

PRODUCING LIMINAL SPACES:  
BORDERS, SOVEREIGNTY, AND GOVERNANCE IN THE GILGIT AGENCY

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## Introduction

“In November 1947, there was only one flagpole in South Asia where the Union Jack still fluttered. This was at the mountainous post of Kalandarchi in the Gilgit Agency where Subedar Jamshed Khan, an ardent imperialist, could not bear the transfer of the agency to Kashmiri hands”.<sup>1</sup>

This anecdote, although seemingly trivial and of questionable authenticity, speaks volumes about the complicated legacy of imperialism along British India’s northern frontier. Today this region forms part of Gilgit-Baltistan, an autonomous administrative unit in northern Pakistan. More than 65 years after attaining independence the constitutional status of this area still remains undetermined.

Over the past six decades there has been a struggle by the inhabitants of Gilgit-Baltistan for greater autonomy and the extension of fundamental rights to them. However, Islamabad has followed a policy of deliberate ambiguity. There has been an uneven participatory approach for incorporating Gilgit-Baltistan representatives in federal bodies, application of century-old colonial rules such as the Frontier Crimes Regulation, and direct administration over people who have no political or electoral rights.

Present-day Gilgit-Baltistan is divided into six districts (Astore, Diamer, Ghanche, Ghizer, Gilgit, Hunza-Nagar, and Skardu). This area borders the Chinese province of Xinjiang to the north; Indian administered Jammu and Kashmir to the east; Pakistan administered Azad Jammu and Kashmir to the south; and Afghanistan through the Wakhan corridor to the west. A historically strategic area it has often been called the ‘fulcrum of

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<sup>1</sup> Yaqoob Bangash, “Three Forgotten Accessions: Gilgit, Hunza, Nagar”, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 38, 1 (2010), 117.

Asia' since it was here that the jealously guarded frontiers of three nineteenth century empires – the British, Russian, and Chinese – met.

Article 1 of the Constitution of Pakistan defines the territories comprising the Republic as the provinces of Balochistan, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtoonkhaw and Sindh; the Islamabad Capital Territory; Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA); and such states and territories as are or may be included in Pakistan whether by accession or otherwise.<sup>2</sup> Gilgit-Baltistan is then not legally included in the territories comprising the Pakistani state.

Even though Islamabad does not recognize Gilgit-Baltistan to be legally part of Pakistan, the Citizenship Act of 1951 applies to the people of this region. Since 1981, residents of Gilgit-Baltistan have been legally allowed to carry a Pakistani passport and apply for a NICOP (National Identity Card of Pakistan). However the residents of Gilgit-Baltistan are not represented in the National Assembly or Senate, and can not seek redress through the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

The main reason for the liminal place of Gilgit-Baltistan is argued to be its status as one of the key-players in the Kashmir dispute. The Pakistan military has propped up the disputed nature Gilgit-Baltistan in order to ensure maximum votes for accession to Pakistan if a UN mandated plebiscite is held. The inclusion of Hunza and Nagar, which have considered themselves as independent states and were declared so by the British in 1935, in to Gilgit-Baltistan also points towards how Pakistan intends on using this region as a bargaining chip in the resolution of the Kashmir issue.

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<sup>2</sup> Government of Pakistan. *The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan 1973*. <Last accessed March 25, 2013 <http://www.pakistani.org/pakistan/constitution/>>

Gilgit-Baltistan's liminal status is also a legacy of colonial rule. By keeping the political status and territorial limits of the Gilgit Agency undefined, the British administered the region without raising fears of annexation in Dogra minds. The Gilgit Agency, established in 1889, was created out of previously impendent states in light of strategic imperatives along British India's northern frontier. At the height of imperial rivalries and boundary making, the forging of this Agency could be understood exercise in modern state power – the demarcation of borders to assert undivided sovereignty. However at this fringe of the empire borders and sovereignty were not always coterminous: the nature of governance and statecraft in the Gilgit Agency points towards the operation of multiple centers of power.

Legally a part of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir since 1846, the British deliberating sidelined Dogra authority over the Agency ever since its establishment. This was done to ensure more control over trade and communication routes, while securing India's northern frontier in an era of international boundary making. Moreover there were concerns over Dogra administration, corruption, and their lack of effective political authority over the region.

Although part of the princely state of Jammu Kashmir, the Gilgit Agency was administered and governed by the British. Much like other parts of the Indian frontier, the British ruled through 'natural leaders'. By subsidizing these rulers heavily the British fashioned a mode of governance that was primarily concerned with ordering these societies, rather than incorporating them into debates over rights and citizenship. The local leaders continued to exert substantial authority over their subjects.

Sovereignty in the Gilgit Agency was not rooted in the Westphalian notion of asserting authority and jurisdiction over territory, but rather in the power to “declare the colonial exception”.<sup>3</sup> The nature of sovereignty was then divisible, and at times ambiguous. The colonial government used the ambiguous nature of this sovereignty to legally administer, but not possess the Gilgit Agency. The ‘handing back’ of the Gilgit Agency to the Dogras in 1947 meant its incorporation into a princely state that had never asserted complete political authority over it before.

With the tying of the Gilgit Agency to the Kashmir issue, the Pakistani state continued to treat it as a colonial outpost and adopted the same political, legal, and economic policies as the British imperial government up till the 1970s. The ambiguities in sovereignty still continued since the Gilgit Agency and Baltistan were legally disputed territory. The post-colonial state used this pretext to deny basic constitutional rights to the people, deprive them from participating in decision-making at the center, and provide them limited powers of self-governance.

In 1970 limited reforms were made, and the Gilgit Agency and Baltistan were formed into an administrative unit called the Northern Areas. Although these two regions shared certain similarities, they had never been politically united in pre-colonial or colonial times. In certain historiography there has been a tendency to examine these regions as one entity – however such works tend to read back in time, assuming the Northern Areas as a historical reality. Whereas the states comprising the Gilgit Agency were linked more closely to Chitral and Badakshan, Baltistan had strong ties to Tibet and Ladakh. The latter was also

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<sup>3</sup> Partha Chatterjee, *The Black Hole of Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 181.

not incorporated into British structures of governance unlike the Gilgit Agency. Given their varied historical trajectories, this thesis will then focus on the geographic area comprising the Gilgit Agency.

The first chapter “Creating Spaces” examines imperial conceptions of the northern frontier of India, and how this led to the establishment of a political entity labeled as the Gilgit Agency. At the apogee of the so-called ‘Great Game’ mapping was used as a tool to create spaces, secure strategic imperatives of trade and communication, and partake in imperial rivalries. However, an exercise in mapping alone was not enough to assert political authority over the Gilgit Agency.

“Managing the Colonial Frontier” then observes how a new administrative structure and military operations were employed to secure control over this area. While examining the nature of colonial governance and statecraft in the Gilgit Agency, it becomes clear that the local leaders of these states still exercised a substantial amount of power over their subjects. Throughout the course of its existence the exact territorial extent and political status of the British Indian Gilgit Agency was never clearly defined. This ambiguity, combined with a clear sidelining of Dogra authority, would then contribute to the liminal status occupied by the Gilgit Agency.

The final chapter, “Postcolonial Liminality” traces the political trajectory of the Gilgit Agency/Northern Areas/Gilgit-Baltistan since 1947. Following the Gilgit Rebellion (1947) the people of this region called for integration within the Pakistani state. However the Kashmir dispute was always used as an excuse to delay constitutional recognition and the provision of political and electoral rights. I will argue that current concerns over power

generation and Chinese influence in Gilgit-Baltistan contributed to the recently enacted *Empowerment and Self-Government Order, 2009* which promises to provide full internal autonomy and province-like status to Gilgit-Baltistan, without actually conferring the status of a constitutional province on it.

The imperial project of territorialization – which was an attempt to assert political authority by demarcating boundaries – was never fully completed in the Gilgit Agency. Much like the oddly defined and administered Gilgit Agency of colonial India, the Gilgit-Baltistan of today waits for autonomy, representation, and rights. In some ways the process of decolonization started in 1947, is still ongoing in Gilgit-Baltistan.



## Creating Spaces

Algernon Durand's account of his tenure as the Political Agent in Gilgit depicts a "constant struggle to raise a stretch of Frontier 300 miles in length from a condition of incessant war, anarchy and oppression, into a state of fairly established peace, prosperity and good government".<sup>4</sup> Although contemporary understandings of the frontier define it as the swathe of land situated between the modern day nation-states of Afghanistan and Pakistan, Durand's remark reminds us that in the nineteenth century this term denoted the space that extended from the Afghan to the meeting point of the British, Russian and Chinese empires.

This frontier was part territorial, part conceptual: Durand's struggle is not only based on efforts at asserting control, but also points out the frequent tropes associated with such spaces. This chapter examines how the British colonial government conceptualized what would constitute the latter-day Gilgit Agency, and to what extent mapping was used as a tool of imperial control in this space. I will argue that the Gilgit Agency was an artificially forged political entity, created to secure trade routes and communication channels in a strategically important space. The process of mapping and remapping then was not only an attempt to delineate spheres of influence, but also a desire to order societies vital to trade.

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<sup>4</sup> Algernon Durand, *The Making of a Frontier: Five Years' Experiences and Adventures in Gilgit, Hunza, Nagar, Chitral and the Eastern Hindukush* (Karachi: Indus Publications, 1977) xi.

## Land of the Dards

Bernard Cohn's classic work on the colonial episteme examined the "ideological construction" of an Indian past through the appropriation and organization of knowledge. The forms of knowledge engendered would then be used to legitimize colonial rule in India.<sup>5</sup> Recent historiography however has complicated this episteme by arguing that these forms of knowledge were mediated through an indigenous framework – these works have also noted that the later generation of British civil servants and explorers were not only interested in recording knowledge, but also controlling it.<sup>6</sup>

The forms of knowledge produced about the Gilgit Agency would then fall into the latter periodization of British civil servants. The two most influential works written on this region were the *Jummoo and Kashmir Territories* by Frederic Drew (1875) and *Dardistan* by G.W Leitner (1866, 1886, and 1893). Although written for starkly different purposes – the first written by an English geologist during his tenure at the Maharaja's court, and the second by a Hapsburg/British orientalist vociferously opposing British military incursions in this region – they both had a profound effect on both British and Dogra understanding and conceptualization.

During his travels to the region, Leitner coined the name *Dardistan* to refer to,

"the country of the Daradas of Hindu mythology and embraces in the narrowest sense of the term, the Shina-speaking countries (Gilgit); in a wider sense, Hunza, Nagyr, Yasin and Chitral; and in the wildest also parts of Kafiristan".<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

<sup>6</sup> B.D Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) 16.

<sup>7</sup> G.W Leitner, *Writings of Dr Leitner* (Lahore: Government College, 2002) 273.

This name was based on the linguistic heritage of what he recognized as Dardic-speaking tribes whose pedigree could be traced back to Pliny and Ptolemy. The term although used by some explorers and administrators would prove to be contentious: in published writings both Leitner and Durand would fight over its accuracy, with political stances over British expansion as their ulterior motives. Later day linguists would also argue that the term lumped together unrelated linguistic and ethnic groups.<sup>8</sup> In any case, the usage of Dardistan implied that although its people might be divided through kinship, caste, or religion there was a common linguistic bond that united them. What would later comprise the Gilgit-Agency would then be roughly, but not exactly, coterminous with Leitner's Dardistan.

Leitner, who saw himself as a linguist, wrote copiously on the folk tales, songs, and customs of Dardistan – directly translating the legends of the area. A place inhabited by fairies, Dardistan was then viewed as a place removed from the politics and cultural transformations in the rest of British India. Although it might have not have been Leitner's intention, but his work would then inform tropes of primitiveness and political stagnation employed by latter-day British officers and explorers.

Another factor which would contribute to the conceptualization of Gilgit and its surrounding areas as far removed, and which figured prominently in colonial writings was the ecology of the region. Drew, Leitner and others such as George Hayward would describe the flora and fauna of the region in detail. This tied in with the rise of empiricism

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<sup>8</sup> Georg Morgeinstierne, *Indo-Irani Frontier Languages* (Oslo: H. Ascheoug & Co, 1973) 139.

and emphasis on taxonomy in European science, and missions such as these would later contribute to the founding of the Botanical Survey of India in 1887.

A predominantly mountainous area traversed by valleys and capped in by snow peaks and glaciers – Dardistan would occupy a place in the colonial imagination as dangerous territory to be explored only by ‘heroic frontiersmen’.<sup>9</sup> Aurel Stein, a Hungarian-British archaeologist conducting research in Chinese Turkestan noted that the Dards occupied the hill tracts formed by the drainage area of the Upper Kishanganga (later renamed the Neelum River). Further elaborating on the geophysical features of this area he noted that,

“Mountain ranges of exceptional ruggedness, covered by eternal snows on their summit lines, and culminating in some of the highest peaks of the world render communication difficult for even for the hardy hill men who have succeeded during so many centuries in maintaining here their struggle with a harsh climate and a barren soil. Frequently the confined valleys themselves present almost equal difficulties, where they narrow to rock-bound gorges filled completely for considerable periods of the year by snow-fed rivers”.<sup>10</sup>

Commenting on the natural resources and agricultural produce Drew noted that the main crops were apricots and walnuts. In the relatively fertile valley Gilgit Valley grains such as wheat, barley, and maize were also cultivated.<sup>11</sup> For the most part Dardistan was not particularly fertile, and inhabitants frequently pursued

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<sup>9</sup> For more on the characteristics of the ‘heroic frontiersman’ see Alex McKay, “Tracing Lines Upon the Unknown Areas of the Earth: Reflections on Frederick Jackson Turner and the Indo-Tibetan Frontier” in Elizabeth Kolsky and Sameetah Agha, *Fringes of Empire: Peoples, Places and Spaces in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011), 78-79.

<sup>10</sup> Aurel Stein. *Ancient Khotan: Detailed Report of Archaeological Explorations in Chinese Turkestan* (Hacker Art Books, 1975) 3.

<sup>11</sup> Frederic Drew, *The Jummoo and Kashmir Territories: A Geographical Account* (London: E. Stanford, 1875), 467.

economic avenues through raiding caravans and participating in the slave-trade to Badakshan.

The form of Islam followed by its inhabitants would also distinguish it from the rest of India– with Shias (Aga Khanis) and Nurbakhishs (a Shia sufi order) comprising the majority rather than Sunnis. British efforts of documenting and ordering in Afghanistan were focused mostly on kinship ties, and this would aid in the creation of “tribal societies”.<sup>12</sup> In Gilgit, caste would emerge as a factor in trying to order society.<sup>13</sup> These subdivisions – the Ronu, Shin, Yashkun, Kremin and Dum – were said to perform different functions in society.<sup>14</sup>

Grouping by caste would not gain much traction in later colonial works and this may have been partly due to the lack of importance attached to understanding the internal dynamics of society. Based off their experience with the Pashtun ‘tribals’ the British political and military officers were more akin to conceptualizing groups who had a leader – even if he was the first among equals. This would then be the *Ra, Raja, Tham, Mehtar* or *Trakhne*, who was initially seen as a spiritual guarantor of fertility for crops, fruit-trees, cattle and humans.<sup>15</sup> British officials would then understand society in Gilgit and beyond as mediated through the leader and his chosen men.

Leitner’s work produced a large colonial archive of knowledge on Dardistan: even if his objective was “the serious study of Oriental subjects”, his writings would be one of the

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<sup>12</sup> Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan*, 26.

<sup>13</sup> For more on British creation of Indian caste see Nicholas Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

<sup>14</sup> Drew, *The Jummoo and Kashmir Territories*, 426-428.

<sup>15</sup> Leitner, *Writings of Dr. Leitner*, 254.

earliest ethnographies and inform how the British initially conceptualized Dardistan in the 1860s.<sup>16</sup> Starting with works produced in the following decade there would be a marked shift in type of knowledge produced – from Leitner’s folk tales of fairies to accurate descriptions and calculations of routes in Dardistan.<sup>17</sup> Whereas works such as Leitner’s tried to understand the internal dynamics of Gilgit society and its surrounding areas, the later ones were directly tied to efforts at gaining political control.

Baltistan was treated as a separate region in colonial writings on Dardistan. Works such as Drew’s, examining the entirety of the Jammu and Kashmir territories, had different sections on Baltistan and Dardistan. It is noted that the Baltis were “Muhammadanised Tibetans” who spoke a language slightly different than, but mutually intelligible with, Ladakhi.<sup>18</sup> The region historically shared stronger connections with Leh, Ladakh and Yarkand in Chinese Turkestan – where many of them had settled or conducted trade. There were also, less strong, connections with the states comprising the Gilgit Agency and many Baltis intermarried with people from Astore and Gilgit.<sup>19</sup> However given limited British intervention in Baltistan, the historical trajectories of Dardistan and Baltistan would diverge until the post-colonial period.

### **The Treaty of Amritsar, 1846**

The East India Company would first come in contact with the territory that would comprise the latter-day Gilgit Agency in the aftermath of the First Anglo-Sikh War (1845-6).

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<sup>16</sup> Leitner, *Writings of Dr. Leitner*, 227.

<sup>17</sup> For example see Drew, *The Jummoo and Kashmir Territories*, Appendix II.

<sup>18</sup> Drew, *The Jummoo and Kashmir Territories*, 356.

<sup>19</sup> E.F Knight, *Where Three Empires Meet; a Narrative of Recent Travel in Kashmir, Western Tibet, Gilgit and the Adjoining Countries* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1905) 247.

The resulting Treaties of Lahore and Amritsar (1846) would create the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir: they served as a way of rewarding Gulab Singh, a Dogra chief in Ranjit Singh's court, for allying with the British. Article I of the Treaty of Amritsar defined the territorial limits of Gulab Singh's possessions. These included,

“...all the hilly and mountainous country, with its dependencies, situated to the eastward of the River Indus and westward of the River Ravee, including Chamba and excluding Lahul...”<sup>20</sup>

This Treaty signed between Sir Henry Hardinge, on behalf of the British Government, and Gulab Singh patched previously disparate territories together. The creation of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir under a Dogra ruler included a number of strategic imperatives: it served as a buffer between Afghan and British territories; it absorbed parts of the Sikh kingdom without the British having to invest significant resources; it was also provided a stable state under British control in light of an expanding Tsarist empire; and arguably offered a Hindu cushion in an otherwise ‘fanatical’ Muslim belt.

The separation of Kashmir from the plains of Punjab underscored the British notion of the ability of boundaries to isolate areas that had been loosely integrated before and shared cultural similarities. Through the Treaty, with its geographic specifications, the East India Company was then employing the language of territoriality and how it defined the limits of sovereignty. Whereas political authority had mostly been exercised people before, in British perceptions it was now tied to the concept of space and land.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> CU Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighboring Countries Vol IX* (Calcutta: Government of India Central Publication Branch) 353.

<sup>21</sup> Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan*, 25.

The Treaty did not explicitly mention the Gilgit Valley and its neighboring areas that were located *northwest* of the River Indus and not *east*. This would later become a point of contention, and was defended by Frederic Drew who stated that “...the framers did not know very exactly nor care to express very closely how the countries lay”.<sup>22</sup>

In 1847 a British commission led by Vans Agnew was sent to negotiate with local rulers and collect intelligence. Even though Vans Agnew was not particularly successful in the first goal, he was able to provide information on the political situation at the moment. In addition to that his diaries and correspondence he included a sketch of his idea of the relative locations of Gilgit and its surrounding areas – which he placed as northwest of the Indus.<sup>23</sup> Even if British officials were not familiar with the location of Gilgit when the Treaty of Amritsar was drawn up, a year later Vans Agnew’s map confirmed it.

The argument of British ignorance presented by the likes of Drew would then prove to be false. It was clear that after 1847 Dogra military incursions in Gilgit went against the territorial limits defined by the Treaty. British officials would turn a blind-eye to this partly due to their buttressing of the Dogras as successors of the Sikh state, and also because expansion into Gilgit afforded vital strategic imperatives.

### **Emergence of Mapping**

Vans Agnew’s map was not only meant to clarify the geographical position of Gilgit and its surrounding areas in regards to the Treaty of Amritsar. Rather it spoke towards a broader trend – the emergence of mapping and boundary making as a tool of imperial

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<sup>22</sup> Drew, *The Jummoo and Kashmir Territories*, 440.

<sup>23</sup> Reynell G Taylor, *Political Diaries of Lt. Reynell G. Taylor, Mr. P Sandys Melvill, Pundit Kunhaya Lal, Mr. P.A Vans Agnew, Lt. J Nicholson, Mr. L Bowring, and Mr. A.H Cocks* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2006) 290.



control. British attempts at surveying and mapmaking were linked to a rise in empiricism and the information revolution of the preceding decades. Cartography then became a means to rationalize space and create colonial knowledge of land, customs, and people.<sup>24</sup> Through efforts such as the Great Trigonometric Survey of India not only were longitudes determined, but territories were also demarcated.

The letters of George Hayward, an ex-British soldier and explorer for the Royal Geographic Society present a fuller picture of map-making efforts in Gilgit and its surrounding areas. In 1869 Hayward was funded by Sir Henry Rawlinson and provided with surveying equipment and mapmaking instruments to explore the Pamir Mountains. Not only did Hayward calculate the exact height of various mountains and provide their coordinates, but he also represented these in the form of elaborate maps.<sup>25</sup> Hayward's representations of Gilgit in the form of a map, along with other such representations by other explorers then formed another veritable colonial archive of knowledge.

The preoccupation with mapping was rooted in a particular Westphalian understanding of the state, where borders were employed to depict 'territoriality': this was an attempt at political authority over people by delimiting and controlling a geographic area.<sup>26</sup> With technological tools such as surveying, measuring and representation not only was space depicted but in certain instances, created.

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<sup>24</sup> Matthew Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India 1765-1843* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997) 319.

<sup>25</sup> George W. Hayward, "Letters from Mr. G.W Hayward on his Explorations in Gilgit and Yasin", *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, 41 (1871) 5.

<sup>26</sup> Thongchai Waichakul, *Siam Mapped: The History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994) 16.

This creation and disciplining of space was also achieved in part by peacetime reconnaissance reports: these produced route reports dividing movement along a track in segments of time and distance.<sup>27</sup> These route reports were vital to securing communication lines. Drew's *Jummoo and Kashmir Territories* contains an exhaustive list of 30 routes with details of height above sea level and distance from one segment to the other. It also provides general comments on best methods to navigate these areas such as the time of year passes are open, mode of crossing, etc.<sup>28</sup> Each route then corresponds with that drawn in a Political Map by Drew. Both maps and route reports then produced an "archive of space" through which military strategists sitting in Simla and London knew which places assisted, and which acted as obstacles, for the flow of men and material.<sup>29</sup>

More recently, Kapil Raj has argued against the privileging of European colonizers in knowledge production as depicted in the works of Edney. Rather he has argued that especially for areas such as the Transhimalayas data was mostly collected by native informants and then compiled into maps and reports. Arguing for the co-construction of this knowledge, he states that Pundits played a constitutive role in the mountains of Jammu and Kashmir with regards to the conceptualization of space and creation of maps.<sup>30</sup> However the works of Hayward and Drew do not allude to the employment of any locals in his surveying and mapping activities, and more importantly it would be problematic to

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<sup>27</sup> James Hevia, *The Imperial Security State: British Colonial Knowledge and Empire-Building in Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) 74.

<sup>28</sup> Drew, *The Jummoo and Kashmir Territories*, 521-544.

<sup>29</sup> Hevia, *The Imperial Security State*, 87.

<sup>30</sup> Kapil Raj, *Relocating Modern Science: Circulation and the Construction of Knowledge in South Asia and Europe, 1650-1900* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)

regard Pundits as locals. For the people of the Gilgit, the Kashmiri Pundits may have been as much colonizers as the British.

### **The 'Great Game'**

It is argued that British efforts at mapping and reconnaissance were in some part fueled by the 'Great Game' – the perceived Anglo-Russian imperial rivalry immortalized in works such as Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*.<sup>31</sup> Although the term would gain much currency in both political and public circles, it encompassed a complex set of imperial concerns. Russian advances in Central Asia and their conquering of the khanates of Bokhara (1866); Samarkand (1868); and Khiva (1873) provided fodder for this Game in British eyes. These led to the so-called 'Eastern Question' – in light of Tsarist expansion, what were British strategic imperatives on the Indian frontiers?<sup>32</sup>

B.D Hopkins, along with other revisionist historians, has recently attempted to debunk this myth of the Great Game. Hopkins argues that the East India Company's policy from 1809-1842 was primarily focused on containing a powerful Sikh state rather than the Russian menace.<sup>33</sup> However one is left to wonder what weightage he would assign to the

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<sup>31</sup> For historic works on the Great Game see Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia* (New York: Kodansha International, 1992) and Karl Ernest Meyer, *Tournament of Shadows: The Great and Race for Empire in Central Asia* (Washington, DC: Counterpoint: 1999).

<sup>32</sup> Hevia, *The Imperial Security State*, 94.

<sup>33</sup> See Chapter 2 of B.D Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan*.

imperial power politics in the latter half of the nineteenth century, which was seen by some to the apogee of the Great Game.<sup>34</sup>

The establishment of the Gilgit Agency was intricately tied to aligning networks of communications and trade routes with British interests, and not merely a result of security issues vis-à-vis the Tsarist state. The Great Game on India's northern frontier was largely an imperial bogeyman, cyclically employed by British policymakers to garner support for the settling and ordering of frontier societies.

The importance of the northern frontier, consisting of Gilgit and its surrounding areas, was then argued to be primarily due to its proximity to the Russian outposts.<sup>35</sup> While on his diplomatic and reconnaissance mission to the area in 1881 Durand painted a familiar specter haunting British policy circles,

“...at the time at which I am writing, had war broken out between us and Russia, there was absolutely nothing to prevent a Russian officer with a thousand Cossacks from reaching Astore in ten days”.<sup>36</sup>

Durand's picture was based more on hyperbole than actual facts: at this time the British had little knowledge of Russian intentions and precise extent of their geographic possessions. Later geographic explorations of the passes of the Northern frontier would establish their inability to accommodate large-scale movement of troops. However this trope of Russian incursions would still continue to be employed in the next few decades. Writing in 1935 Hashmatullah Khan, a civil servant both under the British and Dogras,

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<sup>34</sup> For this view please refer to Robert Huttenback, “The Great Game in the Pamirs and the Hindukush: The British Conquest of Hunza and Nagar”, *Modern Asian Studies*, 9,1 (1975) 1-29.

<sup>35</sup> Durand, *The Making of a Frontier*, 2.

<sup>36</sup> Durand, *The Making of a Frontier*, 41.

noted that the real reason for the establishment of the Gilgit Agency in 1877 and 1889<sup>37</sup> was the Russian threat.<sup>38</sup>

A closer look suggests that the establishment of the Gilgit Agency, and the posting of Political Agent there had other strategic imperatives than just containing the Russian threat. John Biddulph, the first Agent posted in 1877 was said to protect trade and oversee political developments.<sup>39</sup> This clearly indicates that British interests in establishing the Gilgit Agency were not only limited to the Russian threat but they were at least equally concerned with the protection of trade routes.

William Lockhart's mission to Gilgit (1885-86), which played a large part in the establishment of the Agency, was mainly concerned with providing correct knowledge of the Hindukush, its passes, and resources. He was also asked to conduct route surveys on a large scale.<sup>40</sup> Through his findings Lockhart conclusively determined that passes through the Gilgit Agency were not easily navigable for the movement of Russian troops: the Baroghil Pass, which had previously been deemed the easiest route to Gilgit was only suitable for the movement of stray animals. He noted that the Durah Pass was the only one that provided slight danger – however, no army could penetrate it unless a military road was engineered.<sup>41</sup> By the time the decision was made to re-establish the Agency in 1889,

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<sup>37</sup> The Gilgit Agency was established in 1877 with John Biddulph as the Political Agent, but discontinued in 1881. It was then re-established in 1889 with Algernon Durand as the Political Agent.

<sup>38</sup> Hashmatullah Khan, *Tarikh-i-Jammun* (India: Very Nag Pub, 1991).

<sup>39</sup> Yaqoob Bangash, "Three Forgotten Accessions: Gilgit, Hunza, Nagar", *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 38, 1 (2010), 121.

<sup>40</sup> WSA Lockhart, *The Gilgit Mission 1885-1886* (London: Eyre u. Spottiswoode, 1889) iii.

<sup>41</sup> Lockhart, *The Gilgit Mission 1885-1886*, 275.

British policy makers knew that the chances of Russian penetration through Gilgit and its surrounding areas were slim to none.

Lockhart's mission did observe how the acquisition of Gilgit would secure Chitral's loyalty for the British, and provide a right of way through this dominion.<sup>42</sup> All explorers and diplomats traveling to the region in the late nineteenth century noted the strategic importance of Chitral. Pundit Munphool remarked that,

"Chitral is the chief place of commerce in the country. It is situated on the two caravan routes between India, Badakhshan, and Yarkand, which if cared for can be made to connect more closely the north-western frontier of India with Western Turkistan through Badakhshan and Eastern Turkestan through the Pamer steppes..."<sup>43</sup>

Although Chitral did not directly engage in the production of items for trade, it was well known for its thriving slave trade. The rulers of Chitral were in the habit of capturing Shias and Kafir (unbelievers) among others and selling them to slave-dealers in Badakhshan, Balkh, and Bukhara. The price of slaves varied from a hundred to 500 rupees – this was paid partly in cash and partly with goods.<sup>44</sup>

Given the nature of close ties between Gilgit and Chitral and their proximity to each other, British efforts at establishing a presence were heavily influenced by the strategic importance of Chitral as a trade route and entrepot. Historically Chitral had been a tributary of Badakhshan and following the latter's incorporation into Afghanistan, the Amir started making overtures suggesting a wish to occupy Chitral too.<sup>45</sup> A Treaty brokered by

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<sup>42</sup> Lockhart, *The Gilgit Mission 1885-1886*, 276.

<sup>43</sup> Pundit Munphool, "On Gilgit, Chitral and Kashmir", *The Journal of Ethnological Study of London (1869-1870)*, 2,1, (1870) 38.

<sup>44</sup> Munphool, "On Gilgit, Chitral and Kashmir", 38.

<sup>45</sup> Leitner, *Writings of Dr. Leitner*, 385.

the British in 1878 between Ranbir Singh and Aman-ul-Mulk, the ruler of Chitral, tied the geographically important state to Kashmir and thus brought it firmly under the British sphere of influence.<sup>46</sup> Afghan intrigues and the importance of securing trade routes were vital aspects in the establishment of the Gilgit Agency, and the subsequent push into Chitral.

In addition to Chitral, Gilgit's strategic importance and significance to trade was also noted extensively: the Gilgit Agency covered all the passes of the Hindukush from the easternmost one, Shimshal, to the ones at the head of the Yasin river to the west. According to E.F Knight its value also lay in commanding the Indus Valley and the mouth of the Hunza River.<sup>47</sup>

British expansion into the region would also keep in check "unruly tribes" of the Hunza Valley – also known as the Kanjutis – who were in the habit of making raids across the Hindukush. Under the support of the *mir* of Hunza, these 'robbers' were prone to raiding trade caravans crossing through Hunza.<sup>48</sup> According to Knight,

"So great was the dread inspired by these robbers, that large districts have been abandoned by their inhabitants...many a rich caravan on its way from India to Central Asia has been waylaid and pillaged....The Kashmiris and the Chinese found themselves powerless to put a stop to these raids, and the Kanjutis acquired a great prestige, and were considered as quite invincible".<sup>49</sup>

Durand also notes how the name of the Hunza's robbers was a terror to merchants, and how this area was a center of slave trade to 'Chinese Turkestan'.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> CU Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties*, 372.

<sup>47</sup> Knight, *Where Three Empires Meet*, 288.

<sup>48</sup> Knight, *Where Three Empires Meet*, 348.

<sup>49</sup> Knight, *Where Three Empires Meet*, 348.

<sup>50</sup> Durand, *The Making of a Frontier*, 139.

The town of Leh, situated in Ladakh, was a terminus for trade caravans from India and Central Asia. Describing the “cosmopolitan” nature of this town, Knight notes that every summer traders would arrive from India, Tibet, Siberia, Turkestan and other parts of Central Asia, to exchange goods.<sup>51</sup> By the late nineteenth century, Yarkand was the main commercial town of Chinese Sinkiang where Indian traders would reside. In her ethno-history of Ladakh, Fewkes has argued that this trade was not only limited to luxury items such as *pashmina* and carpets, but cotton piece items, *charas* (cannabis) and synthetic dyes also comprised a large volume of this exchange.<sup>52</sup>

The most profitable hunting ground for the Kanjuti robbers was said to be the trade route between Leh and Yarkand over the Karakoram Pass. Kashmiri and Chinese authorities were arguably powerless in stopping these raids. On one occasion the Kanjutis captured a caravan of fifty laden camels and five hundred laden ponies. There were also reports that the merchants captured in these raids were sold as slaves in Chinese Turkestan or to Kirghiz middlemen.<sup>53</sup>

Kanjuti raiders then provided great constrictions to trade with Chinese Turkestan. British establishment of the Gilgit Agency would extend control over these areas, and aid in the management of communication networks and trade routes both towards Chinese Turkestan, Afghanistan and Bokhara.

A commercial treaty signed between the British and the Maharaja Ranbir Singh in 1870 appointed British officers to survey trade routes to Chinese Turkestan. This granted

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<sup>51</sup> Knight, *Where Three Empires Meet*, 177.

<sup>52</sup> Jacqueline Fewkes, *Trade and Contemporary Society along the Silk Road: An Ethno-History of Ladakh* (New York: Routledge, 2009) 115.

<sup>53</sup> Knight, *Where Three Empires Meet*, 348.



the British officers power to authorize the establishment of supply depots, fix the rate of trade goods, and the rents associated with *serais* (rest houses) for trade caravans.<sup>54</sup> Through the treaty both Ranbir Singh and the British agreed not to levy any custom duties on goods in this region, pointing not only towards British interest in these routes, but also an active buttressing of its trade.

Chad Haines has argued that the volume Trans-Karakoram trade, between Leh and Yarkand, was considerably less than that carried out along the northwest frontier. In 1867 the recorded value of imports from Leh to Yarkand was Rs. 171, 092 and from Punjab into Leh Rs. 101, 673. This was not comparable to trade carried out through the Khyber and other northwestern passes which was estimated to be around Rs. 5 million.<sup>55</sup> However with the signing of the 1870 treaty and the subsequent establishment of a British Agency in Leh, the volume of trade going through this entrepot quadrupled.<sup>56</sup>

British explorations in the region had also uncovered potential mineral riches: Durand notes that gold was found in the bed of the Gilgit River. In the valley gold would sell for two-third of the price in Srinagar, and Kashmiri officials and soldiers were engaged in a profitable gold trade.<sup>57</sup> In the next few decades' British officials would also comment on the presence of sulfur deposits and garnets amongst other mineral resources.<sup>58</sup>

Security concerns emanating from perceived inter-imperial rivalry were then not the singular factor in establishing the Gilgit Agency. Rather an attempt at political control

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<sup>54</sup> Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties*, 360.

<sup>55</sup> Chad Haines, *Nation, Territory, and Globalization*, 37.

<sup>56</sup> Fewkes, *Trade and Contemporary Society*, 56.

<sup>57</sup> Durand, *The Making of a Frontier*, 292.

<sup>58</sup> R.C.F Schoenberg, *Between the Oxus and the Indus* (London: Martin Hopkinson Ltd, 1935), 111.

over this area was intricately tied to supporting trade and establishing communication networks. Through the ordering of these people, there was also the promise of reaping material benefits through trade and natural resources. The Great Game was frequently employed in imperial rhetoric – from the likes of Algernon Durand to Lord Lytton. Although it provided a lens for conceiving and justifying expansion into these areas, it also obscured the ground realities and motivations.

### **Mapping and Remapping**

The space constituting the latter-day Gilgit Agency was an imperial borderland –it was a site for “contested boundaries between colonial domains”, even if this contestation was more imagined than real.<sup>59</sup> Adelman notes that by the late nineteenth century there was a palpable shift from imperial rivalry to international coexistence. Even though this shift might not have been so pronounced in the Anglo-Russian case, it did lead to the turning of borderlands into bordered lands.<sup>60</sup>

The last decade of the nineteenth century then witnessed a flurry of British efforts to enter into international agreements delimiting areas of control. In the wake of the Second Afghan War, the Anglo-Afghan agreement (1893) started the demarcation process of the border between Afghanistan and India through the Hindukush Mountains.<sup>61</sup> Similarly the Pamir Boundary Commission delimited the Russo-Afghan border to include

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<sup>59</sup> Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, “From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between North American History”, *The American Historical Review*, 104, 3 (1999) 816.

<sup>60</sup> Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, 816.

<sup>61</sup> For more on the demarcation of the Durand Line see James Hevia, *The Imperial Security State*, 91-106.

the Wakhan Corridor in Afghan territory – creating a buffer between Russian and British space.<sup>62</sup>

The Gilgit Agency, established in 1889, also represented this conception of territoriality: borders were used as markers to denote the ‘us’ against the ‘other’. However the territorial limits of the Gilgit Agency were never fixed – and would be mapped and remapped. This would later contribute what Chad Haines labels as its “liminal status”.<sup>63</sup> When Durand was posted as the Agent in 1889, the Dogra state had control over the Gilgit Wazarat, Astore, Yasin and Punial. In 1891-2 following military campaigns by the British, the valleys of Hunza and Nagar were added to the Agency (even though their exact status was questionable and will be discussed in the following chapter). One of the major reasons for military expeditions in Hunza and Nagar was to quell disturbances caused by Kanjuti raiders, and thus secure trade and communication routes in this strategically sensitive frontier. In the following years the valleys of Darel, Tangir and Chilas were also added within the Agency’s borders.<sup>64</sup> The pretext for incorporating these areas was to stop raids from Chilasi tribes on Dogra and British military forts.<sup>65</sup>

In 1895 the state of Chitral was mapped as part of the Malakand Agency in the North West Frontier.<sup>66</sup> Chitral’s strategic importance has already been mentioned earlier: the demarcation of the Durand Line firmly placed it under British territory limiting Kabul’s

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<sup>62</sup> See “The Proceedings of the Pamir Boundary Commission”, *The Geographical Journal*, 13, 1 (1899).

<sup>63</sup> Chad Haines, *Nation, Territory, and Globalization*, 32.

<sup>64</sup> Durand, *The Making of a Frontier*, 289.

<sup>65</sup> Durand, *The Making of a Frontier*, 372.

<sup>66</sup> Chad Haines, *Nation Territory and Globalization in Pakistan: Traversing the Margins* (London: Routledge, 2012) 26.

claim to this territory. Moreover, by delinking Chitral from the Gilgit Agency, the latter's border with Afghanistan was shortened to only the Wakhan Corridor. With this remapping Badakshan's ties and claims over the small states of the Gilgit Agency would be severed in theory. Placing Chitral in the Northwest Frontier sphere would arguably change British strategic interests in the Gilgit Agency – instead of providing a route to Kabul and Bokhara through Chitral, the Gilgit agency was now primarily viewed as providing access to Chinese Turkestan through Hunza and Nagar.

Even though a clear border was demarcated on the western part of the Gilgit Agency, the border with China remained contentious. In 1889 the British minister in Peking sent a note to the Chinese court suggesting delimitation of the border between India and China. This proposed border would extend beyond the Karakoram watershed to Mount Paolo Sheikovski at the tip of the Wakhan Corridor, where the Russian, Chinese and British empires met.<sup>67</sup> Arguably due to the political upheaval in the Manchu dynasty at the time, there was no reply from China with regards to the border. The British took this as a sign of acquiescence on the part of the Chinese.

In 1905 Lord Curzon was appointed the Viceroy of India. Realizing that Chinese authorities had not responded to the initial delimitation he sent another note proposing to give up British claim to the Tagdumbash Pamir. This was based on correspondence from the Political Agent in Gilgit, who noted that the *mir* of Hunza was unsuccessful in laying claim to land in the Tagdumbash Pamirs.<sup>68</sup> The new border would follow the Karakoram watershed eastward to the Raskam Pamirs. This proposal was based on Curzon's notion of

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<sup>67</sup> Bangash, "Three Forgotten Accessions", 121.

<sup>68</sup> Haines, *Nation, Territory, Globalization*, 27.

the separation of frontiers<sup>69</sup> – now India would not come into contact with Russia, as it had earlier due to Hunza's claim on the Tagdumbash Pamirs. Again, there was no reply from China.<sup>70</sup>

Although some have interpreted this as clear Chinese disinterest in boundary delineation at the time: it is also possible that, as in the case of Siam, boundaries were a matter for local people and not those sitting at the center.<sup>71</sup> However, the British were still interested in establishing the limits of their power through borders and on his travels to Hunza and Chinese Turkestan, P.T Etherton noted that a cairn of stones marked the boundary line between the Chinese and British Empire.<sup>72</sup>

Even though the boundary issue with China was never settled and would later contribute in large part to border disputes, it was clear that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the British tried to clearly demarcate what constituted their spheres of influence. However, they were not beyond tweaking these borders as they saw fit – the changing of their offer to Peking as the Chinese/India border in 1905, clearly showed that as their strategic interests evolved, so did their conceptions of territories and borders.

Before the establishment of the Gilgit Agency access to Baltistan was gained primarily through Ladakh. Haines notes that although transmontane between villages in Nagar and nearby villages in Skardu (Baltistan) existed, they were mostly used for

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<sup>69</sup> For more on the Curzonian vision of frontiers see Lord Curzon of Kedleston, "Text of the 1907 Romanes Lecture on the Subject of Frontiers" <Last accessed online on March 25, 2013 <http://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/ibru/resources/links/curzon.pdf>>

<sup>70</sup> Haines, *Nation, Territory, Globalization*, 27.

<sup>71</sup> Waichakul, *Siam Mapped*, 62.

<sup>72</sup> P.T Etherton, *Across the Roof of the World: A Record of Sport and Travel Through Kashmir, Gilgit, Hunza, the Pamirs, Chinese Turkistan, Mongolia and Siberia* (New York: Frederick A Stokes, 1911) 54.

exchanging goods locally.<sup>73</sup> There were no major routes connecting the Gilgit Agency and Baltistan for commercial purposes. In the early 1900s the British constructed a year-round pony tract from Gilgit to Skardu – this provided quicker access to Baltistan, which was under Dogra rule. Although this tract could be seen as a minor British attempt to bring Baltistan closer to the Gilgit Agency with regards to trade and communications, Baltistan remained politically and administratively disconnected.

## Conclusion

The Gilgit Agency was then a space created from previously independent ‘states’ which in colonial imagining shared a common ethno linguistic heritage, and were loosely integrated through kinship and marital ties. Through delineation the British attempted to turn frontiers into boundaries: whereas the former referred to a zone, often with overlapping authorities, the latter was a line that would theoretically establish a divide between different power centers.

The difference between the delimitation and demarcation of boundaries was also important.<sup>74</sup> The Durand Line and Pamir Boundary Commission *demarcated* the boundaries between the British, Russian and Afghans. Even though attempts were made at establishing the boundaries between China and the Gilgit Agency, the lack of explicit Chinese agreement made this delimitation unsuccessful.

In the first decade after the establishment of the Gilgit Agency there was constant mapping and remapping of areas: however an exercise in cartography alone could not solve

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<sup>73</sup> Haines, *Nation, Territory and Globalization in Pakistan*, 42.

<sup>74</sup> Fewkes (2009) states that “a demarcated boundary, one that has been physically marked and enforced *in situ*, and a delimited boundary, one which is set on a map and explicitly accepted by the states it divides”.

the inherent ambiguity present in power and political authority in the region. British efforts at establishing singular political authority and governing this region are then examined in the next chapter.

## **Managing The Colonial Frontier**

The decade following the establishment of the Gilgit Agency witnessed mapping and remapping efforts as some areas were brought under the Political Agent's jurisdiction, while others were administratively reclassified. In many historical narratives mapping functions as a tool for imperial control: this preoccupation with territoriality however only tells part of the picture; it does not explain how political authority and jurisdiction was asserted within the borders that were created. A map with British colonies colored in red provided one representation of empire, but it depicted little of the variegated nature of British political authority in those areas.

As both an imperial borderland and frontier of British India, not to mention legally part of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, the nature of British governance and statecraft differed qualitatively in the Agency than in other parts of India. The forms of governance employed in the Gilgit Agency were in some respect similar to those in the North-West Frontier as 'traditional' power was buttressed. Through military incursions and administrative changes the British slowly took over political control of the Gilgit Agency from the Dogras. The establishment of British paramountcy in the Gilgit Agency did not translate into a "hollowing of the crown" of the local rulers vis-à-vis the subjects, rather these rulers continued to exercise substantial political authority over them.

The sidelining of Dogra authority in the Gilgit Agency over time was ostensibly based on the incompetence of their military and administrative personnel, and also concerns over their loyalty. However these pretenses also couched British interests in establishing firmer control over communication and trade networks along this strategically



important frontier. It would also be important to note that Dogra political authority was largely limited to the Gilgit district, and had never consolidated fully in other parts of the Agency. With increasing British attempts to sideline Dogra influence, the Agency would then function largely as a British colonial outpost than part of the princely state, and its resulting post-colonial liminal status would be a legacy of this British form of statecraft.

### **Pre-Colonial Forms of Authority**

Similar to other part of the Indian frontier political space was ordered through genealogical and dynastic connections, and not through territory. The area comprising the latter-day Gilgit Agency consisted of small states ruled independently by a *ra*, *thum*, *mehtar*, or *mir* (king or ruler). Even though not integrated under a centralized political authority these states shared political, as well as material, connections.

This can be witnessed in the tale surrounding the creation of Hunza and Nagar. In the fifteenth century the princess of Gilgit gave birth to twins with adjoined backs: one who was energetic and cunning was awarded Hunza, and the other prince who was indolent was awarded Nagar.<sup>75</sup> This folk-tale not only explained the close connections between the two states, but also the historic rivalry between them. There were frequent instances of political intrigue leading to alliances and attacks on other states.

The rulers of these states claimed to be descendants from the Trakhan Dynasty of Gilgit (around the seventh century A.D) – thus up till the start of the nineteenth century kingship was based on dynastic and genealogical legitimacy.<sup>76</sup> The political economy of

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<sup>75</sup> Shah Rais Khan, *Tarikh-e-Gilgit* (Islamabad: Center for the Study of the Civilizations of Central Asia, 1987), 87.

<sup>76</sup> Drew, *Jummoo and Kashmir Territories*, 435.

these states functioned through the collection of taxes by state officials. Collected in the name of the *Ra*, this usually consisted of labor and agricultural produce.<sup>77</sup>

Like other pre-colonial states at the frontier, the *Ra* of each state often maintained a tributary relationship with a suzerain. Suzerainty was then centered on the notion of paramountcy, instead of claiming exclusive allegiance - the relationship focused more on the nature of the tribute rather than controlling land, labor and other resources.<sup>78</sup> In many instances multiple suzerainties could be at play – and the local rulers could skillfully play off one suzerain against another.

Badakshan's ties to Gilgit can be traced back to the thirteenth century: Shah Rais, the ruler of the Trakhan dynasty of Gilgit, sought refuge under the *Tajdar-i-Moghal* (King of the Mongols) in Badakshan. With the help of the *Tajdar-i-Moghal*, Shah Rais was later able to capture and establish control over Chitral.<sup>79</sup> The tributary relation between Chitral and Badakshan continued to flourish up till the nineteenth century. In his travels to Chitral in 1867, Pundit Munphool pointed out that slaves formed one part of the annual tribute that the ruler paid to Badakshan.<sup>80</sup>

Similarly Hunza also recognized the suzerainty of China, paid a nominal tribute, and received presents in return from its ruler.<sup>81</sup> The *thum* of Hunza possessed a *jagir* (estate) in Yarkand, which was awarded to him by China for his help during an insurrection in Turkestan. Moreover in his travels to the region in the 1890s E.F Knight noted that the Kanjutis, under the control of the *thum* of Hunza, often visited Yarkand, and the Hunzais,

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<sup>77</sup> Munphool, "Relations Between Gilgit, Chitral and Kashmir", 37.

<sup>78</sup> Magnus Marsden and B.D Hopkins, *Fragments of the Afghan Frontier* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 28.

<sup>79</sup> Shah Rais Khan, *Tarikh-e-Gilgit*. 79.

<sup>80</sup> Munphool, "Relations Between Gilgit, Chitral and Kashmir", 37.

<sup>81</sup> Durand, *The Making of a Frontier*, 138.

“...have naturally been amicably disposed towards China; for not only did the Chinese authorities wink at the slave-hunting and caravan-raiding of the tribesmen, but they used even once to pay a subsidy to the dreaded *thum*, and allowed him to levy toll on the Kirghiz shepherds of the Tagdumbash Pamir”.<sup>82</sup>

Thus this frontier was marked by geographic and cultural fluidity, with political space that was mapped more by power associations than through territory.

The closest the Mughal Empire came to these areas was in neighboring Baltistan, which established a tributary relationship with the court in Kashmir during the reign of Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb. With the Durrani Empire establishing control over Kashmir in 1757 the relationship with Baltistan continued – although the tribute was purportedly extracted forcibly.<sup>83</sup> Even though Baltistan had long standing ties (peaceful or otherwise) with sovereigns in Kashmir, the same cannot be said for Gilgit, Hunza, Nagar and other neighboring states.

From the start of the nineteenth century Gilgit was prone to sporadic attacks and the short-lived rule of rulers from neighboring. Drew lists “five dynastic revolutions” as occurring during this time and starts with Sulaiman Shah, the ruler of Yasin, conquering Gilgit.<sup>84</sup> He provides no specific reasons for these attacks, and this is followed by the rulers of Punial, Nagar, and Yasin gaining successive control of the Gilgit valley. A local source points towards some form of resistance against these rulers who were laying a claim to the *rajaship* of Gilgit.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Knight, *Where Three Empires Meet*, 351-2.

<sup>83</sup> A.H Dani, *History of the Northern Areas of Pakistan* (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 1989), 274.

<sup>84</sup> Drew, *The Jummo and Kashmir Territories*, 436.

<sup>85</sup> Shah Rais Khan, *Tarikh-e-Gilgit*, 387.

These “dynastic revolutions” that Drew points out were arguably common in this area – given the lack of centralized political authority and a history of intermarriage between the ruling families of these states, there were often periods of intrigue and relative political volatility.<sup>86</sup>

The history of Gilgit intertwined with Kashmir in 1841 when Gohar Aman, the ruler of Yasin, conquered Gilgit. This led Karim Khan, Gilgit’s deposed ruler, to send an emissary to the Sikh governor of Kashmir asking for reinforcements.<sup>87</sup> A thousand Kashmiri troops were then sent under a Sikh general, and Karim Khan was able to take back the Gilgit Valley with their help. Karim Khan paid a small sum for the retention of these troops, and was installed as the *Ra* of Gilgit under the tutelage of the Sikhs.<sup>88</sup>

From 1842-7 the ruler of the Gilgit Valley, Karim Khan, acknowledged the fealty to the Khalsa and granted them access to the road to Badakshan – which the Sikhs purportedly wanted to conquer. Towards the end of this period Gilgit also paid a tribute of 1,50 *khuwars* of grain for the use of the troops in Gilgit.<sup>89</sup> A tributary relationship with the Sikhs was then established much in the same vein as the rulers of Gilgit and nearby valleys had with suzerains elsewhere.

## **Dogra Expansion**

With the signing of the Treaty of Amritsar the Dogras inherited Sikh control over the Gilgit Valley: in 1846 the Dogra soldiers relieved the Sikh troops posted at Astore and Gilgit.

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<sup>86</sup> For an exhaustive account of the political history of these areas up till the 1840s see Dani, *History of Northern Areas*, 163-241.

<sup>87</sup> Leitner, *Dardistan in 1866*, 71.

<sup>88</sup> Sikandar Khan Baloch, *In the Wonderland of Asia, Gilgit & Baltistan* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel, 2004), 103.

<sup>89</sup> Taylor, *Political Diaries*, 285.

Most of these soldiers transferred their services to the new rulers.<sup>90</sup> However Dogra attempts to consolidate their hold over the Valley and neighboring states would be met with fierce resistance.

It would be important to note the nature of the Dogra state that was being fashioned in Jammu and Kashmir. As mentioned in the previous chapter the Dogras were granted the princely state as a reward for their assistance in the Anglo-Sikh War. Lacking a concrete foundation for sovereignty over their subjects, the Dogras proceeded to invent tradition in their search for legitimacy. By combining a history in which the Dogras represented Hinduism and also the Rajput marital tradition, they fashioned what was arguably a “Hindu state”.<sup>91</sup> The historiography surrounding the Dogra state has also pointed towards the Dogras blatant disregard and mistreatment of their Kashmiri Muslim subjects in the last half of the nineteenth century.<sup>92</sup>

The political authority wielded by the Dogras over the Gilgit Valley was tenuous: Karim Khan had entered into a tributary relationship with the Sikhs and even though the Dogras had legally inherited this mantle, they did not share a prior relationship with the people of the Gilgit Valley. Even though Maharaja Gulab Singh had control over the troops and the amount of grain they collected as tribute, it was largely an exercise in force. The local rulers of the Gilgit Valley and its surrounding states did not acknowledge Dogra political authority.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Taylor, *Political Diaries*, 285.

<sup>91</sup> Mridu Rai, *Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects: Islam, Rights and the History of Kashmir* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 7.

<sup>92</sup> See Chitrlekha Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging: Islam, Regional Identity and the Making of Kashmir* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>93</sup> Taylor, *Political Diaries*, 280.

The Dogras would then resort to military incursions in a bid to establish their power. As the people of Gilgit, Yasin, Hunza, Nagar and other smaller valleys questioned the legitimacy of the rule of Karim Khan and the Dogra *Thanadar*, they rose in revolt. The next few years would witness constant low-intensity warfare in these areas. It was only in 1860 that the new Dogra ruler, Ranbir Singh, was able to establish some control over the valleys of Gilgit, Yasin and Darel – but not Hunza or Nagar.<sup>94</sup>

The defeat of Gilgit and Yasin was not free from violence: sources narrate how the Dogras, accompanied by their local ruler, murdered indiscriminately and “...the slaughters lasted five days and nights. The blood of the victims flowed in streams through the road”.<sup>95</sup>

Dogra military incursions and their attempted establishment of legitimacy to rule, albeit through force, would not have been possible without alliances formed with local power-seeking members of the ruling families. The personalized sovereignty vested in the Dogras by the English East India Company did not translate into them having political authority over this part of the Indian frontier. In valleys such as Gilgit and Punial where the Dogras were able to make alliances and subdue revolt through force, they installed their own *Thanadar* and *Wazir* for military and administrative purposes. These personnel would then provide the *Raja* guidelines for ruling over the area.

Even in the 1860s the nature of Yasin’s relationship to the Dogra state would be described as “tributary”. Through an active British interest Dogra control was extended geographically. In the late 1860s the British would help establish tributary relationships between Ranbir Singh and the *mirs* of Hunza and Nagar.<sup>96</sup> Similarly in 1877 with the

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<sup>94</sup> Leitner, *Dardistan*, 51.

<sup>95</sup> Leitner, *Dardistan*, 96.

<sup>96</sup> Haines, *Nation, Territory and Globalization*, 21.

posting of John Biddulph as the Political Agent the two valleys of Chitral were unified and an agreement signed between Ranbir Singh and the *mehtar* of Chitral. Under this Chitral acknowledged allegiance to the Maharaja, undertook to receive an agent and send one to the Durbar, and received an annual subsidy of Rs 12,000 from the Maharaja.<sup>97</sup>

By establishing, even if only nominal, allegiance of these states to the Dogras the British attempted to insure that overlapping suzerainties would be eliminated. However such attempts did not prove to be successful, as Hunza would continue tributary relations with Yarkand well up till the 1930s.

In the first few decades following the Treaty of Amritsar, British officers and policymakers had largely legitimated the Dogra claim to Gilgit and its neighboring valleys: this was done by negating Gohar Aman's claims to power and the construing of the Treaty to encompass the area.<sup>98</sup> However starting in the late 1860s the British press became increasingly critical over various aspects of Dogra misgovernment.<sup>99</sup>

Relations between the Dogras and the British continued to be strained through the 1870s: while ratifying a commercial treaty with Ranbir Singh at Sialkot in 1870, Lord Mayo reportedly warned him to “....commit no aggression on his neighbors and make no attempt to extend his authority beyond the limits that had been conferred to his father”.<sup>100</sup> In 1888 when the people of Hunza and Nagar revolted against Dogra rule, Algernon Durand was sent to enquire into the causes leading to the outbreak. His account painted a grim tale of Dogra military incompetence and their occupation of the Gilgit valley.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties*, 350.

<sup>98</sup> See Drew, *The Jummoo and Kashmir Territories*, 39

<sup>99</sup> G.J Alder, *British India's Northern Frontier* (London: Longmans, 1963), 101.

<sup>100</sup> Alder, *British India's Northern Frontier* 105.

<sup>101</sup> Durand, *The Making of a Frontier*, 13.

Faced with such narratives the 1880s witnessed increasing British distrust of not only Dogra rule, but of princely rulers in general. In an age of emerging nationalisms, the British Raj was forced to engage in a language of rights and accountability to its direct and indirect subjects. Whereas in other princely states a Resident “man on the spot” was appointed to oversee the functioning of the state, Kashmir was an anomaly since the Treaty of Amritsar provided no such provision.<sup>102</sup> After mishandling of a famine that had a devastating impact on the Kashmir valley (1877-9), serious questions were posed regarding governance and the rights of Dogra subjects.

In the wake of the Second Anglo-Afghan War, the Viceroy Lord Rippon stated that the establishment of a Resident in Kashmir was imperative for administrative handling and also because “any disturbances which continued misgovernment might create in Kashmir would be felt acutely on the frontiers of Afghanistan”.<sup>103</sup> Zutshi also notes that this move was made to alleviate the misery of Dogra subjects and reform administrative structures. Lord Dufferin, the Viceroy of India, stated to the Maharaja that “...notwithstanding the ample resources of your state, your treasury was empty, corruption and disorder prevailed in every department and every office, your Highness was still surrounded by low and unworthy favorites, and the continued misgovernment of your state was becoming every day a more serious source of anxiety”.<sup>104</sup>

In 1889 a British Resident was posted at Kashmir and the Maharaja was asked to implement a series of reforms including those in judicial administration, revenue assessment and taxation. Using the perceived, Dogra interaction with the Russians as a

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<sup>102</sup> Rai, *Hindu Rulers*, 159.

<sup>103</sup> Rai, *Hindu Rulers*, 163.

<sup>104</sup> Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging*, 107.



pretext – Pratap Singh was asked to abdicate his powers to govern while maintaining his title as the Chief. The administration of the state was then placed in the hands of the State Council, appointed by the British government.<sup>105</sup>

Simultaneously, the Gilgit Agency was reopened with Algernon Durand appointed as the Political Agent along with two thousand troops, a few assistants, and an Agency surgeon.<sup>106</sup>

### **The Role of Force**

The decade following the establishment of the Gilgit Agency witnessed active British military intervention to determine the territorial limits and the nature of political authority in this space. British military incursions in the Gilgit Agency during the 1890s can be understood in a broader Context. With the decay of Ottoman power the “Eastern Question” - relating to Britain’s strategic imperatives - was posed.<sup>107</sup> Demonstrated by British involvement, and later failure, in the Crimean War, there was anxiety over the resulting balance of power if the “sick man of Europe” were to collapse. These anxieties would contribute largely to British concerns about the “Great Game”, and lead to debates on the nature of policies applied to the frontier regions in the last few decades of the nineteenth century.

The “Close Border” and “Forward Policy” emerged as two schools of thought for the management of frontier relations. The international dimension of this debate centered on whether the British Empire in India should only extend to the Indus, or a scientific

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<sup>105</sup> Rai, *Hindu Rulers*, 166.

<sup>106</sup> Durand, *The Making of a Frontier*, 89.

<sup>107</sup> For more on the international dimension of the Eastern Question see Edward Ingram, *Eastern Questions in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Frank Cass, 1993).

boundary from Kabul to Kandahar be created as the edge of empire.<sup>108</sup> These two schools also focused on the best method to establish relations and control the trans-border tribes. Up till the late 1870s the “Close Border” was seen as the policy of choice: this school argued for minimal British interference in the ‘tribal areas’ and the administrative line inherited from the Sikh state in Punjab were viewed as the territorial limit.<sup>109</sup>

The Forward Policy advocated a push into the so-called tribal areas and the establishing of cordial relations with their leaders. By bringing these tribes on the frontier under British influence, they would arguably be used as shields against foreign aggressors such as the Afghans or Russians. These tribes consisted of “independent or semi-independent communities that held the chain of almost all impenetrable mountains outside the British line”.<sup>110</sup> These communities were classified into three categories: the Dards; the Pashtun and Kakars inhabiting the area from Dir to Kohistan; and the Baluch.<sup>111</sup>

The Forward Policy was seen to hold sway over imperial administrators starting in the late 1880s. However, this distinction between these two schools is problematic as the British undertook at least thirty incursions into the tribal regions of the northwest frontier, even when they were arguably adopting a ‘close border’ approach.<sup>112</sup> These two categories had more to do with debates between policy-makers and in the British press, rather than showcasing how this policy was actually applied at the frontier.

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<sup>108</sup> Brandon Douglas Marsh, *Ramparts of Empire: India's North-West Frontier and British Imperialism*. (PhD Dissertation University of Texas at Austin, 2009) 29.

<sup>109</sup> Marsh, *Ramparts of Empire*, 29.

<sup>110</sup> Sameetah Agha, *The Limits of Empire: British-Pukhtun Encounter, 1897* (PhD Dissertation Yale University, 2001) 14.

<sup>111</sup> Agha, *The Limits of Empire: British-Pukhtun Encounter*, 14.

<sup>112</sup> Agha, *The Limits of Empire: British-Pukhtun Encounter*, 14.

Upon being posted as the Political Agent in 1889, Algernon Durand immediately started distancing himself from the Dogras as intermediaries as he sought to establish relations with those he deemed as 'natural leaders' of these states.<sup>113</sup> This policy of occupation and alliance with those deemed as leaders was similar to that applied by the British in the tribal regions of the north-west frontier, and will be examined more in detail in the following section.

Durand attempted to establish relations with the *thums* of Hunza and Nagar in largely the same way as other areas on the frontier – by offering them subsidies. In 1889, he entered into an agreement with both the *thums* who promised to put an end to the raiding on the trade route to Yarkand, and allow British officers to travel through their territory in return for a yearly allowance.<sup>114</sup>

Durand's diplomatic skills however did not garner much success: it was reported soon after that the *thum* of Nagar's son had murdered his two brothers and was reportedly gathering forces to attack the forts held by Dogras at Chalt and Chaprot. Durand dealt with this threat, real or imagined, by pre-emptively occupying the forts and also capturing another fort held by the rulers of Nagar on the way.

This incident, along with reports of continued raids by Kanjutis on the route to Yarkand, was referred to Simla. After examining the Gilgit question in detail two hundred troops from the 5<sup>th</sup> Gurkha regiment were dispatched to Gilgit. Durand was instructed to write to both the *thums* of Hunza and Nagar informing them it was necessary for their and Kashmir's safety for the British to have free access to these territories.<sup>115</sup> Although the

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<sup>113</sup> Durand, *The Making of a Frontier*, 138.

<sup>114</sup> Knight, *Where Three Empires Meet*, 353.

<sup>115</sup> Durand, *The Making of a Frontier*, 245.

*thum* of Nagar was amenable to British demands, his son and Safdar Ali of Hunza refused to agree.

The Hunza-Nagar expedition was undertaken in 1891 with Gurkha and Dogra troops. Within a few days Nagar was occupied and the people of Hunza also submitted, while their *thum* fled across the frontier.<sup>116</sup> With this military operation the British government was finally able to subdue the states of Hunza and Nagar, which they would now map as their territory. A similar expedition was carried out in 1895 to bring Chitral and the Shin republics of Chilas, Darel, Gor and Tangir firmly under British control.

Chitral's strategic importance and British efforts to establish relationships with the *mehtar* have already been discussed in the previous chapter. The *mehtar* was said to exercise "undefined" authority in the valleys of Darel, Tangir and Eastern Kafiristan.<sup>117</sup> Durand further explains the political status and tributary relationships of these "independent" states of Chilas, Gor, Darel and Tangir: in the 1860s the Dogras had also penetrated these areas and made them nominally tributary to them.<sup>118</sup>

There was political turmoil following the death of the *mehtar* of Chitral in 1895, with different members of the ruling family claiming the throne. The late *mehtar's* brother returned from exile in Kabul, proclaimed himself the new ruler, and declared a holy war against the British. A swift military action, leading to a "minor siege", insured that the British man of choice was installed as the new *mehtar*.<sup>119</sup> At the same time there was news

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<sup>116</sup> Durand, *The Making of a Frontier*, 264.

<sup>117</sup> George Scott Robertson, *Chitral: The Story of a Minor Siege* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1977) 22.

<sup>118</sup> Durand, *The Making of a Frontier*, 356 and 358.

<sup>119</sup> F.E. Younghusband, "Chitral, Hunza and the Hindukush", *The Geographic Journal*, 5, 5 (1895), 415.

of Chilasi raids and murders on Dogra territory near Gilgit: the Chilas valley was then also occupied on the pretext of these raids.<sup>120</sup>

Even though Durand was under the “strictest orders against any interference in the Indus Valley tribes” within less than a decade of the establishment of the Agency these “three independent Shin republics” (Gor, Darel, and Tangir) were brought under control through military action.<sup>121</sup> In his account of the operations conducted Durand goes to great lengths to explain how he was forced to resort to aggression, as the people of these republics had risen in revolt and were planning to attack the fort at Chilas. However, he would later find out that most of the men revolting were actually from the southern republic of Kohistan and not from the Shin republics.<sup>122</sup> Even though Durand was under orders not to annex these three states, his military campaigns and establishment of control over them points to the level of authority exercised by the ‘man on the spot’.

It has been argued that the officers influencing the Counsel of the Government of India on frontier matters were mostly military men. These officers, who were not part of the Indian Civil Service, had little or no diplomatic training and were more inclined to resort to the use of military force without taking into account other factors.<sup>123</sup> Durand’s tenure as the Political Agent clearly shows his military inclinations, and this became more apparent when he served as Military Secretary to the Viceroy of India from 1894-9. The important role played by other military men such as Major John Biddulph and Colonel WSA

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<sup>120</sup> Durand, *The Making of a Frontier*, 282.

<sup>121</sup> Durand, *The Making of a Frontier*, 270.

<sup>122</sup> Durand, *The Making of A Frontier*, 379.

<sup>123</sup> Sir Lepell Griffin, “The Breakdown of the ‘Forward’ Frontier Policy”, *The Nineteenth Century*, 42 (1897), 503.

Lockhart in the forging of imperial policy towards the Gilgit Agency also explains aggressive operations in the area.

### **Governance and Statecraft**

Charles Henry Alexanderowicz argued that prior to the nineteenth century, relations between European and non-European states occurred on a level playing field – the former acknowledged the sovereignty of the latter, and that there were multiple levels of sovereignty.<sup>124</sup> With the shift from natural to positivist law, the sovereign status of these non-European states under international law came under criticism. However this posed problems for imperial powers – if non-European states did not possess sovereign authority would previous treaties concluded with them amount to being null and void?<sup>125</sup>

By creating a distinction between ‘civilized’ and ‘uncivilized’ nations, John Westlake argued that international law could only be applied to the former. Whereas sovereignty had previously been conceived as singular and undivided, this interpretation allowed it to be “flexible and undefined” to suit the needs of empire.<sup>126</sup> The concept of Westphalian sovereignty – with the right of a state to full independence and territorial integrity – was modified to the context of the British Empire in India.

Partha Chatterjee has noted that the nature of British sovereignty in India lay in its prerogative to declare the colonial exception. Through “political law” and “usage” the British would then decide the territorial limits and forms of governance of the Gilgit Agency, even if these did not comply with norms established elsewhere in India. It was through

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<sup>124</sup> Partha Chatterjee, *The Black Hole of Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 188.

<sup>125</sup> Chatterjee, *The Black Hole of Empire*, 191.

<sup>126</sup> Chatterjee, *The Black Hole*, 193.

their power to declare the exception, that the ambiguities in the Gilgit Agency could be created and cultivated.

The ambiguities in sovereignty were especially apparent in the Gilgit Agency. Although the British attempted to assert jurisdiction by delineating boundaries, this process of territorialization was never fully completed. However, military power and a new administrative apparatus were tools used to reconcile the inherent ambiguity in the spaces created.

“Frontier governmentality” is the term used by B.D Hopkins to describe the nature of governance and statecraft along these frontiers. Instead of ruling through the employment of difference, in which the exceptionalism of a space was agreed upon, this new form of governance emerging in the second half of the nineteenth century sought to form alliances with tribes.<sup>127</sup> With the institutionalization of the Sandeman System a bid was made for the “hearts and minds” of these tribesmen: this method of governance chose ‘natural allies’ as tribe leaders and heavily subsidizing them, the British sought to order and control these populations in strategically important areas.<sup>128</sup>

Durand, along with subsequent Political Agents in the Gilgit Agency, would then proceed into negotiations with those they considered as the leaders of these states by offering subsidies. The case of Chitral in 1895 shows that competing claims to power were eliminated through force, insuring that there was a cadre of leaders hand-picked by the British.

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<sup>127</sup> Marsden and Hopkins, *Fragments of the Afghan Frontier*, 56.

<sup>128</sup> For more on the Sandeman System see Christian Tripodi, “Good For One But Not The Other: The Sandeman System of Pacification as Applied to Balochistan and the North West Frontier, 1877-1947”, *The Journal of Military History*, 73, 3 (2009), 767-802.

Soon after the establishment of the Gilgit Agency, the British Political Agent slowly but surely tried to limit Dogra influence in governance and administration. He was anxious to show that,

“...it was our policy to be on good terms with the natural leaders of the people of the country, and the Kashmir frontier officials had mismanaged their affairs so hopelessly, and were so distrusted that I did not wish to have them as intermediaries”.<sup>129</sup>

Since the start there were inherent contradictions in governing the Gilgit Agency. Durand recognized that as the British representative he was responsible for external relations. He was also to ensure the “proper government and progress of the Gilgit district, and for the discipline and control of the troops”.<sup>130</sup> However rule within the borders of the Gilgit *wazarat* (district) was in the hands of the Kashmir Governor, and a Kashmiri General was in command of the State Troops.

Durand formed a Committee of Public Safety comprising the Kashmiri Governor, Kashmiri General and himself – together they were handled administrative issues including the construction of forts, irrigation, and grain revenue.<sup>131</sup> However soon after, Durand replaced the State Troops with the Imperial Service Troops: the latter were placed directly under British Officers. Durand also started personally supervising expenditure to circumvent perceived Dogra corruption. This pointed towards increasing intervention in the running of Agency affairs.<sup>132</sup>

In 1913, the British Political Agent at Gilgit further attempted to weaken Dogra influence by establishing the Gilgit Scouts. The Corps consisted of eight companies drawn

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<sup>129</sup> Durand, *The Making of a Frontier*, 138.

<sup>130</sup> Durand, *The Making of a Frontier*, 226.

<sup>131</sup> Durand, *The Making of a Frontier*, 227.

<sup>132</sup> William Brown, *The Gilgit Rebellion 1947 Chapter I*, (Private Diary), 31.



from Hunza, Nagar, Punial, Yasin, Gilgit *wazarat*, and Kuh Ghizr.<sup>133</sup> These Scouts were the predecessors of the Punial Levies – who received a subsidy from the Dogra ruler for protecting frontiers. The disbandment of the Levies and the raising of the Gilgit Scouts provided the British Agent a means of bypassing the Maharaja for military and administrative purposes. The Scouts were deployed to safeguard the Hunza-China border during WWI, and a few years later also blocked raids from the people of Darel and Tangir.

By examining the practices of road maintenance and the collection of duties, Chad Haines has also argued that even though the valleys of Gilgit and Punial were mapped within the Gilgit *wazarat* over time the British came to assert increasing control over their administration.

The first major administrative task undertaken under Durand was the construction of a mountain-road from Srinagar to Gilgit. This road, ten feet in breadth, provided faster access to the Gilgit: it would greatly speed up communication and the transportation of grain and other materials, especially important since passes leading into the valley were closed due to snow for many months in a year.<sup>134</sup> The road from Srinagar to Gilgit would also provide improved access to Punjabi traders from Amritsar and Hoshiarpur conducting Transkarakoram trade.<sup>135</sup> The construction of roads allowed the colonial state to expand its control and reorient socio-economic and political linkages.<sup>136</sup> It also had a pragmatic

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<sup>133</sup> William Brown, *The Gilgit Rebellion 1947 Chapter I*, 34.

<sup>134</sup> Knight, *Where Three Empires Meet*, 288.

<sup>135</sup> The composition of this trade is discussed in detail in Chapter 1 “Creating Space”. For more on the networks of these Punjabi traders conducting trade via Leh see Jacqueline Fewkes, *Trade and Contemporary Society along the Silk Road: An Ethno-History of Ladakh* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

<sup>136</sup> For more on the importance of routes in colonial administration see Chad Haines, “Colonial Routes: Reorienting the Northern Frontier of India”, *Ethnohistory*, 51,3 (2004), 535-565.

element – it speeded up the transportation of materials to British administrators and military officers.

Nicholas Dirks' ethno history of the Pudukkottai state in South India examines the political transformations of these 'little kingdoms' under colonial rule. He argues that in princely states older rituals and forms of submission underwent a qualitative change – kingship increasingly became a theatrical performance, whereas real power lay in the hands of the British paramount.<sup>137</sup> However by looking at Dogra construction of sovereignty in Jammu and Kashmir, Mridu Rai has argued that the imperial project recognized that there were layers of Indian society it could not penetrate.

In 1911 P.T Etherton, a British military officer, visited the *mir* of Hunza while passing through the region. He was delighted to find that the *mir* had visited India, spoke fluent Hindustani, and was a great admirer of the Indian Army.<sup>138</sup> The ruling classes of the states comprising the Gilgit Agency had established connections with the center and other parts of British India, whether through their participation in the ceremonial Durbar proceedings, or through education and travels. However, British sources are eerily silent on the attitudes of and interactions with local inhabitants, apart from the few chosen as leaders.

The tenure of Durand and those following him was then mostly limited to organizing troops, maintaining roads, and ensuring British paramountcy on the frontier. Like on other parts of the frontier the local inhabitants were not viewed as citizens, but as imperial vassals. Notions of accountability in governance, which were to dominate British debate on

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<sup>137</sup> Nicholas Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 384.

<sup>138</sup> P.T Etherton, *Across the Roof of the World*, 44.

imperial subjects, did not hold sway in the Gilgit Agency. This was then also a “traditionalizing modernity” - tradition and customs were contained and conserved in order to separate these people from the colonial sphere.

Even though the inhabitants of the Gilgit Agency might have been viewed as imperial vassals, the crown of the local rulers was far from being “hollow” vis-à-vis their subjects. Lauren Benton’s argument about the divisible nature of sovereignty, and its ability to held in degrees, also applied to the case of the British, Dogra and local rulers in Gilgit. Those perceived as local rulers in the Gilgit Agency (and Hunza and Nagar) still exerted substantial political authority over their ‘subjects’. With British attempts to order the Agency mostly for strategic purposes, the rulers were left with a free hand in intra-societal matters.

### **Singularizing Authority?**

British constitution of and eventual control over the Gilgit Agency arguably reconfigured the relationship of this so-called margin to the center. A new form of polity and political geography were in the process of being fashioned. It has been argued that such incorporations of the margins led to the shift from rituals of submission to new power relationships that were enacted on a horizontal plane.<sup>139</sup> However recently noting the interplay between law and geography in the formation of empire, Lauren Benton has argued for the formation of enclaves and corridors within imperial spheres of influence

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<sup>139</sup> Waichakul, *Siam Mapped*, 47.

where multiple powers operated.<sup>140</sup> This framework is useful for examining the nature of sovereignty in the Gilgit Agency, where overlapping political authorities were at play.

The relationship between Hunza and Chinese Turkestan has been noted earlier. Even after the Hunza-Nagar campaign in 1891-2 and the establishment of nominal British political authority over Hunza, the states ties to China were not eliminated. In 1911 P.T. Etherton on his travels in Chinese Turkestan met a Hunzai envoy returning from Yarkand after presenting gold dust as the annual tribute to the ruler. This practice of “nominal allegiance” would continue up till 1935, when it was finally finished on British insistence.<sup>141</sup>

However, the long shelf life enjoyed by these forms of tributary relationships points towards the presence of degrees of sovereignty held by different actors be they Chinese suzerains, local *rajas*, or the Dogras. Full power was then reserved for the imperial authority.

By the early twentieth century a complicated system of governance had been chalked out. The Gilgit Agency remained completely under the charge of the Political Agent, who was answerable to the Government of India through the Resident in Kashmir. The Gilgit *Wazarat* (district) was under the civil administration of the Dogra state.<sup>142</sup> The cost of administration of the *Wazarat* was borne by the Dogras, and that of the Agency was shared between the British and Dogras – in what the Political Agent Major G.V.B. Gillan labeled as a complicated and somewhat illogical manner.<sup>143</sup> He noted that,

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<sup>140</sup> Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires 1400-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>141</sup> Etherton, *Across the Roof of the World*, 53.

<sup>142</sup> Dani, *History of Northern Areas*, 291.

<sup>143</sup> Dani, *History of Northern Areas*, 291.

“...the subsidies of the Mir of Hunza and Nagar are paid in moiety shares by both governments, while those of the Governors of Punial, Yasin, Ishkoman and Kuh Ghizr are paid wholly by the Durbars; expenditure on roads, bridges and public buildings in the unsettled districts...borne by the Government of India, but the roads and bridges up to Hunza are paid by the Durbar...the civil levies are paid by the Durbar and also Scouts, but half the cost of the Commandant’s Scout’s appointment and whole cost of the Assistant Commandant’s Scout’s appointment is borne by the Government of India”.<sup>144</sup>

In 1934 Colonel Schomberg was assigned to report on the administrative workings of the Agency. In his travels, and subsequent report, Schomberg was highly critical of the existing system of governance. He advocated that the Agency be incorporated into the Northwest Frontier Province since,

“...the problems of the Agency, vis-à-vis the frontier are similar to those in the (northwest) Frontier Province and geographically the Agent is a part of the province and not of Kashmir”.<sup>145</sup>

British policymakers however did not respond to this recommendation – arguably because of the administrative costs involved for such an operation. However there were serious concerns about the wieldy system of administration in the Agency, and increasing anxiety over increasing Soviet activity in Sinkiang. Even though the Agency was directly under the British Political Agent, there were handicaps in asserting complete control due to Dogra involvement. By sidelining Dogra authority, British control over trade and communication routes could be expanded more effectively. This was also seen as vital to policymakers in light of the creation of the Central Asian republics of Tajikistan and Kirgizia, whose “Sovietization” may infiltrate within the British India.<sup>146</sup>

Given that the nature of Dogra authority over the *Wazarat* was tenuous in the first place, the British leased the Gilgit *wazarat* was leased from the princely state of Jammu and

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<sup>144</sup> Dani, *History of Northern Areas*, 291.

<sup>145</sup> Haines, *Nation, Territory and Globalization*, 28.

<sup>146</sup> Dani, *History of Northern Areas*, 292.

Kashmir in 1935. The lease would provide an easier and less costly way of sidelining Dogra authority without antagonizing them. It dealt with the,

“*Wazarat* of Gilgit Province of the State of Jammu and Kashmir as lies beyond the right [north-west] bank of the river Indus, but not withstanding anything in this agreement the said territory shall continue to be included within the dominions of His Highness the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir”.<sup>147</sup>

The lease granted the British government control over the “civil and military administration” of the Gilgit *wazarat*, even though the territory still continued to be included in the territory of the Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir. Through this lease of sixty years, the British were able to gain firm control over affairs of the Agency, and sideline Dogra influence without actually having to annex the territory. Moreover, by 1935 the Raj was heavily embroiled in political reforms at the center and dealing with anti-colonial and nationalist movements. The leasing then provided a quick, easy but ambiguous method to secure the frontier.

The Agency under British control was then divided into four political districts (Punial, Yasin, Kuh Ghizr and Ishkoman), each administered by a *raja* under the Political Agent’s supervision. The Political Agent also “controlled” the *mirs* of Hunza and Nagar and the Gilgit *wazarat*. The Chilas sub-agency consisting of six communities (including Gor and Thor) was under the supervision of an Assistant Political Agent.<sup>148</sup>

At this time the status of Hunza and Nagar was also declared in a letter to the Resident in Kashmir, stating “we do not consider these territories (Hunza, Nagar, Chilas, Kuh Ghizr, Ishkoman and Yasin) as part of Kashmir”.<sup>149</sup> Even though the population of

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<sup>147</sup> Dani, *History of the Northern Areas of Pakistan*, 299.

<sup>148</sup> William Brown, *The Gilgit Rebellion 1947*, 24.

<sup>149</sup> Haines, *Nation, Territory and Globalization*, 31.

these areas had in the First Schedule of the Government of India Act been included in that of Jammu and Kashmir, the Political Department declared that Hunza and Nagar were separate “Indian States” and Chilas Kuh Ghizr, Ishkoman, and Yasin were “tribal areas”.<sup>150</sup>

Shortly after the lease was signed the British Political Agent entered into an agreement with the *mir* of Hunza. The *mir*’s subsidy was increased by Rs. 3000 per annum, and he was also granted a *jagir* in Bugrot Nullah. The British stipulated that he stop exchanging an annual tribute with the Chinese, give up his right to collect grazing dues in the Tagdumbash Pamir (which Curzon had in a note to the Chinese agreed to regard as their territory), and the right to cultivate land in Raskam.<sup>151</sup>

By challenging the claim of the Maharaja over Hunza, Nagar and the ‘tribal areas’, the British further delinked these areas from Jammu and Kashmir. By the mid-1930s attempts were made to singularize authority in the Gilgit Agency, and to turn its cartographic representation into reality. This was partly due to increased anxiety over Chinese geo-political motivations.

Up till the mid 1930s, the *mir* of Hunza had held an ambiguous position between accepting the political authority of the British and Chinese. Although he received subsidies from the British and had entered into a treaty with the Dogra Maharaja, he still grazed livestock and collected taxes from areas the British considered as Chinese territory. With the lease of 1935 and the establishment of Hunza as a state under British, and not Dogra, authority the collection of taxes, law enforcement, and administration became the purview

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<sup>150</sup> Haines, *Nation, Territory and Globalization*, 32.

<sup>151</sup> Dani, *History of Northern Areas*, 295.

of the Political Agent.<sup>152</sup> By increasing the *mirs* subsidies and providing him land the British attempted to firmly place Hunza under their control, and eliminate Chinese suzerainty.

As Chinese authorities had not formally accepted the two previous attempts to establish a border between Hunza and China, the British then attempted to enforce this border by bringing Hunza under their control. States under British control, the subjects of Hunza and Nagar would now need an official passport and visa to cross the border established by Curzon.<sup>153</sup> Through such bureaucratic mechanisms, Hunza and Nagar were firmly placed under British political authority.

Benton argues that inter-imperial conflicts encouraged highlighting symbolic demonstrations of power and authority, rather than a strict control of institutions.<sup>154</sup> Along the northern frontier where the three empires of Britain, China and Russia met, the nature of sovereignty can then not be understood through the lens of centralized political authority. The cartographic representation of the Gilgit Agency as a unified political entity was hard to achieve in reality. Up till 1935 there were differentials in the political status, administrative control, and internal compositions of these principalities that limited the construction of uniform sovereignty.

## **Conclusion**

Since its inception the Gilgit Agency possessed inherent ambiguities in terms of its territorial extent, the division of jurisdiction, and the political status of its units. These

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<sup>152</sup> Shafqat Ahmed, *A History of Marginality: Nature and Culture in the Western Himalayas* (Proquest Dissertations & Thesis: Yale University, 2009) 144.

<sup>153</sup> Shafqat Ahmed, *A History of Marginality*, 144.

<sup>154</sup> Benton, *A Search For Sovereignty*, 281.



factors would hinder the construction of a uniform or similar sovereignty over the different principalities. Whereas other areas such as Chitral were firmly mapped as part of the North West Frontier sphere, the Gilgit Agency was tied to the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. Dogra constructions of sovereignty and governance in the Kashmir valley had come under increasing criticism starting in the late nineteenth century. However, the Gilgit Agency shared limited cultural and political affinities with the regions of Jammu and Kashmir. Egged on by strategic imperatives British intervention and statecraft insured that potential ties to the Dogra state were increasingly sidelined. The Gilgit Agency then over time came to be governed as a colonial outpost on India's northern frontier, and this in part would contribute to its post-colonial liminality.

## Postcolonial Liminality

By successfully asserting political authority over the Gilgit Agency, the British Raj had marginalized the potential for Dogra control over this area. With the transfer of power in 1947 the Gilgit Agency faced a challenging task: incorporation into and control by a Dogra State that it had little historic, cultural or political relations with. This chapter then examines the process through which the Gilgit Agency acceded to Pakistan, and how the postcolonial state's handling of this region ensured its liminality. The Pakistan military's close grip on policy guaranteed that the Gilgit Agency would always be tangled up with the Kashmir dispute, thereby providing an excuse to constantly delay recognition and grant autonomy. However recent symbolic forms of autonomy and rights granted to Gilgit-Baltistan are tied to the post-colonial state's geo-strategic interests in power generation and quelling perceived Chinese influence.

### The Gilgit Rebellion, 1947

“It was monstrous to think that the Gilgit Agency, whose loyalty to the British had never swerved over half a century, should now be flung into the melting pot by handing it over to Kashmir. And the melting pot it would assuredly be, if the Agency was placed at the mercy of bribery, corruption, malpractices, and inefficiency of the Kashmir officialdom at a time the state's own position would be extremely doubtful”.<sup>155</sup>

The quote above describes the reaction of William Brown, Commandant of the Gilgit Scouts, upon hearing that on August 1, 1947 the Gilgit Agency would be handed back to the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. This act, taking place two weeks before the transfer

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<sup>155</sup> William Brown, *The Gilgit Rebellion 1947 Chapter II, 2.*

of power, would then intricately tie the future of the Gilgit Agency with that of Jammu and Kashmir.

The few years before 1946 witnessed increasing agitation in the Kashmir Valley under the Muslim and National Conferences: Sheikh Abdullah, leader of the National Conference had started a Quit Kashmir Movement, aimed not against the British but the Dogra ruler. This period saw a major reversal in the stance of the National Conference, as they made efforts to bridge the divide between Kashmiri Muslims and Pandits. With the articulation of *Kashmiriyyat* at this crucial stage, Sheikh Abdullah attempted to unite Kashmiris in a nation-building program.<sup>156</sup> The Gilgit Agency, still under British political authority, was not in the least affected by these events in the Kashmir valley. Neither are any major incidents of anti-colonialism documented in the sources available. The important point to note was that at this time the political connections between Kashmir and the Gilgit Agency were weak at best.

In May 1946 the Cabinet Mission plan had announced that when the British government left India, its paramountcy would lapse and the rights of the princely states would return to them. Accordingly, there was a provision in the Indian Independence Act of 1947 that terminated all treaties and agreements between the British government and the rulers of princely India. Agreements relating to strategic issues such as communications, post, customs and transit were to remain in force – until superseded by new agreements.

A State Negotiation Committee appointed by the Indian Constituent Assembly and the Chamber of Princes, was led by Mountbatten and engaged in direct negotiations with

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<sup>156</sup> Rai, *Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects*, 384.

the rulers of Princely India. Although The Partition Plan of 1947 insured that each princely state could opt to remain independent, the British were actively supporting the accession of these states into either Pakistan or India.<sup>157</sup> It was at this stage that competition between the Muslim League and Congress intensified as they courted the princely states. Nehru's close ties with Sheikh Abdullah, and his wish for Kashmir to accede to India were an open secret. The *Times* reported attending the All-India States Peoples Conference in Delhi, Sheikh Abdullah stayed with Nehru.<sup>158</sup> Using his personal relationship with Lord Mountbatten, Nehru pressed for conditions facilitating Kashmir's accession to India.

The Radcliffe Boundary Award granted three sub-districts of Gurdaspur (East Punjab) to Indian Territory. Before the award it was generally thought that owing to its Muslim-majority population, it would be mapped within Pakistan. However the awarding of these three districts ensured that Kashmir would be able to accede geographically to India, and not only Pakistan. On hearing this decision, Liaquat Ali Khan had noted that this was a 'political' move and a 'grave injustice, which will amount to a breach of faith on the part of the British'.<sup>159</sup>

Mountbatten had written to the Secretary of State, Lord Listowell, asking for the termination of the Gilgit Agency's lease before the transfer of power.<sup>160</sup> According to Alistair Lamb the British rationale for returning the Gilgit Agency was based on the assumption that the Maharaja would accede to India, which Mountbatten hoped to see as

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<sup>157</sup> For more on negotiations with princely states in 1947 see Ian Copland, *The Princes of India in the Endgame of Empire, 1917-1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

<sup>158</sup> Robert Huttenback, *Kashmir and the British Raj: 1847-1947* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2004), 164

<sup>159</sup> Bangash, "Three Forgotten Accessions: Gilgit, Hunza, and Nagar", 124.

<sup>160</sup> Bangash, "Three Forgotten Accessions: Gilgit, Hunza, and Nagar", 124.

the new guardian of the Northern frontier.<sup>161</sup> Since the British had only leased the Gilgit *wazarat* from the Dogras it was still legally part of the Maharaja's territories – under this pretext that the Gilgit Agency was handed 'back' to the Dogras.

The 1935 lease had only dealt with the Gilgit *wazarat*, and not the other areas comprising the Gilgit Agency which were already under British control. However with the imminent transfer of power, this technicality was glossed over by referring to the area as the Gilgit Subdivision – whereas earlier this area had meant only the *wazarat*, now it also encompassed polities classified as 'tribal areas' by the British before. By construing the lease and definitions of the Agency to suit their means the British were able to 'hand back' the Gilgit Agency to the Dogras, and thus escape messy debates over the political status of the areas comprising the Gilgit Agency. It is also important to note that none of the local rulers of these areas – including the *raja* of Gilgit – were consulted when deciding the fate of the Gilgit Agency.

With the handing over of the Agency to Jammu and Kashmir on August 1, 1947, and the uneventful passage of August 15, rumors had started circulating in Gilgit of a revolt. Even though there was increasing anxiety over a possible Jammu and Kashmir accession to India, the Gilgit Scouts in their first meeting with the new Governor of Kashmir had also put forward a list of demands including pensions, pay raise, etc.<sup>162</sup> Arguably opportunist demands, they did point towards some hope of accommodation within an independent

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<sup>161</sup> Alastair Lamb, *Kashmir: A Disputed Legacy* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1994), 107.

<sup>162</sup> William Brown, *The Gilgit Rebellion*, 54

Jammu and Kashmir state. It was accession to the Indian Union that was vehemently opposed.<sup>163</sup> A local Gilgit Scout talking to William Brown remarked,

“The whole of what was the Gilgit Agency is pro Pakistan. There is no doubt about it. We are all Muslims: do you blame us? We could never swear allegiance to Hindustan. Apart from religion, the Gilgit Agency is really part of the North West Frontier Province and is therefore part of Pakistan. If Kashmir remains independent, well and good. We shall be independent here but we can also keep the friendliest relations our brother Muslims in Pakistan. If Kashmir accedes to Pakistan even better. But if the Maharaja through pig-headedness, bad advice, political pressure or attractive remuneration accedes to Hindustan, then there be trouble here”.<sup>164</sup>

Brown also met with the *mirs* of Hunza and Nagar, who had just returned from talks with Maharaja Hari Singh in Srinagar. The Maharaja had agreed that the Treaty brokered by Durand in 1891-2 was now null and void, as the Crown Representative had withdrawn. Hari Singh therefore attempted to pressure the *mirs* to enter into a new treaty with him. The *mirs* observed that although they wanted to maintain cordial relations with the Maharaja, they were not prepared to come under treaty obligations as yet. When Brown asked why it was the case, the *mir* of Nagar replied that “it will very difficult for us if the State of Jammu and Kashmir accedes to Hindustan”.<sup>165</sup> The *mirs* then saw themselves as completely independent states, further pointing towards the confused constitutional status they had occupied in the last century.

Upon hearing such conversations William Brown, along with Captain Jock Mathieson in Chilas, planned a coup d'état if Hari Singh acceded to India. Mulling over the planned coup, he wrote,

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<sup>163</sup> William Brown, *The Gilgit Rebellion*, 48.

<sup>164</sup> William Brown, *The Gilgit Rebellion*, 48.

<sup>165</sup> William Brown, *The Gilgit Rebellion*, 28.

“I shuddered at the havoc which would follow a decision by a ruler of Kashmir to join India. The blame for the destruction of life and property would lie directly on the British government. I therefore felt it was my duty, as the only Britisher left, to follow a course which would prevent this. Partisan, traitor, revolutionary I may have been....I would not rest until I had done the utmost in my power...”<sup>166</sup>

Brown arguably perceived himself to be following in a long line of ‘heroic frontiersman’. Although motivated by concerns for the local inhabitants, Brown in a similar vein to his predecessors such as Durand saw himself as the only man fit to set things right – and in the process attain glory.

During “Operation Datta Khel”<sup>167</sup> Brown would put the Governor of Gilgit under protective custody; put all Hindu and Sikhs in the Agency in a refugee camp; cut all telephone links and take over the civil wireless station; set up his own administration over the entire province (Gilgit Agency); and signal the Prime Minister of the NWFP informing him of a revolt in Gilgit and requesting him to inform the Government of Pakistan.<sup>168</sup>

Much debate has been generated over where the impetus for the revolt originated, and who in fact led it. Differing accounts have placed emphasis on the role of the Gilgit Scouts (in particular Subedar Major Babar) and the Muslim Officers of the Jammu and Kashmir Army (Captain Mirza Hassan of the 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry) in leading the revolt. The availability of William Brown’s personal diary further complicates the picture as he takes credit for devising and putting Datta Khel into operation.

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<sup>166</sup> William Brown, *The Gilgit Rebellion*, 65.

<sup>167</sup> Datta Khel was the administrative headquarters of the North Waziristan Agency. It was also one of the sights of an uprising against the British in 1897.

<sup>168</sup> William Brown, *The Gilgit Rebellion*, 26.

Martin Sokelfeld and Ahmad Hasan Dani have both given more weight to the local origins of the rebellions, and dismissed Brown's claim as the leader of the movement. More recently Yaqoob Bangash, in possession of William Brown's diary (also used as a source here), has argued that he played a key role in leading the movement, commanding the Scouts, and liaising with the Pakistani state.<sup>169</sup>

On October 26 1947 Hari Singh wrote to Lord Mountbatten, formally acceding to India. The Instrument of Accession was purportedly signed to protect Hari Singh's state from attacks by Muslims from Poonch.<sup>170</sup> This was contested by the Pakistani state, which argued that the Dogra state had committed atrocities earlier against Muslims in Poonch and Jammu.<sup>171</sup> Pakistan also questioned the legality of the accession, arguing that Hari Singh had acted under duress from Nehru, and argued that since Hari Singh had fled the Kashmir Valley at the time of accession he had no power to take a decision on behalf of the people. Following the Instrument of Accession, Indian troops landed in the princely state to take over defense of the state. There have also been debates over the exact timing of when the Instrument was signed. Sources suggest that Indian troops had already been airlifted into Srinagar before the Hari Singh signed the Instrument of Accession.<sup>172</sup>

In the meantime Brown received a telegram from the *mehtar* of Chitral stating that "Chitral is breaking off all relations with the Kashmir Government. Neither my state not

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<sup>169</sup> For a discussion of the conflicting accounts see Yaqoob Bangash "119-120 and 130-132.

<sup>170</sup> Huttenback, *Kashmir and the British Raj*, 164.

<sup>171</sup> Victoria Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict: Pakistan, India and the Unending War* (London: I.B Tauris, 2003), 50.

<sup>172</sup> Victoria Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict*, 53.



Gilgit can accept accession of Kashmir to Hindustan”.<sup>173</sup> This was taken as an indication of support from Chitral, and indirectly Pakistan – however, up till this point the Pakistani state had not made any formal agreements with the rulers or Gilgit Scout about a possible solution within the Pakistani state.

On the night between October 31 and November 1 the coup was successfully executed – even though accounts of who led it are contradictory. There was some debate over whether the Scouts wanted to establish a “United States of Gilgit”, the Pakistani flag was raised the next day and a Provisional Government created.<sup>174</sup> By November 3 both the *mirs* of Hunza and Nagar had wired their instruments of accession to Brown who forwarded them to Peshawar.<sup>175</sup> Although Hunza and Nagar entered into a treaty with the Dogras in 1891-2, the *mirs* always maintained that they were independent states and not under the political authority of the Maharaja. Following the 1935 lease, the British Political Agent had also declared them as “Indian States” and stated that they were not part of Kashmir.

In the coming two weeks Brown established correspondence with the *mehtar* of Chitral and Colonel Bacon (the former Political Agent of the Gilgit Agency), informing them of the situation at hand and asking for a representative from the Pakistani government to visit. On November 16, 1947 the first Pakistani Political Agent Mohammad Alam Khan arrived in Gilgit and effective control of the Agency was handed over to him.

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<sup>173</sup> William Brown and Sardar Alam. “Report on 1947 Events in Gilgit”. Last accessed online March 25, 2013 <<http://www.gilgitbaltistan.us/Analyses/report-on-1947-events-in-gilgit-agency-part-i.html>>

<sup>174</sup> Brown and Alam, “Report on 1947 Events in Gilgit”.

<sup>175</sup> Bangash, “Three Forgotten Accessions: Gilgit, Hunza, and Nagar”, 137.

In 1949 a UN negotiated ceasefire was agreed upon by both India and Pakistan. Through this the State of Jammu and Kashmir was divided into two in which Pakistan held the Gilgit Agency, Baltistan, a narrow portion of the Kashmir province, and Poonch and Mirpur (in Jammu). India controlled Ladakh, a portion of Poonch, and the majority of the Jammu and Kashmir province.

### **A Postcolonial Constitutional Limbo**

With the establishment of the cease-fire line the Gilgit Agency and Baltistan was placed under the administration of Pakistan's Ministry of Kashmir Affairs (later renamed Kashmir Affairs and Northern Areas – KANA). Structures of British imperial control were mostly kept in place, and at times enhanced. Instead of a British Political Agent, the Pakistani state appointed a Political Resident (based in Islamabad, and Joint Secretary of KANA) to administer the Agency. The Resident was responsible for the administration of the Agency, and also performed the functions of a law enforcement individual (District and Sessions Judge and District Magistrate); collector under revenue laws; Commissioner; and Inspector General of Police.<sup>176</sup> Other bureaucrats from Islamabad, acting as Assistant Political Agents and Officers, assisted the Resident.

From 1947-71 the rulers of the principalities comprising the Gilgit Agency were mostly allowed to retain their existing control over the population. In all areas except the Gilgit Sub-Division and Astor (which were "settled areas") the Pakistani state agreed not to enforce land revenue. Moreover continuing in the British vein, a tributary relation was

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<sup>176</sup> Dani, *History of Northern Areas*, 407.

fashioned. In Chilas, Rs. 3335/annum royalty was realized from different communities; Darel and Tangir presented seven *tolas* of gold dust as tribute every year; the *mir* of Hunza received an annual subsidy of Rs. 5,400/annum; and the *mir* of Nagar received Rs. 5,400.<sup>177</sup> The *mirs* of Hunza and Nagar were accorded executive, judicial, and legislative powers under the direction of a Political Agent from the center.<sup>178</sup>

Not only was there political continuity from the colonial to the post-colonial period; there were also economic continuities. In the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, a system of *begar* was instituted: it was a system of forced labor, in which peasant could be drafted any time into the service of the state.<sup>179</sup> Along with *begar*, the Dogras had also appropriated agricultural produce. Although this system was not a new invention by the Dogras, under them it took on an exploitative aspect.

The practice of *begar* and heavy taxation continued on in the post-colonial period. *Mirs* and other local rulers were largely autonomous in the internal affairs of the state, and continued exploitative practices of *begar*, heavy taxation, and appropriation of agricultural produce.<sup>180</sup> In 1951 residents of Gilgit and Punial protested against the heavy-handed *begar* and taxation. The *raja* of Punial ordered the Scouts to shoot at the protesters, and six people were killed. In the late 1960s there was a large-scale resistance movement in Nagar against the *begar* system and heavy taxation.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Dani, *History of Northern Areas*, 407-8.

<sup>178</sup> Dani, *History of the Northern Areas*, 408.

<sup>179</sup> Mridu Rai, *Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects*, 66.

<sup>180</sup> Sokefeld, "From Colonialism to Postcolonial Colonialism", 954.

<sup>181</sup> Martin Sokelfeld, "From Colonialism to Postcolonial Colonialism: Changing Modes of Domination in the Northern Areas of Pakistan", *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 64, 4 (2004), 960

The people of Gilgit and Baltistan then continued to live under an administrative system inherited from the British Raj, and now supported by the Pakistani state. Whereas the Frontier Crimes Regulation had previously not been employed in the region, this century old legal system was now the primary law-enforcement code, and denied constitutional, civic and political rights to the residents of Gilgit and Baltistan.<sup>182</sup>

Over the past century the FCR had been described as “an arbitrary law giving uncontrolled powers to the Deputy Commissioners”.<sup>183</sup> Rather than providing the administration of justice, its main aim was the suppression of crime in what were seen as strategically important but lawless colonial districts. The FCR placed unlimited power in the hands of the Political Agent, who was the main administrator of justice. Under this legal code, judicial review of his decisions was barred. In a series of cases courts across Pakistan had declared that the FCR was repugnant to the Pakistani constitutional principles of equality before the law, and the equal protection and application of laws within the state.<sup>184</sup>

Under the application of the FCR in the Gilgit Agency political rallies, meetings, and processions were also banned. In 1971 when a group of lawyers protested against the FCR and the acquisition of their rights, they were imprisoned.<sup>185</sup> In 1971 another general strike was called in Gilgit, but this time it was violently suppressed by troops from the NWFP.<sup>186</sup> Such protests in the period from 1947-71 point toward continued discontent of the people

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<sup>182</sup> For more on the use of FCR post 1947, and the use of Political Agents in ‘tribal areas’ see Ahmed Rashid, *Descent Into Chaos* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009).

<sup>183</sup> Anita Raman, “Of Rivers and Human Rights: The Northern Areas, Pakistan’s Forgotten Colony in Jammu and Kashmir”, *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* (11): 2004, 201.

<sup>184</sup> Raman, “Of Rivers and Human Rights”, 203.

<sup>185</sup> Abdul Hamid Khan, *The Last Colony of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Balawaristan* (Rawalpindi: Gawalmandi Press, 2001), 11.

<sup>186</sup> Sokelfeld, “From Colonialism to Postcolonial Colonialism”, 960.

of the Gilgit Agency. They protested against the exploitative nature of the local rulers and demanded integration within the Pakistani state.

In the early 1970s the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) formed a government at the center under an ostensibly leftist and inclusionary manifesto. The rhetoric of the PPP and its actual motivations notwithstanding, under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto significant administrative changes were made to the region now called the “Northern Areas” to provide it more autonomy and rights. The FCR along with the rule of hereditary princes was abolished; an attempt was made to bring the administrative structure in line with those of the settled areas; and a Northern Areas Council (NAC) was constituted, with members elected through direct adult franchise. In 1974 Hunza, the last princely state, was incorporated into the Northern Areas.<sup>187</sup>

Residents of the Gilgit Agency, Hunza and Nagar largely welcomed the Bhutto reforms, as they abolished the authority of the local rulers. However these reforms were a double-edged sword: by abolishing the local rulers authority, a power vacuum was created. Rather than providing a chance for democratic processes, and giving the residents of the Gilgit Agency a stake at the center – these reforms only strengthened Islamabad’s grip over the Northern Areas.

The area was ruled through executive fiat from Islamabad – and even though NAC members were elected, they had limited advisory functions. The people of the Northern Area were even worse off than those in FATA, who sent representative to both the National

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<sup>187</sup> International Crisis Group, “Discord in Pakistan’s Northern Areas”. 131 (2007), 12.

Assembly and Senate. The people of the Northern Areas were not represented in both houses of government (the National Assembly and the Senate).

Under Bhutto's administration the first major incident of sectarian violence in the Northern Areas was also recorded when in 1975 the Shiite *muharram* procession was shot at, allegedly from a Sunni mosque. With the arrest of the *qazi* (leader) of the mosque for this incident, clashes between Sunnis and Shias followed. The Gilgit Scouts were ordered to quell this violence – something they had been asked to do in all instances of agitation before.<sup>188</sup> Soon after the Scouts were disbanded, and replaced with the Northern Light Infantry – comprising of both local and non-local (mainly Pashtun) soldiers.

With the institution of the Northern Lights Infantry, along with the building of the Karakoram Highway (connecting Gilgit Baltistan to both Chinese Sinkiang and Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa) demographic shifts started occurring in the Northern Areas. Pathan and Punjabi traders and military officers now started settling in this area – changing not only the ethnic and linguistic, but also the religious balance in this predominantly Shia region.

This process continued under the regime of Zia ul Haq – from 1977 to 1985 the Northern Areas were designated as a separated martial law zone, and the limits rights granted to the people of the Northern Areas were suspended. In 1981 the Pakistan Citizenship Act (1951) was extended to the citizens of the Northern Areas, and they were allowed to have citizenship of Pakistan “inasmuch they have been issues Pakistani identity

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<sup>188</sup> Sokefeld, “From Colonialism to Post Colonial Colonialism”, 961.

cards and Passports”.<sup>189</sup> However even with this, the extension of fundamental rights and democratic representation was denied to them.

The increasing sectarian tensions from the demographic shifts, and also resulting from the “Islamization” policies embarked upon by Zia, led to violent conflict in 1988. Sunnis from the NWF tribal areas, joined by local sunnis from Chilas, Darel, and Tangir attacked Shia villages on the outskirts on Gilgit and looted, killed and plundered these communities for three days. The Frontier Constabulary was eventually sent in to stop the violence – however by this time 150 people had been killed.<sup>190</sup>

‘ Shia religious leaders pointed towards state complicity in these incidents, and argued that it was in line with state efforts to shift the religious and ethnic demographics in the Northern Areas. They argued that the Pakistani state was uncomfortable with a predominantly Shia territory, and this was the reason for denying rights, recognition, and autonomy to them.<sup>191</sup>

Rather than only understanding the complicated political status in the Northern Areas through a sectarian lens, it would also be important to understand the geo-political reasons for the center keeping a strong grip on these areas. A predominantly agricultural country, Pakistan is dependant on water not only for power but also irrigation needs. Of the five rivers of the Punjab (land of the five rivers), three originate in the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. Glaciers that feed the Chenab and Jhelum are located in Indian Jammu and Kashmir, while the largest river Indus originates in the Northern Areas. The

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<sup>189</sup> Anita Raman, “Of Rivers and Human Rights”, 204.

<sup>190</sup> International Crisis Group, “Discord in Pakistan’s Northern Area”, 16.

<sup>191</sup> International Crisis Group, “Discord in Pakistan’s Northern Area”, 1.

Gilgit and Swat rivers also originate here. Water sources, integral part to Pakistan's economic survival and an increasing cause of concern, are one of the main reasons for ensuring a strong grip on the Northern Areas.

By granting fundamental political rights to the citizens of the Northern Areas, more autonomy, and giving them representation at the center, Islamabad would have to negotiate with it over the rights and royalties related to resources and power generation. Pakistan has asserted that the Northern Areas are incapable of self-governance based on their perceived lawlessness.<sup>192</sup> However it would be important to note that the Pakistani state itself has at times supported this "lawlessness" by turning a blind eye (if not actively encouraging) demographic shifts and the resulting sectarian tensions.

With the lifting of martial law regulations a buoyant political movement came to the fore in the Northern Areas – parties such as the Balawaristan National Front (BNF) were formed in 1992 calling for a "sovereign and independent republic of Balawaristan".<sup>193</sup> Parties such as these used the term *balawar* to denote their identity – it was a term used in eight-century Chinese sources to refer to the people of Baltistan (Great Bolor) and Gilgit (Little Bolor). By imagining a shared past, this movement is one of several oppositional groups protesting Pakistani "colonial" policies. The leader of the BNF argues that the Pakistani state is worse than the Dogra Maharajas, since they never endeavored to settle Hindus on the land of Muslims.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Anita Raman, "Of Rivers and Human Rights", 204.

<sup>193</sup> Abdul Hamid Khan, *The Last Colony*, 15.

<sup>194</sup> Abdul Hamid Khan, *The Last Colony*, 4.



Although the BNF has been a source of much discussion in policy and press circles, it is one of many parties operating in the Northern areas since the early 1990s. More mainstream parties such as the PPP and PML-N are also active, demanding independence and equal opportunities, as well as infrastructural and economic improvements.

### **Development, Autonomy, and Rights**

In 1999 the *Al-Jehad Trust* brought a case to the Supreme Court on behalf of the citizens of the Northern Areas regarding the denial of their constitutional rights. This constitutional petition sought the following remedies: enforcement of fundamental rights under the constitution of Pakistan; declaration of the Northern Areas constitutional status; declaration of the people of the Northern Areas as full citizens of Pakistan with the right to participate in the affairs of the federation; and the granting of provincial status. Responding to the charges of political, economic, and social discrimination the Supreme Court directed the Pakistani government to,

“...initiate appropriate legislative/administrative measures within a period of six months from today to make necessary amendments in the Constitution/statute/order/notification to ensure that the people of the Northern Areas enjoy their above fundamental rights, namely to be governed through their chosen representatives and have access to justice through an independent judiciary...”.<sup>195</sup>

After following almost a decade of rule under Musharraf where development was emphasized over rights and no action taken on this Supreme Court judgment, the *Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self Governance Order 2009* was passed by the Cabinet aiming

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<sup>195</sup> Supreme Court of Pakistan. *Fauzia Saleem Abbas v. The Federation of Pakistan* 1999. <Last accessed on March 25, 2013 [http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/fouzia\\_saleem\\_abbas\\_and\\_3\\_others\\_v\\_federation\\_of\\_pakistan\\_.pdf](http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/fouzia_saleem_abbas_and_3_others_v_federation_of_pakistan_.pdf)>.

to provide “political empowerment and better governance to the people of Gilgit-Baltistan”.<sup>196</sup>

The 2009 Act is argued to be one in a long line of minimal concessions granted to the people of what is now ‘Gilgit-Baltistan (GB)’. Although the Act gives ‘province-like’ status to GB, it does not provide it with jurisdiction over what is usually a list of provincial subjects. Moreover, even though a regional Legislative Assembly has been created, it has no real tangible power, and extensive powers are provided to the Chairman who is in fact the Prime Minister. GB is also excluded from being under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, and instead has its own Supreme Appellate Court. It is also not provided any representation in bodies at the Federal level. However the Act does extend fundamental rights to the people of Gilgit-Baltistan – the implementation of these rights, and methods of redress is still to be witnessed.

The liminal status occupied by Gilgit-Baltistan, and the unwillingness of the Pakistani state to grant it autonomy or provincial status, has often been linked to the Kashmir issue. In three resolutions since 1949 the United Nations Security Council and United Nations Commission have called for “the question of the accession of the State of Jammu and Kashmir to India or Pakistan to be decided through the democratic method of a free and impartial plebiscite”.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> Government of Pakistan. *Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self Governance Order 2009* <Last accessed on March 25, 2013 <http://gbtribune.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/self-governance-order-2009.pdf>>

<sup>197</sup> United Nations Security Council. *Resolution 39* (1948). <Last accessed on March 25, 2013 <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/047/64/IMG/NR004764.pdf?OpenElement>>

Starting from the 1950s India increasingly distanced itself from agreeing to hold a plebiscite arguing that Pakistani troops had not withdrawn, and elections determining the state's status had been held in India.<sup>198</sup> However Pakistan's decision to tie the Gilgit Agency/Northern Areas/Gilgit-Baltistan with AJK and treat it as part of the disputed territory was based on the notion that if a UN mandated plebiscite were held, then this area would form part of the vote bank for Pakistan. This "calculated ambiguity" is wrought with contradictions: while Pakistan opposes India's claim over AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan, it does not recognize them as part of Pakistani territory fearing it would negate Kashmir's status as a disputed territory and imply acceptance of the status quo.<sup>199</sup>

The military, as chief architect of Pakistan's Kashmir strategy, has ensured the people of Gilgit-Baltistan were not granted autonomy or rights they had been demanding since 1947. This in large part then contributed to a growing nationalist movement in the region. However the threat of 'separatism' from such parties might be exaggerated: in the 2009 elections (the first to be held since the passing of the 2009 Order) the legislative assembly was dominated by representatives from the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N), Jamiat Ulema e Islam (JUI), and the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM). It was only in a special by-election held in 2011 that a member of the Balawaristan National Front won a seat.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Victoria Schofield, "Kashmir's Forgotten Plebiscite" (BBC News, January 2002). <Last accessed on March 25, 2013 [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/1766582.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/1766582.stm)>

<sup>199</sup> International Crisis Group, "Discord in Pakistan's Northern Areas", 6.

<sup>200</sup> Government of Gilgit Baltistan. "Bio-data of Members" <Last accessed on March 25, 2013 [http://www.gilgitbaltistan.gov.pk/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=70&Itemid=66](http://www.gilgitbaltistan.gov.pk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=70&Itemid=66)>

Although the 2009 Order was limited in the scope of its reforms, it was intended to symbolically place Gilgit-Baltistan closer within the sphere of the Pakistani state. This was fueled by Islamabad's increasing geo-strategic interests: these included allaying tensions over the Diamer-Bhasha Dam's construction and royalties, and subduing perceived Chinese influence in the region.

Much like the Russian threat was used as an imperial bogeyman, increasing Chinese influence in the area is causing alarm in some policy circles. In a U.S Congressional testimony to the Human Rights Committee, Senge Sering from the Institute of Gilgit-Baltistan Studies noted that increasing Chinese control over operations mining and other exploration/extraction of natural resources in the area has led to,

“The situation, in which thousands of Chinese personnel have assumed de facto control of the region, poses serious political threats to both the natives and the international community. China's presence in Gilgit-Baltistan complicates the Kashmir issue, and prolongs the dispute between India and Pakistan, which is like oxygen to the terrorists and rogue elements within the ISI”.<sup>201</sup>

Sering also argued that the 2009 Order “allowed Pakistan to reap the benefits from Gilgit-Baltistan's strategic location in a time when China, her all wealthy ally is investing billions of dollars in the region”.<sup>202</sup> Concerns over increasing Chinese influence were further strengthened by rumors that China was planning to open a consulate in Gilgit-

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<sup>201</sup> U.S Congress Human Rights Committee. “Indigenous Peoples in Asia” (07/26/2011). <Last accessed on March 25, 2013 <http://tribune.com.pk/story/275669/boundary-row-over-diamer-bhasha-dam-wapda-proposes-splitting-royalties/>>

<sup>202</sup> Senge Sering, “Constitutional Impasse in Gilgit Baltistan”. *Strategic Analysis*. 34, 3 (2010), 355.

Baltistan.<sup>203</sup> It has been argued that the 2009 Order was passed under pressure from US concerns over growing Chinese hegemony over this area.

The foundation stone for the Diamer-Bhasha Dam was laid in October 2011, in the Diamer district of Gilgit-Baltistan.<sup>204</sup> The plan to construct this roller-compacted concrete dam was announced in 2006 and in 2008 the National Economic Council, a constitutional body, approved it. To be located on the River Indus, 165 kilometers downstream of the Gilgit Valley, the dam is projected to supply 4,500 kW of clean hydropower.<sup>205</sup> However, since the start there were arguments over the question of royalties from this project. The Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution of Pakistan had clearly indicated that any royalties from infrastructural projects and natural resources would be the property of the province. The royalty dispute arose over the position of Shandur, which the governments of GB and Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa (KPK, formerly NWFP) both claim as theirs (see map for location).

A plan by the Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) of Pakistan intends to resolve the dispute over royalties by placing six power generation units each in

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<sup>203</sup> Zafar Iqbal. "China's Diplomatic Expansion in South Asia". *Eurasia Review* (July 2012). <Last accessed on March 25, 2013 <http://www.eurasiareview.com/03072012-chinas-diplomatic-expansion-in-south-asia/>>

<sup>204</sup> As of March 2013 the project has been put on a back burner due to unavailability of international donors. The World Bank refused to bankroll the project since it was being constructed on disputed territory. However other donors such as USAID and the Asian Development Bank had already committed funds to the project.

<sup>205</sup> Engr Husain Ahmed Siddiqi. "Kick Starting Diamer Bhasha Project". *Dawn* <Last accessed March 25, 2013 <http://dawn.com/2011/04/11/kick-starting-diamer-bhasha-project/>>

GB and KPK, thereby splitting the royalties evenly.<sup>206</sup> As the Diamer-Bhasha dam is a long-term project, the eventual outcome remains to be seen. However, it was clear that in order to get support from Gilgit-Baltistan over the construction of this dam it was important to grant them some nominal form of autonomy and rights.

## **Conclusion**

Following the transfer of power, and the resulting Kashmir dispute, the areas of Gilgit and Baltistan were tied to this issue. British policies had sidelined Dogra authority in the Gilgit Agency, which resulted in administration and governance in colonial hands. Through keeping the political status and territorial limits of the Gilgit Agency ambiguous, the British were able to 'hand back' the Agency to Dogra rulers. The date of the Agency was then tied to Kashmir, an area it shared little historic political and cultural connections with.

In the postcolonial period the Pakistani state, under the military's influence, ensured the continuation of Gilgit and Baltistan's liminality. By treating it as an important player in the Kashmir dispute, and the major vote bank if a plebiscite be held, Gilgit-Baltistan were not integrated within the Pakistani state or provided fundamental rights. Moreover, Hunza and Nagar were also linked with the Kashmir issue even though they considered themselves as independent states and had been declared so by the British in 1935.

Up till 1971 the Pakistani state continued political, economic and legal practices from the colonial era. However during the colonial period the British were able to use rituals of submission and the distribution of honor, rank, and subsidies in a more successful

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<sup>206</sup> Zafar Bhutta. "Boundary Row Over Diamer Bhasha Dam". *The Express Tribune* <Last accessed March 25, 2013 <http://tribune.com.pk/story/275669/boundary-row-over-diamer-bhasha-dam-wapda-proposes-splitting-royalties/>>

manner. In colonial sources no widespread agitation against British rule has been recorded, arguably due to the fact that local rulers still exerted political authority over their subjects rather than the British. However Islamabad's strong grip on Gilgit-Baltistan, refusal to provide it a stake at the center, and extend fundamental rights to the citizens has led to its policies being deemed as "colonial".

## Conclusion

The national Independence Day is celebrated across Pakistan on August 14. However, in Gilgit the *yom-e-azadi* (day of freedom) is November 1, the day the Scouts rebelled against the Dogra Raj. In the past few years, nationalist groups in Gilgit-Baltistan have also boycotted the *yom-e-azadi* celebrations, alleging that it only marks another epoch of colonial domination – that of Pakistan's. Parties such as the Balawaristan National Front and Karakoram National Movement are often depicted in the media as a threat to Gilgit-Baltistan's stability and regional security – however, if electoral politics is any indicator most people in GB still support mainstream political parties and integration within Pakistan. They demand the extension of fundamental political rights to them, a stake at decision-making in the center, and more control over politics and economic resources of the state.

Gilgit-Baltistan's liminality stems from the ambiguities in sovereignty in the colonial and post-colonial period. British policymakers chose to keep the political status and territorial limits of the Gilgit Agency undefined – leading to its position as an anomalous space within the patchwork of empire. Legally part of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, administered by the British, and ruled by local leaders – sovereignty was then not monolithic in the Gilgit Agency. Even though the Agency was a cartographically unified entity, its internal dynamics prevented the imposition of centralized authority.

The nature of sovereignty in the post-colonial also stemmed from its power to declare the exception. With the linking of Gilgit-Baltistan to the Kashmir issue, the area has



been placed in permanent liminality until the resolution of the Kashmir dispute. Since Pakistan cannot legally claim Gilgit-Baltistan as its territory, it has used this pretext to place the region in a state of permanent exception until the issue of sovereignty is resolved. The Kashmir dispute has been used as a premise to deny rights and self-governance, and ensure a strong grip on Gilgit-Baltistan.

Apart from the Kashmir issue, Pakistan's interest over the years in Gilgit-Baltistan has mainly been strategic – from the building of the Karakoram Highway to enhance trade, to the projected Bhasha-Diamer dam to increase energy capacity. Projects such as the KKH have been couched in terms of providing 'development' to the people of Gilgit-Baltistan, however is the state that has reaped the benefited from these projects. Moreover it has allowed the state to change the demographics of Gilgit-Baltistan, contributing to sectarian violence and "lawlessness" in the region.

There have also been increasing instances of sectarian violence in Gilgit-Baltistan, starting in the 1980s, and reaching alarming numbers in the past few years. Fingers have been pointed towards the Pakistani military that has used areas of GB as training grounds for the Kashmir conflict, and the settlement of Pathans and Punjabis. The state again has turned a blind eye to many instances of these sectarian killings.

Since 1947 the people of Gilgit-Baltistan have called for integration within the Pakistani state and the extension of fundamental rights to them. With the announcement of the 2009 Order, it was hoped that Islamabad would provide the people of Gilgit-Baltistan with more avenues for representation and consultation at the federal level. However as with political development in Pakistan – progress has been slow. The postcolonial state for

all intents and purposes still continues to treat Gilgit-Baltistan as a remote colonial outpost, inhabited by Dardic speaking fairies.

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## Appendix

Map 1 – The nature of disputed territory in the Pamirs



Source: Kreutzmann, Herman. "Kashmir and the Northern Areas of Pakistan: Boundary Making Along Contested Frontiers", *Erdkunde*, 62, 3 (2008), 201-219.

Map 2 – Map of the Areas between the Oxus and the Indus (1935)



Source: Schoenberg, R.C.F. *Between the Oxus and the Indus* (London: Martin Hopkinson Ltd, 1935).

Map 3 – Present Day Gilgit-Baltistan



Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Northern\\_Areas\\_Pakistan.svg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Northern_Areas_Pakistan.svg)