

## Abstract

Waziristan, one of the largest and most backward tribal areas of Pakistan, is inhabited by the fiercest Pashtun tribes. With the annexation of Punjab in 1849 British Empire shifted their attention towards securing the Indian Boundary which it shares with Afghanistan. During 19<sup>th</sup> Century Imperialist Russian began to conquer the small and weaker states of Muslim Khanates who shared their borders with Afghanistan. British fear of Russian invasion turned into reality with Panjdeh Incident of 1885<sup>1</sup>. British did not want to lose India which was popularly known as 'Jewel in the Crown'. To keep India safe from the clutches of Imperialist Russia Britishers soon formed a Border Commission and negotiated a new boundary line between Russia and Afghanistan. After drawing a formal boundary line, Indian Government began to divert their attention towards securing its eastern border with Afghanistan and Waziristan was the largest tribal agency located at the boundary.

In addition to Russian threat, there was another challenge the British India was facing in Waziristan and that was the security of trading passes in Waziristan i.e. Tochi Pass and Gomal Pass. The Britishers soon established settled districts particularly Bannu and D.I Khan, which were frequently attacked by tribal lashkars. This compelled British Government to interfere in Tribal affairs in the initial decades of their rule i.e. from 1849 to 1878. Britishers did not want to physically occupy the tribal areas and they relied on the services of middlemen or intermediaries while the outlawed tribes were punished for their crimes through temporary punitive expeditions. The beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century marked with extensive administrative and military reforms towards Waziristan. These reforms included the separation of North West Frontier (NWFP), from Punjab in 1901 and introduction of Frontier Crime Regulation (FCR) and System of Political Administration in Waziristan.

From 1922 to 1936, to settle down relations with the tribes, British Government introduced several incentives which included introducing and increasing tribal allowances and providing jobs to the local tribesmen in the newly started construction projects in Waziristan. All of these positive incentives helped in stopping tribal raids which was one of the most important British objectives in Waziristan. In 1936 Waziristan once again fell into chaos and a new much stronger tribal revolt against British Government began in Waziristan. A Wazir spiritual leader

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<sup>1</sup> In 1885 Russian troops finally attacked and captured Pajdeh District then under the control of Afghanistan.

popularly known as Faqir of Ipi<sup>2</sup> successfully instigated most of the Waziristan tribes against British India after the incident of Islam Bibi.<sup>3</sup> Government Policy of interference in religious affairs of tribal people led to the most successful tribal revolt ever faced by British Government in more than nine decades. The tribal revolt was temporarily suppressed with the help of a full scale Waziristan Operation of 1936, but the Operation failed to kill or capture Faqir of Ipi. The Faqri resisted the British Officials for more than a decade until British left India in 1947.

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<sup>2</sup> Faqir of Ipi's real name was Mirza Ali Khan was a Wazir spiritual leader. Faqir launched Anti-British movement in 1936 after the incident of Islam Bibi.

<sup>3</sup> A Hindu girl named Ram Kaur eloped with a Muslim School teacher Sayed Amir Ali Shah and converted to Islam, changed her name to Noor Jehan but locally known as Islam Bibi. Her parents registered case in British Court and court handed over Islam Bibi to her Hindu parents. The case became the cause of Faqir's call of jihad against British Government.