The Politics of Migration, Peace, and Governance: Reflections on the Recent Academic Discourse on Refugees and the Post-Conflict Dynamics in the Tribal Region of Pakistan

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329

Reviewed works:

Alimia, Sanaa. 2022*. Refugee cities: How Afghans changed urban Pakistan*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 248pp., ISBN: 9781512822793 (ebook), $39.95.

Khan, Ashgar. 2022. *Mainstreaming the tribal areas (ex-FATA) of Pakistan bordering Afghanistan: Challenges and prospects*. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 410pp., ISBN: 9789811917943 (ebook), €96.29.

Yousaf, Farooq. 2021. *Pakistan, regional security and conflict resolution: The Pashtun tribal areas*. Abingdon/New York: Routledge, 226pp., ISBN: 9780367612115 (ebook), £31.19.

Introduction

The ongoing plight and horrible condition of the Afghan refugees has sparked conversation regarding the livelihood and everydayness of Afghan people living in Pakistan for the last three to four decades. As I am writing this piece, the highest court of Pakistan is about to hear the case of the Afghan refugees who were given an ultimatum from the government. The issue of Afghan refugees came to the public limelight at a time when the economic crisis of Pakistan has reached its peak and

now the state is unable to balance its financial conditions. The interim government of Pakistan has announced that all Afghan refugees who do not have the POR (proof of registration) card[1] should leave the country by the first of November 2023. For this purpose, officials were given the task of searching and finding those who were living in the country illegally and warning them of the forced deportation in case they did not leave on their own.

However, over the first week of November, the government could not handle the situation at the Afghanistan-Pakistan border area and eventually had to postpone the deportation for another two weeks. As per new directions, the government is determined to deport even the registered Afghans by the end of December. But as per Media and International Agencies report, 370,000 refugees have already left since 1st October (*Aljazeera* 2023). Though a majority of the Pakistani people are silent over the situation (Hussain 2023), civil society organisations including the United Nations agencies and many people (mostly using digital platforms) across the country condemned the policies of the incumbent government. The Afghan people in case of deportation are not only afraid of the troublesome working conditions in Afghanistan but also fear an uncertain traumatic future at the hands of the Taliban. There are even those Afghans who have not even seen Afghanistan since they were born in this country (ibid.).

Many Afghan refugees believe that it would be better for them to flee to some other country than to return to Afghanistan as they know that an unknown future awaits them. While residing in Peshawar, I met many Afghan working people who have been lamenting their condition and are looking for some kind of support from people to leave for somewhere else. At the same time, in my encounter with the local Pakistani people, there is a particular segment of society who would support this decision and pressure the Afghans to leave the country. Some (mostly shop-owners and traders) would even coax the government officials to deport them on the basis that they have occupied their trade and business activities. Even though they both have the same origin of ethnicity (Pashtun) the issue of discrimination and marginalisation is so sharp that it has left no place for solidarity or fraternity from the Pakistani side.

The discussion is aimed at examining the ongoing problem of the Afghan refugees from the perspective of a particular past and situates the issue in the context of the "nomadic present". It is argued that the government is trying to reduce the subjective experiences of the people by decontextualising them of their past. The aspect of time and space has been overwhelmingly overlooked for the sake of particular political

rhetoric—of legality and security. Aside from "official warnings" in newspapers and media platforms, the everyday life of an Afghan refugee (registered or unregistered) is characterised by the traumatic experiences of inquiries—in phrases such as, "Identify yourself!", "Are you an Afghan?", "Are you a refugee?". These constant troublesome inquiries about the identity of being "Afghan" make them targeted individuals without any accepted personhood. However, when it comes to the question of identity (as the rest of the discussion will show us) Afghan people have always identified themselves with a city-oriented identity. When the Afghan people arrived in Pakistan for the second time during the post-9/11 war on terror, they would identify themselves as from "Kabul", common folks in the rural areas used to call them "*Kabulia'n*", those who belong to the Kabul, though not all of them were from Kabul.

Similarly, Sanaa Alimia (2022) in her work argues that Afghan people who have been residing in Peshawar or Karachi for the last several decades built these cities with their labour and small business activities. Many Afghan people who are born in Pakistan are not only eligible for a "naturalised citizenship" status but they have also earned their identity through their labour and work. However, the government or people in power overlook the importance of their hard labour and instead treat them with contempt and a lack of dignity. Now their plea from the government is that instead of recognising their labour and work they should be allowed to live on a humanitarian basis.

In June 2022, many Afghan people protested in Islamabad, carrying coffins with a clear message: 'Kill us or rescue us' (Yousafzai 2022). Now instead of rescuing, the government no longer intends to provide them a place to live. What is the root cause of the problem? And how can we locate the issue in the larger context? The ultimate aim of this work is to engage the existing literature to understand the spiral of oppressive neo-colonial regime(s) and to think about de-colonial subjectivity from an academic perspective.

Glimpses into the reviewed literature

In their more recent contributions, academicians have engaged critical epistemological tools to look at the issue of the Pakistan-Afghanistan borderland with an entangled view of the local people. Reflecting on those works the ongoing attempt uncovers multiple themes surrounding; inhuman conditions and plight of the refugees, efforts for peace and conflict resolution, and efficient ways of governance in the tribal region. These discussions are an invitation to the readers for a contemplative engagement on the dynamics of the Pakistan-Afghanistan borderland by accentuating the grievable conditions of the local Pashtun population
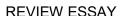
and refugees (for "grievability", see Butler 2016).

One of the prominent features marking the Pakistan-Afghanistan borderland is the status quo of catastrophic events or ruptures, happening cyclically for the last more than three decades. Leaving the socio-economic fabric in rattles, these international events (namely the big powers interventions) have practically oppressed and dispossessed people who are living on the margins as refugees or migrants. Sanaa Alimia invites us to think about the problems of identity and belonging from the poor and migrant people's ontological and subjective experiences. At the same time, while embarking upon the politics of the refugees, she is making a very robust case for a city-oriented identity; publicly and openly subscribed and claimed by the refugees and marginalised population alike. Residing on the margins, these refugees in two major metropolitan cities, namely Peshawar and Karachi are surviving at the height of insecurity.

In the meantime, focusing on the issue of regional peace and security Farooq Yousaf attempts to locate the problems of security in historical terms. He begins to open up the discussion by locating the problem in colonial practices and reiterates that even after the inception of Pakistan, the colonial project has been still alive in the legal and juridical order of the country. It has left the people of the tribal region under the inhuman and oppressive rule of the Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR) of 1901. The apparent reason for keeping tribal areas under the FCR was to leave the border security to be held up by the people themselves (Yousaf 2021, 74). Experiencing violence and trauma under the FCR the tribal people have lost faith in the state institutions. Resulting in a chaotically intermingled sense of insecurity for the people in the tribal region. The discussion on regional security often leads to the art of governance which has been the utmost concern from the very beginning.

It is debated among the academicians on what form of governance can bring about stability to the region. In this context, Asghar Khan, pigeonholes on how the state and society can be structured to address and mainstream the ungovernable territories. He puts the historiography of the tribal region vis-a-vis the apparatuses of governance since the implementation of the FCR (Khan 2022). For him, the tribal areas of ex-FATA have long been understood and known for their resistance to imperial-colonial powers. Thus, he roughly translates the idea of "resistance to colonialism" into "ungovernability", making less room for the legitimation of authority when exercised with exploitative and hegemonic tendencies.

These contributions coax readers to understand that the tribal region of Pakistan is under a perpetual cycle of oppression, dispossession and systematic violence at different levels. And to understand the politics of the region one must take into consideration the ignored voices of the local people. It is also argued that a proper democratised structure of governance with the engagement of local people could have helped maintain peace in the region as well as mitigate the plight of refugees. In the following, I look at the above-mentioned themes from the perspective of these authors with a nuanced observation.

The precarity of wars: The making of refugees

Following the two metropolitan cities of Pakistan, i.e. Peshawar and Karachi, Sanaa Alimia in her long-term research project uncovers how migrants and refugees identify and connect their livelihood to these cities. From the lenses of post-colonial literature, she attempts to locate the issue of identity and belonging concerning the ontology and subjectivity of migrant people. While taking into account the politics of being a "refugee" she describes an alternative version of identity, calling it a "city-oriented identity". Unlike the traditional nation-state concept-tion of identity, her approach to the issue of identity is based on the city which is democratic (involving unheard people) and encompasses the principle of equality.

To explore the livelihood of the Afghans and many other undocument-ed migrants in Pakistan, she engages in a lengthy critical ethnographic work ranging from the period between 2004 and 2017 cataloguing in-depth interviews and lived experiences.[2] Thematically overviewing the issues of refugees, she unpacks the discussion from the historical charge sheet starting mainly from the invasion of the Soviet Union on Afgha-nistan to the US intervention in the post-9/11 attack. It is argued that these two recent engagements by the powerful countries in Afghanistan led to a systematic and structural marginalisation of the Afghan people inside Pakistan and outside. In other words, these events created many accounts of microhistories. One might call this the "micro-histories of the dispossessed". Such dispossession (from their dignity, humanity, subjectivity and collective identity) comes when one is deprived of his/her basic human rights. The ongoing pervasive marginalisation which is corroborated by the institutional violence in a multi-layered way also contributes to the problem.

The Afghan people are constantly put under the kaleidoscope of nationality and questioned for their original status. Strictly speaking, in the aftermath of these military interventions, the displaced population has been left at the mercy of modern territorial nation-states, leaving

their (somewhat fluid) identity at odds with the mainstream concept-tualisation of nationhood. Oddly enough, the refugees lost their rights to be "political subjects" in a relationship with a body politic. They are, to borrow the phrase from Giorgio Agamben (2000, 6-8), reduced to the status of bare life, without any political status. At the same time, such forced statelessness and lamentable human condition can be described in the words of Hannah Arendt as the radical deprivation of the 'right to have rights' (DeGooyer et al. 2018, 18). On the ground, Alimia talks about the "constantly controlled" life of these refugees which could be described as under a psychologically giant prison. As one local *chai wala* (tea seller) who I meet almost every day would put it 'unbearable' and 'indescribable'. Whenever I talked to him about the conditions, he would nod his head and say, '*sa ba oko us*' ('cannot do anything now')! A condition where one is saying without speaking! One is alive physically but sadly dead inside to raise his voice.

After living for more than three decades in different places in Peshawar and Karachi, these refugees have got married and have grown-up kids who have never been to Afghanistan, eventually forming their way of life in these cities. Drawing on this idea of forming livelihood, Alimia among many other issues pigeonholes on the plea for "naturali-sation" or by-birth acquisition of citizenship for the refugees. Accordingly, the constitution of Pakistan approves the process of naturalisation in theory under the Pakistan Citizenship Act of 1951, however, in practice, it does not happen. The officer at Afghan Commissionrate told Alimia (2022, xv), 'Let me be candid, it (naturalisation) is not going to happen. There is absolutely no way. Naturalisation is not an option. Local integration is not on the cards'. The *shanakhat* (identity) of being an Afghan creates an alienation at the heart of the nation-state and therefore becomes a hurdle in the way of recognising even their *insaniyat* (humanity). In other words, the refugees are dehumanised and objectified as the unknown "other" who can be left like a "homo sacer" at the altar of the nation-state (Agamben 1998). Extending citizenship to the Afghan people would grant them their political status with rights, resulting in mobilisation at the bottom level which is incongruous and unacceptable to the existing hegemonic elite rule.

One can hardly overlook the power dynamics in the everyday quoted-ian existence of people in camps.[3] Despite living in a poor neighbour-hood, the agency of the people can be seen in their everydayness; taking care of their necessities such as water, health facilities, and houses (though they do not have well-established houses) and other important needs. However, attempting to achieve these needs is not without a hard struggle. At the particular camp that Alimia calls "camp-

e-Marwarid" the refugees have been confronting different usurpers and mafias, attempting to capture their resources. On top of that claiming the city as their own gives them a strong sense of belonging and empowerment. Though such a strong attachment to the city has never been recognised in some official capacity by the government, for the people it would form the core of their subjectivity.

The early migrants who arrived in the aftermath of Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, speak in a melancholic and nostalgic tone about the past when they had their places to live and could form their identity. However, since later, they were forced to settle in the new urbanity, they have assimilated their livelihood into it and would unflinchingly claim or reclaim the city. Alimia focuses on the idea that these cities have gone through enormous transformation after the refugees started residing in them. On the other side, the state apparatuses along with the land mafia are quite active in surveilling, harassing, expelling and punishing them by controlling their natural liberty in pursuing their livelihood.[4] In a nutshell, forced settlements are followed up by forced expulsion. However, as it also noticed, despite the shared vulnerabilities there is no attribution of misfortune to God (no reference to theodicy), and no place for superstition or folktales in the language of these people. Rather they would directly question the powerful elite and government. As one respondent, Bilqis said, 'What does the government care? We are poor and for them we are nothing….but this is not our doing; it is theirs' (Alimia 2022, 81).

In the same vein, she unveils the struggling lives of the refugees in Peshawar. Living in vertigo and the spiral of institutional and social oppression, the staggering condition of the refugees in Peshawar, again, in different camps, presents a somewhat similar depiction of the dispossession. Notably, one may practically see that their abandoned subjectivity and truncated identity are caught in the shabby and rotten system of the POR card. Factually speaking, the presence of the POR card creates more problems for the Afghan people than its absence. Besides, it does nothing when it comes to facilitating or ameliorating their socio-political status. On the contrary, the presence of the card dispossesses refugees of their dignity and respect. Such and other mechanisms of exclusion ultimately trigger alienation and traumatise their living experiences (ibid., 114).

Alimia takes different statistics from the UNHCR and other organisations showing the rate of expatriation that has happened in the last few years (ibid., 40, 115, 121).[5] In such a predicament, the Afghan refugees are being taunted, discriminated and humiliated in broad daylight.[6] It is also observed that two times Afghan refugees feel the most vulnerable;

first, if their POR card expires and second when there is a bomb blast in the city. The police would start harassing and imprisoning them in their quotidian existence. Unsurprisingly, the ongoing plight is also based on the pretext of security. As one respondent, Palwasha said,

> We've had a good impact on this area. We populated it; we gave it life, making it into a town. There are shops and a market. Before it was a *jangal*, nothing more. We have changed Peshawar. The police, however, have started to come and raid this area and search it. Anytime bombs explode in Peshawar, the police come running to our area. There have been three raids here already. My husband died five years ago, but they hassle my sons near enough every day. (ibid., 83-4)

In the ongoing discussion, Alimia refers to Foucault's discursivity and governmentality approach along with Deleuze's conceptualisation of "controlled societies" which makes a clear sense of the refugee's livelyhood. Nevertheless, the discussion is not reduced to just one particular frame rather engages the reader through various lenses of the post-colonial researchers and sociologists in the academia.

Overall, Alimia's work is the story of the dispossessed; those who are living in the marginalia of the state but their contribution in building the cities is more significant than one can imagine. In this timely contribution to the studies on migration and refugees, she makes a case, for a city-based identity and belonging which can be seen from the perspective of the most vulnerable and discriminated people. Providing a profound saturated ground for an alternative conception of city-based identity, it practically dismantles an ethnically biased or nationally prejudiced system of body politic.

336

Debating peace and Conflict Resolution in the post-colonial structures

Behind the existing problem of refugees (both Afghan and Pakistani), there is another layer of inherent oppression in the form of constant military adventurism. To put it bluntly, war (local or international) based policies are the primary cause of displacement in the first place. Farooq Yousaf (2021) opens up the issue of the most recent military operations, showing us the demonic face of military-led interventions.

To pinpoint the ground realities in the shadow of the precarity of current wars, one can note that the people in the tribal region have been living under the colonial rule of the FCR implemented from 1901 till 2018. For Yousaf, the regional power dynamics are always flirting with oppressive colonial structure. These draconian rules have deeply damaged the socio-cultural fabric of the Pashtun society. While people living with

the old Pashtunwali codes were trying to find a resolution to their disputes especially, through *jirga* (council of elders) and *lashkar* (group of army). However, with the onset of the militancy, the entire landscape was thrown into the resounding patterns of war and military interventions. Yousaf (ibid., 113) discloses the devastating impact of the ongoing operations from 2002 to 2017.

Understanding the existing crisis in the Pashtun tribal areas without the history and traditions of the people might disillusion our thinking concerning the state of peace and conflict. Yousaf puts into question the existing condition of Pashtuns in the crucible of colonial history. And also stresses the idea that Pakistan after getting independence from the British Raj could not deconstruct or disenthrall from the oppressive colonial regimes of legal and institutional structure. Instead, it has maintained the oppressive rule of the FCR of 1901 in the ex-FATA region for more than 70 years (ibid., 76). The author debates that such coils of oppression have led to the rise of militancy and conflict in the region. He counts the example of the rise of Taliban in Swat, wherein arguably many individuals considered their local sharia-based *jirgas* as the ultimate and swift ways to dispute resolution and justice (ibid., 90, 99).

Accordingly, Pakistan being a post-colonial state has failed to understand the sensibility of the tribal people and their ways to conflict resolution (ibid., 42-3). For the record, the regional elders have been following the centuries-old codes of Pashtunwali which include: *aitbar* (trust), *badal* (reciprocity, revenge and retribution), *badraga* (safe conduct), *hujrah* (community hub), *jirga* (council of elders), *lashkar* (group of army), *lokhay warkawal* (giving pots), *melmastya* (hospitality), *nanawatay* (pardoning the enemy), *nang* (honour), *tarboor* (clan member or distant cousin), *tiga* (forming a truce) and many more (ibid., 17-22). The author comments upon the misrepresentation of these codes as well. These codes were given the supposed presentation and sweeping generalisation by colonial historians and writers, such as Mountstuart Elphinstone.[7] However, these codes somehow make the tribal people unique in the orientation of their livelihood.

More specifically, within the umbrella of Pashtunwali customs and codes, there are two major codes which can be understood from the perspective of peace and conflict resolution known as "jirga" and "lashkar". Jirga is the elder council which decides any kind of dispute emanating between two or more rival parties. It is famous for the swift delivery of justice and since it is considered a part of the Pashtunwali custom its decision is accepted unanimously. Moreover, there are four major kinds of jirgas: *loya* (grand), *qaumi* (peoples), *sarkari* (state/FCR) and *shakhsi* (person or third party) (ibid., 91). While lashkar is roughly

considered the executive part of the jirga decision, lashkar, which means "the formation of militia/army", can also be organised to protect the people. Oddly enough, after the independence of Pakistan, the government encouraged the formation of militia to carry out operations in the disputed border region of Kashmir (ibid., 76).

Nevertheless, these two customary bodies have played a very important role in the maintenance of peace and conflict resolution in the Pashtun tribal region. The author in this discussion emphasises the fact that both jirga and lashkar have massive public support. And therefore, even after the merger of tribal agencies (now called NMDs newly merged districts) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Pashtun people would like to resolve their disputes through jirga and lashkar. However, the ongoing military occupation and extended war on terror have somehow disbanded and discredited the formation of militias for peaceful purposes.

In this context, Yousaf gives a chronological account of different military operations that were carried out from 2002 to 2017. These military operations include Operation *Al Mizan* (justice) from 2002-2006, Operation *Zalzala* (earthquake) in 2008, Operation *Serat-e-Mustaqeem* (righteous path) in 2008, Operation *Rah-e-Nijat* (path of salvation) in 2009 and among many others the infamous Operation *Zarb-e-Azab* (sharp strike) in 2014. These operations were conducted with the intention to prevail peace in the region through hard-core military solutions. However, to give the devil his due, except for some temporary decline in the militant activities these operations could not produce efficient results (ibid., 113). On the contrary, these operations led to massive displacement and civilian casualties. As the author cites, in some instances the civilians were collectively punished which closely resembled the policies of the British Raj. There is the so-called idea of "collateral damage", however, a close examination shows the reprehensible and horrible nature of these operations. The author counts several instances of such atrocities (ibid., 114-5).

Having failed to take into account the role of jirga and lashkar the formal military ways to resolve conflict not only created massive deprivation but also became counter-productive in the form of contagious militant uprisings. All these militant activities not only sabotaged the local infrastructure but also posed a challenge for the locally displaced people and refugees to carry on their livelihood. As Sanaa Alimia (2022, 83) notes the refugees' lives would get more troublesome in the case of a security situation as the police would treat them as potential culprits. On the other side, when traditional efforts to restore peace were employed, they also became ineffective because those who were involved in the peace process were targeted and killed with impunity. It

338

is noted that since 2005, around 149 prominent tribal elders have been killed in the tribal areas by militants.[8]

Such militant atrocities and military-led interventions caused colossal damage to people and their livelihoods. However, in the recent past, the local population have become cognisant of their appalling condition and thus it led to mobilisation and protest in the form of Pashtun Tahafuz (protection) Movement (PTM) led by Manzoor Ahmad Pashteen. It is argued that the rise and popularity of the PTM is due to the fact that ex-FATA regions have not only been left out of the mainstream governance process but they have had to suffer the consequences of an imposed war. Moreover, many scholars argue that the PTM is going to play a major role in the political and institutional development of the tribal regions as activist Mona Naseer argues (Yousaf 2021, 176). However, some raise questions over its lack of paying attention to the gender-based violence in the region and its transformation into a mainstream political party.[9] Nevertheless, it is doubtlessly clear that the tribal region for more than a century has been living with "precarity" (Butler 2020) under the oppressive regime of the FCR along with the malaise of Cold War politics.

In the wake of political mobilisation and the troublesome human condition, the tribal region caught the attention of the media (social and mainstream). Eventually, the government has to merge all its agencies (federally and provincially administered tribal areas) with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province under the 25th constitutional amendment in 2018. Now, to what extent the merger with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa can help mitigate the miseries of the people, remains to be seen.

Yousaf has thoroughly surveyed the historicity of the tribal people's miserable conditions and in the end, argues that the institutional connection along with tribal customs (such as jirga and lashkar) in the form of a hybrid system might be a way out to the resolution of conflicts. Currently, the hybridity model is being operationalised and its results can be observed in the long run. However, it is a prerequisite to focus on issues of injustices in social and economic terms before one can expect good results from the institutional arrangement (in the form of hybridity). More specifically, access to basic needs, alleviation of poverty, inclusivity of women, addressing the structural violence and "democratisation from below" are the ways to maintain peace in the long run. Finally, imagining an indigenous response to the existing perilous conditions requires a rigorous examination of the colonial coils and loops, thus, a possible way to locally effective conflict resolution might be achieved if the governance structure is thoroughly de-colonised.
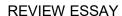
Governance beyond colonial apparatus

Besides the police-based search and control, the larger problem lies with the overall process of governance in the tribal region. When it comes to the modern state and society relations, there is always some form of vacuum or struggle for power on either side. To put it rather in critical terms, how can the state and society be structured to address and mainstream the ungovernable territories? Though the term governance is closely interpreted as maintaining "law and order" with security such a framework for "governance" is not without a discursive apparatus of colonialism. For Alimia, creating ambiguity regarding "governance" practices was a part of the colonial legacy and strategy. In this context, the British Raj is responsible for the territorial ambiguity as well as the usage of Pashtun cultural values as codes for the Pashtunwali (Alimia 2022, 18). Asghar Khan is attempting to look at the tribal regions of Pakistan vis-a-vis the apparatuses of governance.

For him, the tribal areas of ex-FATA have long been understood and known for their resistance to imperial-colonial powers. He projects the image of Pashtuns as historically resistant to the acceptance of authority when exercised with coercion and oppression, making them "ungovernable" people as is obvious in the case of British colonialism. However, the concept of an "ungovernable" population does not include people who would take benefits from the British Raj. In this respect, one can find the problematics of the colonial legacy. He discloses the fact that while joining Pakistan the tribal *malaks* (clan leaders) demanded to continue their British policy of privileges and royalties (Khan 2022, 238-39). Though he does not pay too much attention to this problem, one may argue that the prevalent issue of ungovernability has a complex relationship with the power dynamics within the colonial policies of governance. For Alimia, that is how the British Raj maintained their ruling practice.

While keeping in the background the issue of ungovernability and governance per se; there are three theoretical approaches process of governance. These are namely: the state-centric approach, the society-centric approach and the state-in-society approach (ibid., 22-55). The state-society model suggests a top-down approach: the state attempts to regulate and control society. Roughly interpreted as the classical Weberian model of the state's monopoly on power. In the society-state model, a bottom-up approach is adopted, where the society attempts to control the state machinery and exercise power democratically. It is accompanied by the idea of resisting the power of the state employing

concentration in the social norms and values. Such an approach gets inspiration from the social cohesion existing in the society. Finally, the state-in-society approach is a horizontal location of power by sharing it with the social forces, but in this scenario, a strong state still holds its monopolistic approach concerning the non-state actors. It is also known as the state-centric relational governance approach. Such an approach to governance holds the idea that in this way the state and society shall coalesce for change and order in society (ibid., 50).[10]

On the practical side, Khan engages these models with the tribal customs concerning the codes of Pashtunwali. He attempts to unveil the problematic relationship between a weak state and a strong tribal society. More specifically, he argues that the tribal region through its customs has maintained a very strong grip over the population. Citing different figures from the survey he had conducted, it is noted that 88 per cent of the tribal population believes that the Pakistani state has a weak presence in the tribal areas (ibid., 155).[11] Moreover, he also critiques the existing mode of governance because the people in tribal regions have been feeling alienated from the state and thus they no longer trust any public policy or development plan from the government. He quotes an internally displaced person's voice which sums up accurately the existing conditions of marginalisation and deprivation.

341

> We belong to Pakistan, but today, we do not feel Pakistani at all because we are living in camps, a life in exile. Not only that we are left hapless and helpless during the war on terror by the rest of Pakistan, but also the government of other provinces prohibited the entry of tribal Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). This shocked our trust and feeling to be Pakistanis. Even the history is replete that how much the tribal people sacrificed for Pakistan. We sacrificed during independence movement, during USSR attack on Afghanistan, and even recently in the war against terrorism. (Mohmand 2014; Khan 2022, 158-59)

The ongoing war on terror and its consequences have further aggravated the condition of the tribal people. Quite ironically, for the last two decades, the government has adopted military solutions to the regional instability and militancy which has created long-term deprivation and dispossession on the part of the tribal people. As it is argued such a state-centric approach has never been effective in curbing militancy or its consequences.[12] For Khan, the state-centric approach should be replaced with an alternative model that implies a society-centric model. At the same time, while expanding on Migdal's model of "state in society" he carefully examines the case of the Pakistani state about the social forces. His final thought is that such a model in the case of the Pakistani state needs a nuanced way to operationalisation otherwise it

might lead to further deterioration of the state's strength as well as trust from the people of ex-FATA.[13]

For Khan, the only model that might work in the tribal region is the society-centric approach. It is pertinent to involve the local and indigenous perceptions of governance in mainstreaming the political and legal accounts. Pragmatically speaking, the idea of society-centric might create a new way not only to resolve the issues of insecurity and crisis but also perhaps lead to an inclusive and pluralistic form of governability. I would like to add that such ways to mainstream the ex-FATA might be pursued with the grain of salt because the idea of governance in its current modalities is very much entangled in the market-based neoliberal hegemonic economic order. And even if we attempt to get rid of the ungovernable spaces we will still be facing the issue of new exploitations in the form of neoliberal structure. Therefore, it is necessary to take into account the ongoing pervasive hegemonic economic forces to protect the locally oriented independent economy and human labour.

Coda

The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House.
(Audre Lorde, 1984)

342

The ground realities in the post-colonial state of Pakistan are the need for crucial changes both at the epistemic and policy levels. From the discourse on migrants and refugees to the governance apparatus, a complete overhaul is required with alternative models. Similarly, an emancipatory framework must be intended to dismantle the apparatuses of colonialism in both psychological and historical terms. The aforementioned works from Alimia, Yousaf and Khan are designed to subscribe to the principles of de-colonial methodologies to empower and reconnect knowledge with its local foundations. While employing critical epistemological tools these contributions explore the pervasive marginalisation and forced migration in the newly merged districts (NMDs) of tribal regions. The above-mentioned contributions pick up on diverse approaches from ethnography to in-depth analysis, making a strong case for the unheard voices. It is pertinent to consider that these contributions encompass a narrative of the dispossessed people: those who are being forced to live in the marginalia of the state, like a bare life, but their way of life has made an unfathomable contribution to their occupying places.

At the same time, one might be looking for the primordial question i.e. what led to the rise of forced migration in the region? These

discussions dissect the role of colonial legal-juridical order. The works claim that an institutionally binding order in the shape of the FCR is incompatible with the socio-cultural norms and has utterly destroyed the stable foundations of the tribal community. Eventually, these oppressive forces moved people to resist and gather around undemocratic forces for justice, in response to which the state adopted coercive measures, further aggravating their miseries. For the readers, how can one make sense of the ongoing atrocities in the "longue duree"? And under which emancipatory way one can reimagine the tribal region? Showing us a grim picture of the tribal region, these academicians invite the readers to critically rethink the old colonial structures and their impact on the whole society and to mobilise our thinking for an alternative and indigenous-based engagement for peace and stability.

Endnotes

[1] A POR card is issued by the government of Pakistan through the national database and registration authority (NADRA) which allows the Afghan migrants to stay legally in Pakistan. It is commonly known as *mahjir* (refugee) card.

[2] The author not only narrates the detrimental conditions of the Afghan refugees but also the poor and marginalised internally displaced people residing in *katchi abadis* (squatter settlements) in Karachi.

[3] Alimia focuses on camp-e-Marwarid pseudonym for a camp where the refugees have been struggling for their livelihood and confronting different land and water mafias. The discussion is not limited to the camp-e-Marwarid but also encompasses people living in *goths* (a Sindhi language term for informal subdivision of agricultural land) and katchi abadis.

[4] Forced eviction by different realtors, mafia and power brokers is quite common at these katchi abadis and other settlements such as Ishtiaq Goth. The Urban Resource Centre (URC) says that from 1996 to 2002, forced evictions by government agencies impacted 40,900 houses and displaced 286,300 people in Karachi (Alimia 2022, 69).

[5] There is a policy for the Afghan expatriation called "Afghan Management and Repatriation Strategy" (AMRs) which is managed by the Afghan Commissionerate and SAFRON (Ministry for States and Frontier Regions).

[6] Not to mention that mass deportation is not limited to Pakistan. In 2016, the EU declared Afghanistan as a safe country and thus 937 Afghan refugees were deported from Germany. And at the same time, right-wing governments and ruling elite throughout the developed world have been targeting refugee to be deported and expelled (Alimia 2022, 143, 144).

[7] Mountstuart Elphinston (1779-1859) is considered the one who categorised the Pashtunwali codes. He guided the British governance process in the tribal areas. He also conflated Afghan with Pashtun. And his epistemic legacy created a set of tropes for the Pashtun society, see Alimia (2022, 19-20). Resultantly, Yousaf comments upon the misrepresentation of Pashtun people. He argues, 'these generalisations in the colonial readings have categorised Pashtuns as "savage", "vengeful" or "fearless, warrior-like" people who do not like to be ruled by external powers' (Yousaf 2021: 28-9).

[8] Along with 1400 Jirga members who were targeted and killed (Yousaf 2021, 157).

[9] Yousaf (2021, 174, 176) quotes Dr. Noreen Naseer who argues that the PTM has nothing to offer in the case of gender-based violence and the issues of women rights. She observes that the leader

of the movement maintains a very conservative outlook when it comes to women rights. Moreover, she remarks that the PTM can only become a stakeholder in the country's political ecosystem if it is allowed to transform from a movement to a political party. However, in the current circumstances it does not seem so. For her, Manzoor Ahmed (Pashteen) is a good storyteller, however, with limited political acumen and political constituency. Therefore, Pashteen might not be interested in transforming PTM into a political party.

[10] Also, Khan (2022, 272-80) relies on the work of Joel S. Migdal when he is attempting to interpret the issues of state penetration in society in the case of tribal areas.

[11] Similarly 75.33 percent tribal people trust their informal normative institutions, resulting in resistance to the state sponsored institutions (Khan 2022, 197).

[12] One may link the issue of treating militancy from the perspective of perpetual crisis and state of exception. The chief proponent of this view Giorgio Agamben (2014) argues that security, crisis situation and the permanent state of exception gives legitimacy for the contemporary technology of governance in the modern state. Further he argues that the governments deal with security by treating the effects rather than its causes. In other words, modern nation state has to exist on the pretext that there is an "exceptional situation" that could be dealt with iron hands. Such a conception of governance model perfectly reflects the tribal region of ex-FATA.

[13] Khan (2022, 258-83) notes complexity in the case of social forces; he maintains that in the case of Pashtun segmentary societal structure (*nang* and *qalang*), the distribution of natural resources (minerals), the role of various stakeholders such as malaks, non-state actors such as Taliban, state intervention in the market and human capital (labour) and many other factors require an intelligent way to deal with the tribal areas. However, the current weak structure of the state is not efficient enough to mobilise its policies in such a direction.

344

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