

JANIKHEL AND LIMITS OF PAKISTANI STATECRAFT

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Abstract

Born in the ashes of the British imperial rule, the statecraft of the postcolonial state of Pakistan is predicated upon the ideas, norms, values, and practices of the British colonial administration as well as the culture of power preceding it. They form the governing precepts of the state of Pakistan especially in regards to state-society relations in the territories existing at the state's periphery. The paper attempted to locate the recent community-led protest in the Janikhel area of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province against murder, mayhem, and the management of space by the state in the paradigm of Pakistani statecraft. It applied the theory of Pakistan's strategic culture as a theoretical framework in studying how the state imagines its management of spaces, the people, and the state-society relations in the peripheral territories by taking Janikhel as a case study. The paper concluded that dual imperial legacies of the British and the Mughals as well as the violent making of the postcolonial state embedded an arbitrary and semi-imperial understanding that informed the development of the Pakistani strategic culture from which stems its statecraft. This statecraft possessed an ideating continuity of the British security perceptions toward tribal territories and formed the "frontier mind" of the Pakistani state leading toward a practice of statecraft that is unaccountable and authoritarian, and it is being increasingly becoming exhaustive in its approach and regulation of the everyday state.

Keywords: Culture of Power, Constitutionalism, Statecraft, Strategic Culture, Governance

Introduction

In early 2021, a tribal area called, "Janikhel," in the Bannu district of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province (KPK) of Pakistan jolted with people's rage and anger as they protested over the discovery of the bullet-riddled bodies of four teenage boys. The protest builds over the boiling local resentment on the scores of abductions and killings of people in the locale. The people's rage was also partially informed by the callously cold attitude exhibited by the administrative organs of the Pakistani state. The attendant indignation that the people in Janikhel felt resulted in the outrage expressed by the local leaders and protestors in their speeches.

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Following a week of protest, the protestors were placated with the assurances given by the government, and an agreement was signed that was presided by the Chief Minister KPK Mahmood Khan. The signed agreement was reflective of a normative administrative drill of Pakistani statecraft in the tribal regions in the aftermath of every such outpour of peripheral anger over the failure of the state in the provision and preservation of fundamental constitutional rights. The agreement followed all the crucial elements of the drill, some of the salient features of which were: offering monetary compensation for the families of the deceased teenage boys; assuring people of safety and security and a reduction in violence by a crackdown on armed groups; promising developmental package for the area; and the government would conduct an independent inquiry into the brutal murder of the four teenage boys.¹

Not long after that, one of the local tribal leaders, Malik Naseeb Khan, who was present in signing the first agreement, was murdered by assailants that sparked off another protest which also ended in a negotiated agreement with the government agreeing to release four missing people from the area. This agreement was negotiated on the back of the first agreement.²

This horrendous episode of murder and mayhem in Janikhel yet again reinforces the existing structural apathy and attitudinal passivity of the Pakistani statecraft toward the peripheral regions.³ Born amid horrific communally-motivated partition violence and with fractured territorial contiguity with some regions displaying reluctant or ambivalent tendencies in joining

¹ Jibran Ahmad and Saud Mehsud, "Killng of youths sparks protests in northwest Pakistan," *Reuters*, March 28, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-killings-protests-idUSKBN2BK0K2>

² Siraj Khan, "Janikhel protestors want peace, not false promises," *Samaa*, June 08, 2021, <https://www.samaaenglish.tv/news/2338599/archives-janikhel-protesters-want-peace-not-fake-promises>; Sirajuddin, "Janikhel tribesmen end protest after release of four missing persons," *Dawn*, June 27, 2021, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1631796>

³ Moeen Cheema and Farooq Yousaf, "Constitutionalizing a perpetual transition: The "integration" of the Pashtun "tribal areas" in Pakistan," *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 18, no. 2: pp. 1405-1428; Elisabeth Leake, "At the nation-state's edge: centre-periphery relations in post-1947 South Asia," *The Historical Journal* 59, no. 2: pp. 509-539; Benjamin D. Hopkins, *Ruling the Savage Periphery: Frontier Governance and the Making of the Modern State* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2020)

with the new state of Pakistan, the state psyche and strategic behavior of the newly-independent state were morphed around the ideas and notions that conceives a distinct worldview organized around the brute expression of power and a semi-imperial understanding of statecraft.⁴

Moreover, the legacies of the British colonial rule in consonance with the imperial Mughal Empire also factored into the formation of the strategic behavior and cultivated a semi-autocratic or –imperial mind in the newborn state.⁵ Collectively, these legacies and circumstances originating from the partition violence shaped the peculiar construction of the strategic culture of Pakistan. The statecraft and the attendant approaches to security and governance especially concerning the peripheries such as Janikhel stem from the Pakistan strategic culture that embodies a distinct outlook of the national state and gears it toward the pursuance of geostrategy predicated upon hyper-realism at the cost of the people-centric developmental model.⁶

How the violence and the resultant protests were dealt with in Janikhel plays into the wider scope of the norms, notions, and ideas driving the national statecraft. They are expressive of the unique nature of Pakistan’s strategic culture that borrows its approaches to statecraft from historical legacies of the past administrative dispensations, adapts them to modern cartographic

⁴ Ian Talbot, “Legacies of the Partition for India and Pakistan,” *Politeja* 59, no. 2: pp. 7-25; Tahir Hasnain Naqvi, “The Politics of Commensuration: The Violence of Partition and the Making of the Pakistani State,” in *Beyond Crisis: Re-evaluating Pakistan*, ed. Naveeda Khan (Routledge India, 2010); Nisid Hajari, *Midnight’s Furies: The Deadly Legacy of India’s Partition* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2016); Husain Haqqani, “Pakistan’s Endgame in Kashmir,” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, July 01, 2003, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2003/07/01/pakistan-s-endgame-in-kashmir-pub-1427>; Yaqoob K. Bangesh, *A Princely Affair: The Accession and Integration for the Princely States of Pakistan, 1947-1955* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Venkat Dhulipala, *Creating a New Medina: State Power, Islam, and the Quest for Pakistan in Late Colonial North India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016)

⁵ Stephen P. Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Brookings Institution Press, 2006); Ilhan Niaz, *The Culture of Power and Governance of Pakistan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Farooq Yousaf, “Pakistan’s Colonial Legacy: FCR and Postcolonial Governance in the Pashtun Tribal Frontier,” *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 21, no. 2: pp. 172-187

⁶ T. V. Paul, *The Warrior State: Pakistan in the Contemporary World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Christine Fair, *Fighting to the End: The Pakistan Army’s Way of War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Ahmed Waqas Waheed, “State Sovereignty and International Relations in Pakistan: Analysing the Realism Stranglehold,” *South Asia Research* 37, no. 3: pp. 277-295

realities, configure its state practices accordingly, and imposes them onto the society through the enabling tools and mechanisms of the state, thereby arbitrarily framing an understanding of state-society relations, governing model, and nationalism that exercises a significant role in the perpetuation of the structural logic of statecraft, the limits of which are now being exhausted and crucially merit a revision.

Imagining the Periphery

For a postcolonial state like Pakistan, peripheral areas are representative of more than a mere cartographic fact on the ground. They're endowed with a living idea of their own, much before the process of decolonization submerged them territorially into new nation-states. The peripheries, therefore, have a unique sense of political identity and belonging before a new expression is given to their territorial, social, and political characters. This submerging of their uniqueness into a new idea of the nation tends to become more intricate if the territory and the people in question belong to geography that has a strategic or political significance.⁷ In this context, the nature of sovereign power in the political geography attains a far more influential role with its decisions having implications beyond the people in the given territory.

While Janikhel is a tribal area constitutionally situated in KPK province which itself is a relatively mainstreamed province in the Pakistani constitutional structure, the area borders the North Waziristan region of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).⁸ FATA was integrated into KPK as part of an oft-cited, "Bajwa Doctrine."⁹ Yet still, in a more political sense,

⁷ Benedict Korf and Timothy Raeymaekers, "Border, Frontier and the Geography of Rule at the Margins of the State," in *Violence on the Margins: States, Conflict, and Borderlands*, eds. Benedict Korf and Timothy Raeymaekers (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)

⁸ FATA was merged in to KPK province in 2019 through a constitutional amendment yet still it is imagined as a frontier area and seen from a geostrategic sense in Pakistan strategic culture. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1411156>

⁹ Kamal Alam, "The Bajwa Doctrine: The Pakistani Military Has Done More than Enough," *Royal United Services Institute (RUSI)*, February 16, 2018, <https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/rusi-newsbrief/bajwa-doctrine-pakistani-military-has-done-more-enough>

Janikhel is a territory that comprises an arch of tribal areas that have a strategic significance in the “frontier mind” of the Pakistani strategic culture.

There is ample literature on the idea of strategic culture¹⁰ but for the paper, I would take the definition of strategic culture that was propounded by Alastair Iain Johnston, “strategic culture is an ideational milieu which limits behavior choices. This milieu consists of shared assumption and decision rules that impose a degree of order on individual and group conceptions of their relationship to their social, organization, or political environment.”¹¹ Johnston’s definition fits well within the broader theoretical framework of Pakistan strategic culture.

In consideration of the definition above, Pakistan's strategic culture was born in an ideational milieu of historical legacies of statecraft in the region and the violent making of the new state of Pakistan. The determinants that came to define Pakistan's strategic culture owe their notional belonging to both, or either, of them. Traditionally scholars have written on the strategic culture of Pakistan from a strategic studies perspective. However, the understanding postulated by H. A. Askari, P. Lavoy, and C. Fair is more grounded in the political geography Pakistan inherited after the culmination of the British raj.¹² For these scholars, five constitutive elements determined Pakistan strategic culture: a perennial belief that Pakistan is an insecure and incomplete state, thus it must stringently seek to secure itself especially territorially; India is an existential enemy and

¹⁰ Michael C. Desch, “Assessing the Importance of Ideas in Security Studies,” *International Security* 23, no. 1: pp. 141-170; Rashed Uz Zaman, “Strategic Culture: A “Cultural” Understanding of War,” *Comparative Strategy* 28, no. 1: pp. 68-88; Ole R. Holsti, “The Belief System and National Images: A Case Study,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 6, no. 3: pp. 244-252; David G. Haglund, “What can Strategic Culture contribute to our Understanding of Security Policies in the Asia-Pacific Region?,” *Contemporary Security Policy* 35, no 2: pp. 310-328

¹¹ Alastair Iain Johnston, “Thinking about Strategic Culture,” *International Security* 19, no 4: pp. 32-64

¹² Hassan A. Khan, “Pakistan’s Strategic Culture,” in *South Asia in 2020: Future Strategic Balances and Alliances*, ed. M. R. Chambers (Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2002); Peter R. Lavoy, “Pakistan’s Strategic Culture: A Theoretical Excursion,” *Strategic Insights* 6, no. 10; Christine Fair, “Pakistan’s strategic culture: Implications for how Pakistan perceives and counter threats,” *The National Bureau of Asian Research*, December, 2016, <https://www.nbr.org/publication/pakistans-strategic-culture-implications-for-how-pakistan-perceives-and-counters-threats/>

seeks to undermine Pakistan's territorial and ideological integrity; Afghanistan is a persistent source of instability and revanchist measures; India seeks hegemony in the region and it must be resisted; and the centrality of Islam to national life.

These constitutive determinants articulate an approach to statecraft that is reflective of a securitized understanding of the political geography comprising the state of Pakistan. In particular reference to the ideating continuity of the British colonial legacy, the approach of the Pakistani statecraft in managing its frontier spaces evokes the British security perceptions toward the tribal regions.¹³ Besides securitizing governing behavior toward the frontier spaces, this approach also led to the construction of a political economy centered on securitization leading toward a rentier state model rather than a developmental one.¹⁴

Demonstrably this securitization approach to statecraft plays into the broader imagining of the Pakistani state of its role in the region as it pursues its geostrategy based on power politics than developmental economics. It is precisely this geostrategic role that triumphs securitized management of the frontier spaces over the citizen-centric model of governance. It contrives a governing structure that is democratic only in name. It practices a kind of arbitrary statecraft with a hard power-centric rule of force that is primarily concerned with the preservation of the territorial security of the Pakistani state in the frontier spaces more than a citizen-centric approach of responsive governance.

¹³ Lawrence Ziring, *Pakistan in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Harrison Akins, "Tribal Militias and Political Legitimacy in British India and Pakistan." *Asian Security* 16, no. 3: pp. 304-322; Paul Staniland, Asfandyar Mir and Sameer Lalwani, "Politics and Threat Perception: Explaining Pakistani Military Strategy in the North West Frontier," *Security Studies* 27, no. 4: pp. 535-574

¹⁴ Aqil Shah, "Constraining consolidation: military politics and democracy in Pakistan (2007-2013)," *Democratization* 21, no. 6: pp. 1007-1033; Akbar S. Zaidi, "Rethinking Pakistan's Political Economy: Class, State, Power, and Transition," *Economic and Political Weekly* 49, no. 5: pp. 47-54; Ayesha Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule: The Origins of Pakistan's Political Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Ayesha Siddiqi, *Military Inc.: Inside Pakistan's Military Economy*, second edition (London: Pluto Press, 2016)

Curating a National Self

The question of ‘self and sovereignty was a significant political marker of being and belonging when the imperial rule of the colonialist powers was crumbling all over the globe with the advent of the 20th century. Besides troubling the minds and political strategies of the leaderships leading the charge of decolonization of their respective ‘national communities’, the question also posed a strategic challenge to the colonialist powers ending their imperial rule over the subject populations. While some colonialized communities possessed a deep coherence and continuity with their past in terms of communal existence and territorial belonging and preserved an embattled sense of identity during the colonial rule, some other colonialized communities had to be ‘imagined’ to articulate a demand for a separate sense of identity and belonging with a distinct spatiality.¹⁵

The construction of the *National Self* in the postcolonial state of Pakistan falls into the second category. To subdue preexisting solidarities and craft a new one within the people and their territories that now comprise Pakistan, the leadership leading the charge of freedom struggle had to conjure up a new political identity in the notional embodiment of “Muslim Nationalism.”¹⁶ However, the conjuring of “Muslim Nationalism” and its authoritative imposition over all preexisting solidarities in the postcolonial state led to a dynamic which could be characterized as, “instabilities of identity,” but this authoritative imposition of the religious notion of imagined community is a hallmark of a crucial element in Pakistan’s strategic culture; the centrality of Islam in national life. As the state of Pakistan grappled with the acute security crisis over resources and

¹⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Books, 2016)

¹⁶ Maya Tudor, *The Promise of Power: The Origins of Democracy in India and Autocracy in Pakistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Ayesha Jalal, *The Struggle for Pakistan: A Muslim Homeland and Global Politics* (Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 2014)

territory soon after the independence, the securitized understanding that was developed in the formative period also crept into the understanding of the new state regarding national identity.

Framing the diversity in identity as a threat to a national imagined community, the postcolonial state strived to shape a model of nationalism based on the exclusionary notion of being and belonging, wherein religion triumphs the overall form of identity markers.¹⁷ This still-perpetuating exclusionary model is based on an ethnoreligious notion of nationalism whereby ‘Muslims’ – and that too Sunni majority than Shiite and others – and ‘Punjabis’ are the first among equals in the hierarchy of identity curated by the Pakistani state.¹⁸ This exclusionary model of national identity directly feeds into the structural logics of Pakistan’s strategic culture and statecraft on establishing and provision of responsive and representative governance at all levels of the state.¹⁹ As underscored earlier, while Janikhel is constitutionally a part of KPK province however the approach exercised by the state in dealing with matters to the area reeks of an understanding that still considers it in the arch of tribal areas that the Pakistan strategic culture imagines through a prism of a “frontier mind.”²⁰

¹⁷ Alyssa Ayres, *Speaking like a State: Language and Nationalism in Pakistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Aasim S. Akhtar, *The Politics of Common Sense: State, Society, and Culture in Pakistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Hassan Gardezi and Jamil Rashid, *Pakistan: The Roots of Dictatorship (The Political Economy of a Praetorian State)* (London: Zed Press, 1983)

¹⁸ Shenila Khoja-Moolji, *Sovereign Attachments: Masculinity, Muslimness, and Affective Politics in Pakistan* (California: University of California, 2021); Nosheen Ali, *Delusional States: Feeling Rule and Development in Pakistan’s Northern Frontier* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Husain Haqqani, *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military* (Carnegie Endowment for Peace, 2005)

¹⁹ Ammar A. Jan, *Rule of Fear: Eight Theses on Authoritarianism in Pakistan* (Lahore: Folio Books, 2021); Abubakr Siddique, *The Pashtun Question: The Unresolved Key to the Future of Pakistan and Afghanistan* (London: Hurst Publishers, 2014); Sarah Eleazar and Arsalan Khan, “The Sovereign Power of the Mob: Blasphemy Accusations as Democratic Politics in Pakistan,” *Society for Cultural Anthropology*, March 16, 2021, <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/the-sovereign-power-of-the-mob-blasphemy-accusations-as-democratic-politics-in-pakistan>

²⁰ M. Ilyas Khan, “Uncovering Pakistan’s secret human rights abuses,” *BBC News*, June 02, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-48139648>; Frud Bezhan and Daud Khattak, “Reform of Colonial-Era Laws Aims to bring Pakistan’s ‘Black Hole’ into the Light,” *Gandhara*, May 03, 2017, <https://gandhara.rferl.org/a/pakistan-tribal-areas-reforms/28465511.html>; Saman Rizwan, “Counterterrorism through People’s Lens,” *Centre for Strategic and Contemporary Research (CSCR)*, June 24, 2021, <https://cscr.pk/explore/themes/defense-security/counterterrorism-through-peoples-lens/>; Farooq Yousaf and Steve Wakhu, “Security in the ‘Periphery’ of

Notwithstanding the much-celebrated FATA merger bill that reshaped the constitutional status of the territories in the legal framework of the state, the prospective reforms and governance intended to be practiced in the region are still a long shot as the managers of Pakistan's securitized state are apprehensive in loosening their monopoly over the actual control and the underlying understanding that shaped much of the Pakistan strategic culture toward the tribal territories.

Thus, the relationship between citizens and the state in these tribal territories are practiced in semi-imperial terms wherein citizens are merely imagined as subjects of a center that is acting upon a role of a semi-imperial entity regulating state-society relations by operationalizing its "frontier mind."²¹ Despite having regular intervals of electoral exercise to practice their democratic right in electing their representative to the assemblies, the nature of governance in these territories, Janikhel included, is democratic in name only as the affairs are regulated extensively in an autocratic fashion even by the provincial government that is supposedly representative of the locale will.²²

This arbitrariness and semi-imperial governing outlook, therefore, impede middle structures of state that ought to serve as an intermediary between the people and the state. No doubt that protestors in Janikhel attempted to march to Islamabad to register their protest and it was only after this expression of intent by them that the provincial government swung into action and the chief minister himself had to preside over the signing of an agreement. The disequilibrium of power between the people and the state embodies the hierarchy of identity that shaped the *National*

post-colonial states: analyzing Pakistan's 'tribal' Pashtuns and Kenyan-Somalis," *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation, and Culture* 26, no. 4: pp. 515-532

²¹ Elisabeth Leake, "At the nation-state's edge: centre-periphery relations in post-1947 South Asia," *The Historical Journal* 59, no. 2: pp. 509-539; Asad Hashim, "FATA: The Never-Ending War on Pakistan's Periphery," *World Politics Review*, January 06, 2015, <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/fata-the-never-ending-war-on-pakistan-s-periphery/>

²² Raja Qaiser Ahmed, Mohammad Ishaq and Muhammad Shoaib, "The Changing Political Trends in Erstwhile FATA: A Study of the Last Three Elections," *International Area Studies Review* 24, no. 4: pp. 335-348

Self in the country as people in these faraway peripheries are less of a citizen and more of a subject of a semi-imperial state.

Rule by Decree

Identity and governance tend to have a corresponding relationship when it comes to the practice of statecraft. Many of the postcolonial states constructed and shaped the nature of their national identity in the hierarchical structure where the notion of majoritarianism has profound clout. Those identities that found themselves at the bottom of the hierarchy of identity have to endure a kind of governance in their territories that is mostly arbitrary, autocratic, and unresponsive to local demands. The existence of these identities in the national cartographic consciousness has more to do with the territorial compulsions than an all-embracing attitude by the power elite of the postcolonial states.

The tribal territories including Janikhel are representative of these territorial compulsions. The power elite that led the Pakistan struggle against British raj did not have a coherent roadmap to recognize the distinct being and belonging character of the tribal territories. The mind of the political strategists was prefixed on the strategically territorial necessity to achieve a relatively composite state. However, citing the insecurity complex that feeds into Pakistan strategic culture, this historical legacy of territorial compulsions and the dilemmas of being and belonging still perpetuates the same kind of thinking and practices of statecraft that were being practiced in the formative years.²³

²³ Shakeeb Asrar and Wajeeha Malik, "Pakistan's Tribal Areas: 'Neither Faith nor Union Found,'" *Al Jazeera*, 2019, <https://interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/2019/pakistans-tribal-areas-fata/index.html>; Ziad Haider, "Mainstreaming Pakistan's Tribal Belt: A Human Rights and Security Imperative," *Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs*, 2009, <https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/files/xstandard/Student%20discussion%20paper%200901.pdf>

Even though the 18th constitutional amendment regarding devolution of power and 25th constitutional amendment regarding FATA merger with KPK provided a glimpse of what could be an outreach to these areas by the Pakistani state to bring them on parity with the mainstream, and ensure the granting and preservation of the constitutional rights of the people residing in these areas, the realities of power and exercise of authority on the ground reflects a continuation of the kind of arbitrary and authoritarian statecraft that was being practiced since the earliest of days of their integration with Pakistan.²⁴

This continuation harbors a profound structural malaise within it as the perpetuation of this kind of statecraft wherein people are imagined as subjects of a semi-imperial territory and their very being and belongingness are securitized to only serve in the grand geostrategic objectives of the state.²⁵ This continuation tends to lead toward exhaustion of statecraft which ultimately breeds insecurity and violence – features that led to the protests in Janikhel. The continuation of the exhausted statecraft also characterizes the state’s inability in recognizing the failures of the governing model as well as reevaluating the center-periphery relations despite the passage of 18th and 25th constitutional amendments.²⁶

This failure stems from the addictiveness of the state toward a kind of geostrategy based on power politics. This kind of geostrategy merit a state behavior toward frontier territories that considers them as buffer zones to mitigate security threats to the mainstream. By exercising actual

²⁴ Imrana Begum, “FATA’s Merger with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: An Historical Analysis,” *Pakistan Perspectives* 23, no. 2: pp. 127-143; Kiyya Baloch and Kenneth Andresen, “Reporting in Conflict Zones in Pakistan: Risks and Challenges for Fixers,” *Media and Communications* 8, no. 1: pp. 37-46

²⁵ Umar Farooq, “How War Altered Pakistan’s Tribal Areas,” *Foreign Affairs*, October 06, 2017, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/pakistan/2017-10-06/how-war-altered-pakistans-tribal-areas>; Farid Alam, “Dismantling Pakistan’s Tribal Areas,” *Asia Foundation*, October 24, 2018, <https://asiafoundation.org/2018/10/24/dismantling-pakistans-tribal-areas/>

²⁶ Samra Anwar and Abdur Rehman, “The Future of FATA: When Reforms Come Knocking,” *London School of Economics*, October 26, 2017, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/southasia/2017/10/26/the-future-of-fata-when-reforms-come-knocking/>

control over the regulation of space and people in these territories, the state securitizes its understanding of being and belonging. In this securitization approach, the imagining of citizens by the state conforms to the semi-imperial notion of relations. Whenever they protest, they tend to be considered as challenging power than exercising their constitutional rights. This notional imagining of citizen-state relations in these areas configures into the wider spectacle of regional geopolitics as citizens are imagined as subjects to be arbitrarily regulated than acting as constitutionally-empowered citizens of a national state.

Following the failures in imagining a new kind of relations with the people in tribal territories, the state double downs on its securitized approach by constructing a “representational black hole” around these areas. In the mainstream discourse of storytelling and policy, these areas aren't part of conversations. Their discursive, visual, and cultural representations are marginal, in some instances holistically absent, from the national mainstream that often focuses on metropolises than regions such as Janikhel.

In perpetuating its power-centric worldview in geostrategy, the Pakistani state aggravates genuine grievances of the people in tribal territories with its exhausted statecraft that fails on the multitude of levels including remodeling of state structures, a genuinely representative form of local governance, reimagining public agency, and underscoring the representation of tribal territories in mainstream cultural and political conversations.

Conclusion – What’s Past is Prologue

History has a way of making itself relevant in contemporary moments. The more one tries to cast off the influence of history, the more the latter exerts itself into the matrix. The intransigence exhibited by the Pakistani statecraft in reforming its approaches especially the understanding

towards the frontier territories is a case in point as the same local grievances of violence, mayhem, and rights continue to reappear.

Undoubtedly, imperial legacies of the past and partition violence shape much of the strategic behavior of the Pakistani state viz-a-viz these territories, the history also underscore the need for reforming thinking and governing approach. The Pakistani state did make important progress in terms of constitutionalizing the role of frontier territories and extending theoretically the provision of constitutional rights to the people in these areas, much work is still left to be done on the ground as ideas, norms, and values are embedded in the Pakistani strategic culture persist in informing the state's approach to these territories.

Primarily, the Pakistani state must reconsider its geostrategic role in the region as much of the thinking and practices are shaped by this. For developmental economics and peace to be triumph in these territories, the state should imagine that all geopolitics is local. By healing and addressing local concerns, considering the expression of these concerns as legitimate legal and constitutional demands than a ploy by "nefarious enemies" is a first step in reconstituting center-periphery relations.

Subsequently, the state must also reimagine the people as citizens, not as subjects of a national state by empowering them constitutionally and establishing responsive legal and political structures that provide easy access to justice and consider the right to protest and dissent as a constitutional one. The fact that Janikhel protestors had to call out the prime minister of the country reflects the degree of confidence they have in middle structures of governance.

By reshaping structures and agency, the state must also focus on representational issues beyond electing members to assemblies. Information blackouts due to "security sensitivities" only led to the aggravation of local concerns. These wounds of the people when left unattended and

festered for far too long tend to have repercussions that could result in a self-fulfilling prophecy of insecurity and turbulent borders in the mind of Pakistan's security managers.

Conclusively, by building on these issues of representation, responsive structures, and constitutional agency, the Pakistani statecraft could remodel its "frontier mind" outlook of tribal territories as establishing and preserving them would ensure a citizen-centric approach to governance in which people are equal participants along with the state in preserving and sustaining social stability. A Citizen-centric approach to governance would co-opt people in maintaining peace in the territories and ensure that no security threat would come from their areas.

The constitutional amendments are the first, important step in the right direction toward reconstituting Pakistan's relationship with its frontier territories. The current statecraft as it notionally and practically exercised is holistically exhausted and demands a significant revision to the norms, values, and conduct of the everyday state in these territories.