnam Mills, *op.cit.*, pp.144-85; Winston S. Churchill, *op.cit.*, pp.91-195; *op.cit.*, *The Borderland: The Country of the Pathans*, pp.175-82, 247-54; *The Risings on the North-West Frontier*, pp.75-106, xvii-xxvi; George Macmunn, *op.cit.*, pp.210-14; *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India*, Vol.1, pp.478-91, 567-87; J.G. Elliott, *op.cit.*, pp.170-74. It was for their fighting against the Mamunds at Shah Tangi, in one of the battles, that Lieutenants T.C. Watson and J.M.C. Colvin and Corporal Smith were awarded Victoria Cross (H.C. Nevill, *op.cit.*, p.236 n.*; George Macmunn, *op.cit.*, p.214).

¹⁵⁴ For detail about the punitive measures against the Utman Khels, Bunerwals and Chamlawals see H.C. Nevill, *op.cit.*, pp.243-47; *The Risings on the North-West Frontier*, *op.cit.*, pp.239-50; H.C. Wylly, *op.cit.*, pp.102-105, 152-54; *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India*, Vol.1, pp.311-19, 413-16.

fierce fighting it was again captured on 20 October. To avert the night sniping on the camps, the technique of establishing strong piquets at the nearby peaks, within range of the camps, was adopted which proved to be a great success. On 28 October the advance towards Sampagha Pass was begun. Though resisted by the tribes, the British troops made their advance. After taking the Sampagha Pass on 29 October, and leaving the 1st Brigade in the camp at Mastura, the forces resumed their advance on 31 October from the Orakzai country into Tirah Maidan over the Arhanga Pass.¹⁵⁵

At occupying the deserted Tirah Maidan, reconnaissance was made to Bagh, up the valley, and, the next eight days survey operations were made. However, the Zakha Khels made frequent attacks and intermittent firing into the camp. On 9 November reconnaissance was made to Saran Sar, commanding the eastern end of the Tirah Maidan, which caused fighting and heavy casualties on the British side—while on their way back to the camp. Nevertheless, on 11 November another reconnaissance was made to the Saran Sar. On 13 November a reconnaissance to the Tseri Pass, in the Waran valley, was undertaken, which was greatly harassed by the tribesmen. On 16 November the return to the camp was made and on the 18th the camp was moved to Bagh. On 22 November the next important series of the operations was begun and reconnaissance was made to Dwatoi in the Bara valley, which too was fired up on by the tribesmen, time and again, and on the 24th the forces returned to Bagh. On 26 November, a combined move with the Kurram Column was made against the tribes on the extreme west of the Afridi country, in the course of which fighting took place, at occasions, with the tribesmen. This operation came to end on 6 December, with the British troops' return to Bagh. At accomplishing the task and coming of the winter, the British forces evacuated Tirah, starting their withdrawal on 7 December, and completing it on 14 December 1897. The retreat, however, was not unmolested as the Afridis made frequent attacks and sniping and the British forces sustained heavy losses; 164 persons were and wounded in the course of the retreat only.¹⁵⁶

After the return from the Orakzai area and Afridi valleys, preparation for sending punitive expedition into the Zakha Khel valley of Bazar and up the Khybar Pass were made. All was ready on 22 December 1897 and the British forces advanced in both the directions per plan. The British forces marched unopposed and unmolested but troubles overtook them later on as fierce attacks and sharp fighting, even

¹⁵⁵ H.C. Nevill, *op.cit.*, pp.276-87.

¹⁵⁶ H.C. Nevill, *op.cit.*, pp.287-301.

hand to hand fighting, took place, resulting in heavy casualties—four officers were killed, among whom Colonel Haughton was eminent in stature—on the British side. The Zakha Khels, however, too, at last came to terms with the British.¹⁵⁷ With this the punitive measures—resulted by the 1897 uprising—came to end. H. Woosnam Mills opines, about these punitive expeditions:

With the successful pacification of the Swat Valley, the peaceful submission of the Mohmands and the final success of Sir Bindon Blood among the stubborn Mamunds the first act in the frontier war drama of 1897 ended, and the curtain was rung down preparatory to the second act, when Sir William Lockhart with the flower of the British and Indian army marches on the plateau of Tirah, and in their own fastnesses proves to the truculent Afridis and Orakzais that though the patience of the *Sirkar* is as enduring as a summer's day yet his arm when put forth against his foes is long as a winter's night.¹⁵⁸

Notwithstanding the colonial authorities took the task of punitive expeditions at hand for punishing and pacifying the tribes involved, the mighty British arms 'took more than three years'—which include pacification of the Mahsuds, who rose in 1898—in accomplishing the task in the process of which 'a total of more than 75,000 troops' were employed.¹⁵⁹

Fines levied, properties destroyed and agreements extracted

H.L. Nevill states that 'to compel the surrender of guerillas, such as the frontier tribes of India, by the usual process of breaking down the means of defence would entail operations so prolonged and costly as to be out of all proportion to the interests at stake.' And hence contends that 'other means, therefore, must be found to achieve the same result, such as the destruction of villages and personal property, which has always been the only effective way of dealing with the elusive tribesmen beyond the North-West Frontier of India.' He, however, asserts that 'at the same time this is only the last resource when other means fail, and even then must be resorted to with caution, or exasperation rather than submission

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.301-05. For detail about the work of the punitive expedition against the Afridis and Orakzais see *ibid.*, pp.276-306; H.C. Wylly, *op.cit.*, pp.318-37, 407-10; *The Risings on the North-West Frontier, op.cit.*, pp.143-49, 158-238, xxvii-lxiii; George Macmunn, *op.cit.*, pp.224-40; T. Hungerford Holdich, *op.cit.*, pp.351-64; Arthur Swinson, *op.cit.*, pp.244, 246-51.

¹⁵⁸ H. Woosnam Mills, *op.cit.*, p.10.

¹⁵⁹ James W. Spain, *op.cit.*, p.178.

may be the result.¹⁶⁰ That was why, besides other means and tactics, the colonial authorities resorted to destroy properties of the tribes involved¹⁶¹ so that to punish and compel them to come to terms. In this way, ‘to keep the peace,’ they extracted agreements ‘from such *jirgas* as could be coerced into assembling.’ They moreover levied huge fines on the tribes involved and, where they can do, confiscated ‘large number of rifles.’¹⁶²

Piquets built

To protect their garrisons and strategic positions in future, the colonial government built piquets around the garrisons and ‘along the lines of march.’¹⁶³ Because, as H.L. Nevill has pointed out, ‘the Pathan has a strong dislike to having an enemy above him, so, by holding the commanding points in the vicinity of a camp, he is not only prevented from using them as positions for his sharpshooters, but the best posts of observation—the necessary preliminary to accurate sniping—are denied to him.’¹⁶⁴ And as J.G. Elliott points out, the three things the tribesmen disliked are ‘an enemy on high ground above him, having his line of retreat threatened, and artillery fire which, as he had no guns of his own, he always thought to be slightly unfair.’¹⁶⁵

Recalling of British forces to settled areas

To pacify the tribesmen, remove their fear of further British expansion into the tribal area and their resentment against the forward policy and move, Lord Curzon, the new viceroy, withdraw the ‘forces behind the administrative border, which was completed by 1902.’ This ‘reduced tension considerably, and an unusually long period of relative quiet followed.’¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁰ H.C. Nevill, *op.cit.*, p.322.

¹⁶¹ For example see H.C. Nevill, *op.cit.*, pp.297, 299-300, 303; *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India*, Vol.1, p.581; A.H. McMahon and Ramsay, *op.cit.*, p.52; *op.cit.*, pp.115-16; *The Risings on the North-West Frontier*, *op.cit.*, p.24.

¹⁶² James W. Spain, *op.cit.*, p.178. For example also see A.H. McMahon and Ramsay, *op.cit.*, pp.51-52; *op.cit.*, pp.113-17; *The Risings on the North-West Frontier*, *op.cit.*, pp.23-26; *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India*, Vol.1, p.587; J.G. Elliott, *op.cit.*, p.207.

¹⁶³ James W. Spain, *op.cit.*, p.178.

¹⁶⁴ H.C. Nevill, *op.cit.*, p.317.

¹⁶⁵ J.G. Elliott, *op.cit.*, pp.110-11.

¹⁶⁶ James W. Spain, *op.cit.*, p.179. For some detail about the withdrawal of the regular British forces from the advanced positions in the tribal areas see

Death of forward policy

As the forward policy and move was a major cause of the uprising, a hue and cry was made against it in the British circles, which compelled the policy makers to rethink over this policy. Consequently, 'wiser counsels prevailed under Lord Curzon, whose policy can be described as one of withdrawal and concentration. In other words, the policy pursued in the nineties was to be replaced by one of non-interference resembling in many respects the old 'close border' system.'¹⁶⁷

Therefore, although the uprising seemingly failed, it ultimately proved 'the quiet death of the 'Forward Policy' on the north-western marches of the British Indian Empire.'¹⁶⁸ Besides, the uprising, in Arthur Swinson words, 'triggered off another round in the political controversy over the 'Forward Policy', and perhaps the most ferocious of all. This time not only the strategic and military problems of the Frontier were examined but the basic structure of the administrative system.'¹⁶⁹

James W. Spain rightly observes that 'the result of it all,' viz. the punitive expeditions, fines levied, properties destroyed, agreements extracted, piquets built, withdrawal of armed forces to the settled areas and death of the forward policy, however, 'was a return to the *status quo*.'¹⁷⁰

Extension of railway lines and roads

In the course of the uprising, the colonial authorities felt the need of the extension of the railway lines and roads to different parts of the Frontier tribal area and also to improve the communication system for strategic reasons: to enable the forces to reach the war front in a short span of time, in such a critical situation, and also to send the arms and ammunition and bag and baggage easily. Therefore, railway lines and roads were stretched and extended either to the borders of the tribal area or inside the tribal area as well, where it was feasible and can be managed.¹⁷¹ This facilitated the colonial government in achieving the mentioned objectives, but at the same time provided the tribesmen an easy mean of transport and communication—at their doorstep or the

Baha, *NWFP Administration under British Rule*, pp.12-14; *The Cambridge History of India*, Vol.6, *op.cit.*, pp.466-67.

¹⁶⁷ *The Cambridge History of India*, Vol. 6, *op.cit.*, p.466.

¹⁶⁸ Akbar S. Ahmed, *op.cit.*, p.111.

¹⁶⁹ Arthur Swinson, *op.cit.*, p.251.

¹⁷⁰ James W. Spain, *op.cit.*, p.178.

¹⁷¹ For detail see Baha, *NWFP Administration under British Rule*, chap.4: titled 'strategic railways and roads,' pp.107-31; *The Cambridge History of India*, Vol.6, *op.cit.*, p.467.

nearest possible place—and also boosted the trade by facilitating export from and import to the tribal area.

Formation of NWFP

The separation of the trans-Indus areas from Punjab and forming it as separate province, though, was not a new phenomena as ‘for at least a quarter of a century, viceroys, administrators and generals had, tentatively or otherwise, put forward proposals for the creation of a new administrative unit, which,’ according to Collin Davies, ‘they hoped would usher in an era of peace on the blood-stained border and prove a panacea for most of the evils to which it was subject.’¹⁷² The idea, however, was so far not consummated due to one reason or the other. The uprising of 1897 give a fresh thought to the Frontier problem and stimulus to the issue of the creation of a separate Frontier administrative unit. Resultantly, one of the direct and far-reaching consequences of the uprising proved to be ‘the creation of a separate North-West Frontier Province, under the viceroyalty of Lord Curzin, in 1901.’¹⁷³

Conclusion

The North-West Frontier remained a constant source of troubles for the Britons since their occupation of Punjab and the trans-Indus Frontier plains. Lord Curzon once remarked that ‘no man who has read a page of Indian history will ever prophesy about the Frontier.’¹⁷⁴ Frequent attacks and inroads were made from the tribal area into the areas under the colonial control and the colonial authorities faced constant troubles and fighting at the hands of the tribesmen since 1849. However, ‘the year 1897’ not only ‘witnessed the most serious conflagration which has ever disturbed the North-West Frontier’¹⁷⁵ but ‘the British in India were facing their gravest crises since the Mutiny.’¹⁷⁶ Although caused by a combination of factors, each one important at its one place, the religious element and the *jihad* concept proved to be the key factor, cornerstone

¹⁷² C. Collin Davies, *op.cit.*, p.104.

¹⁷³ Akbar S. Ahmed, *op.cit.*, p.111. Also see Olaf Caroe, *op.cit.*, p.388; Arnold Keppel, *Gun-Running and the Indian North-West Frontier*, reprint (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2004), pp.1-2.

¹⁷⁴ Arthur Swinson, *op.cit.*, p.267.

¹⁷⁵ *Administration Report NWFP from 9th November 1901 to 31st March 1903*, p.10; *Administration Report on the North-West Frontier Province for 1921-22*, p.10.

¹⁷⁶ Charles Miller, *op.cit.*, p.250.

and the lever and the *mullas* and *faqirs* or the religious men the leading figures in the 1897 uprising.

Akbar S. Ahmed states that ‘the ‘jihad’ in the colonial encounters of the nineteenth century were a last grand and futile gesture of the ‘traditionalist’ forces of Islam tilting against the most powerful nations on earth’. He, however, rightly observes that ‘the inevitability of the outcome merely underlines the conceptualization of the rationale contained in the ‘jihad’ by its participants: the struggle is more important than victory; the principle more important than the objective.’¹⁷⁷

Notwithstanding the failure of the tribesmen in attaining their immediate objective in 1897, they did the ‘struggle’ with zeal and fervour and stood by the ‘principle’ earnestly. The uprising, moreover, brought far-reaching consequences especially in the administrative set up of the region and formulation of a policy of containment on the British side. It also showed that religious sentiments could overcome all tribal jealousies and unite people to make the highest and supreme sacrifice even in the most divisive tribal cum feudal society, a fact which still holds true. The present state of affairs in the post 11 September 2001 scenario in the tribal area, both Federally and Provincially Administered Tribal Areas, is also a testimony to it.

And while going through the reports and writings about the 1897 uprising one find ample evidences that speak of the same strategy and course adopted by the tribesmen both in 1897 and in the present situation. And the difficulties faced and course adopted by the then British forces and the present-day Pakistani forces also have great similarity.

¹⁷⁷ Akbar S. Ahmed, *op.cit.*, p.93.