



# Policy Journal of Social Science Review



**Governance, Underdevelopment, and Internal  
Colonialism: A Study of the Tribal Areas (ex-  
FATA) of Pakistan**

**Dr. Asghar Khan<sup>1</sup>  
Muhammad Faheem<sup>2</sup>  
Dr. Zia Ur Rahman<sup>3</sup>**

**Governance, Underdevelopment, and Internal Colonialism: A Study of the Tribal Areas (ex-FATA) of Pakistan**

<b>Dr. Asghar Khan</b>	Lecturer Department of International Relations, University of Peshawar. Email: <a href="mailto:mian_786pk@yahoo.com">mian_786pk@yahoo.com</a>
<b>Muhammad Faheem</b>	Lecturer at the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Peshawar, Peshawar. Email: <a href="mailto:m.fatheem485@gmail.com">m.fatheem485@gmail.com</a>
<b>Dr. Zia Ur Rahman</b>	Assistant Professor at Abasyn University, Peshawar. Email: <a href="mailto:mianzia786@gmail.com">mianzia786@gmail.com</a>

**Abstract**

This research investigates the persistent underdevelopment and marginalization of Pakistan's Tribal Areas (ex-FATA) bordering Afghanistan, arguing that these regions have been subjected to a form of internal colonialism. The paper explores the historical and contemporary factors contributing to this unequal center-periphery relationship, focusing on the role of governance, development policies, and elite interests.

By analyzing socio-economic indicators and comparing the ex-FATA to other regions of Pakistan, the study reveals a stark disparity in development outcomes. The paper argues that the ex-FATA's marginalization stems from a combination of factors, including historical neglect - the region's isolation and limited integration into Pakistan's national development framework have hindered its progress; Governance Challenges - weak governance, corruption, and the dominance of local elites have diverted resources away from development needs; and elite capture - the political and economic power structures in the ex-FATA have often been captured by elites who prioritize their own interests over those of the broader population.

The paper concludes by examining the implications of internal colonialism for the ex-FATA's population, including poverty, limited opportunities, and social unrest. It also discusses potential strategies for addressing these challenges and promoting more equitable development in the region.

**Keywords:** Governance, underdevelopment, Tribal Areas, elite class, Center-periphery, internal colonialism, colonial culture, development indicators.

## **Introduction**

The concepts of center-periphery relations and underdevelopment are essential for understanding the socio-economic dynamics of marginalized regions. In Pakistan, the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (ex-FATA) exemplify how historical neglect and governance challenges can perpetuate inequality and hinder progress. Located along the border with Afghanistan, ex-FATA has been marked by its strategic position, rugged terrain, and socio-political isolation. Despite being an integral part of Pakistan, the region has consistently lagged behind the rest of the country in development outcomes, with socio-economic indicators such as health, education, and infrastructure far below national averages.

The governance model imposed on ex-FATA has its roots in colonial legacies, notably the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR), which was enacted by the British in the 19th century. This legal and administrative framework, maintained in various forms until its repeal in 2018, restricted integration with the rest of Pakistan and perpetuated a system of indirect rule. Under this model, local elites, such as tribal elders (Malaks), played a crucial role in administering the region, often prioritizing their interests over broader community needs. This governance approach led to the region's exclusion from Pakistan's national development agenda, thereby creating a dynamic where ex-FATA was effectively treated as an internal colony. The state's inability to foster inclusive growth and meaningful political representation reinforced the marginalization of the region.

This study explores the persistent underdevelopment and marginalization of ex-FATA through the lens of internal colonialism and center-periphery relations. It posits that the region's socio-economic disparities result from a combination of historical neglect, governance challenges, and elite capture. The research seeks to understand why, despite being a part of a democratic state, ex-FATA remains significantly underdeveloped. It investigates how the governance structure, resource allocation, and development policies implemented by the central state have perpetuated a pattern of internal colonialism, wherein the periphery remains exploited and excluded from the benefits of national progress.

## **Research Questions and Methodological Approach**

The primary objective of this paper is to assess whether the underdevelopment of ex-FATA is a result of internal colonialism perpetuated by the central state through governance practices that replicate colonial-era treatment. The research is guided by the following questions:

1. Why is there a significant development gap between the center (core) and periphery in Pakistan, especially in the tribal areas (ex-FATA) as a periphery, despite Pakistan's democratic framework?
2. What factors contribute to the persistent underdevelopment of ex-FATA, making it lag behind compared to other regions of the country?

This study employs a post-colonial theoretical framework, drawing on concepts of center-periphery relations and internal colonialism. It argues that colonial legacies do not automatically dissipate with independence but continue to shape the political, economic, and social structures of post-colonial states. These structures often reproduce the inequalities and exploitation characteristic of external colonial rule, resulting in internal disparities within a nation.

The research approach involves a critical analysis of historical and contemporary data, comparing development indicators in ex-FATA with those of other regions, particularly Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

This comparative analysis aims to illustrate the systemic underdevelopment and socio-economic disparities in the region. The paper also considers the role of governance, elite interests, and policy failures in maintaining this status quo. By examining these elements, the study demonstrates how the governance practices toward ex-FATA align with the features of internal colonialism, showing that even in the absence of a foreign ruler, the region's socio-economic reality mirrors that of colonial exploitation.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Colonialism, or "colonialism proper," emerged during the Industrial Revolution in Europe, characterized by the "subjugation by physical and psychological force of one culture by another... through military conquest of territory" (McMichael, 2012). This global practice of occupying weaker states by industrial powers lasted for over three centuries and saw its decline after the Second World War. However, the end of formal colonialism did not eliminate the practices of exploitation and subjugation; instead, these transformed into new forms of indirect control known as neo-colonialism. Neo-colonialism manifests as the intervention and influence of developed nations in the internal affairs of developing countries, often through capitalism, cultural imperialism, or global business practices (Sartre & Jean-Paul, 2001).

In the post-colonial era, neo-colonialism in former colonies led to the continuation of exploitation by the local ruling elites, who adopted the colonial power's practices within their independent states. This form of internal exploitation, where the elites replicate colonial dynamics, is termed "internal colonialism." Internal colonialism describes the separation of a dominant core from the peripheral regions within a nation-state, resulting in unequal development and distribution of resources. It represents the structural, social, economic, and political inequalities that exist among different regions of the same state. Additionally, the term encompasses the discrimination and imbalance in development policies within a state, often impacting minority or marginalized groups. At its core, internal colonialism refers to the oppression and exploitation of a state's own regions and peoples by a dominant class or ruling group, resembling the patterns of external colonial powers' exploitation of foreign colonies.

The term "internal colonialism" is utilized here in preference to other terms like exploitation, inequities, or discrimination because the literature on post-colonial states in political science provides a more relevant context than socialist literature. This paper adopts a middle ground between the definitions of internal colonialism presented by González Casanova and Van den Berghe. González Casanova distinguished internal colonialism from the Marxist class system, focusing on the geographic and ethnic-racial perspectives. He defined internal colonialism as the social relationships and structures of exploitation and domination among culturally distinct groups within the same state (González Casanova, 1969). His definition highlights that, unlike traditional colonization, internal colonialism involves exploitation within a nation by its own dominant class, incorporating various dominant-subordinate group relationships (González Casanova, 1965, 1969).

Conversely, Van den Berghe (1978) offered a more restrictive definition, arguing that the broad use of the term has diluted its usefulness for social science analysis. According to Van den Berghe, internal colonialism is characterized by the domination of one ethnic group over another, territorial separation, distinct land tenure rights, and discriminatory governance rules for the subordinate group, such as the implementation of the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) in ex-FATA. This model also includes economic inequalities, where the dominant group subjugates the subordinate group, making them dependent within production and labor relations. This paper frames internal colonialism as a special case within the theory of dependent capitalist development, specifically in the context of the relationship between the central Pakistani government (the core) and the tribal areas of ex-FATA (the periphery).

The theoretical framework adopted here integrates the concepts of internal colonialism and center-periphery relations to analyze the underdevelopment of ex-FATA. Comparative politics literature generally provides three broad approaches to the study of center-periphery dynamics. First, the theory of modern system analysis argues that, since the 16th century with the rise of capitalism, global market forces, rather than domestic factors, have shaped national development or underdevelopment (Eagly, 1984). The structure of this process placed core manufacturing states in a dominant position, exploiting the peripheral states, which were primarily raw material producers, to serve the economies of the core. This dynamic resulted in the underdevelopment of the global periphery, as it hindered their capacity to develop independently.

Second, the theory of internal colonialism is often seen as an extension of modern system analysis because it emphasizes the dependency and exploitation within a state. It focuses on internal territorial inequality and the various mechanisms through which the core region exploits and controls the periphery (Blaug, 1962). Third, unlike traditional inter-governmentalist approaches, the center-periphery framework offers a balanced view of center-local relations,

providing insights into how central authorities manage, control, or exploit peripheral regions. However, this approach does not always specify the principal actors in the periphery (Appleby, 1978).

The center-periphery model is particularly suited to explaining internal colonialism at the national level, where unequal development relations result in the underdevelopment of peripheral regions. The internal colonialism framework examines how the core regions within a state exploit and maintain control over peripheral territories, preventing their autonomous development. It suggests the need for balanced development, where resources are redistributed to address inequalities and empower marginalized populations. This model discourages polarized development based on race, class, geography, or ethnicity (Veblen, 1923, 1967; Johnson, 1972; Hechter, 1975), advocating for a more equitable societal structure.

#### **Tribal Areas (ex-FATA) and Development**

The available authentic data, primarily from the 1998 census and other historical records, indicate that the development in the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (ex-FATA) has long lagged behind and continues to lag behind the adjacent Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and the rest of Pakistan. This persistent underdevelopment is attributed to a combination of endogenous and exogenous factors. Endogenous factors, related to governance, include inadequate infrastructure, limited access to roads, communication, and transportation networks, insufficient allocation of development funds, and low levels of local community participation in development efforts. The administrative system's dependence on tribal elders (Malaks) for overseeing development projects, combined with prevalent corruption and the shared interests of local officials and Malaks in the distribution of development funds, has further worsened these challenges (Asian Development Bank, 2003).

Exogenous factors, including natural and geographical constraints, have also significantly contributed to the region's development issues. The remoteness, rugged terrain, and harsh ecological conditions of ex-FATA create formidable barriers to progress (Galgano & Palka, 2012). For example, only about one-sixth of the region consists of plains, while the rest is primarily mountainous and barren (Asian Development Bank, 2003). Additionally, historical and international factors have played a role in shaping the region's development trajectory. Both the British colonial authorities and the Pakistani state later utilized the area as a buffer zone with Afghanistan for more than six decades. The ongoing conflict and instability across the Afghan border over the last 38 years have further hindered development efforts in the region (Rubin, 2013).

These combined factors underscore that ex-FATA represents a classic example of an internal colony within Pakistan, where state policies and structural challenges have continued to marginalize the region.

**Population and Housing**

As of the 1998 Census, the population of ex-FATA was approximately three million. The overall population density in the region stood at 117 persons per square kilometer, varying significantly at the individual Agency and Frontier Region (FR) level. For example, in FR D.I. Khan, the population density was just 19 persons per square kilometer, while Bajaur Agency recorded a much higher density of 461 persons per square kilometer. The region's annual population growth rate is slightly below the national average of 2.7% and the provincial average of 2.8% in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Household size in ex-FATA averaged 9.3 persons, higher than Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's 8 persons and the national average of 6.8 persons. The gender ratio showed 108 males for every 100 females. Moreover, the census indicated that around 126,577 people, predominantly men, had migrated from ex-FATA to other parts of Pakistan (Table 1).

Housing conditions in ex-FATA, as recorded in the 1998 Census, also reflect the region's developmental challenges. The proportion of households with five or more rooms was higher in ex-FATA (20.56%) compared to the rest of Pakistan (6.92%) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (8.67%). This suggests that the number of persons per room was lower in ex-FATA (2.91) than in the rest of Pakistan (3.13) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (3.34). However, the percentage of pucca (brick and mortar) housing units was notably lower in ex-FATA (36.73%) compared to Pakistan (54.64%) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (56.15%), indicating a prevalence of less durable housing structures.

A majority of the population in ex-FATA resides in rural areas, resulting in the region having a higher rate of owned housing units (90.08%) compared to the national average (81.19%) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (80.61%). Cultural factors, including reluctance to disclose information about female household members, likely contributed to biases in census data collection, potentially underrepresenting the actual population (Government of Pakistan, 1998).

**Table - 1: Population of ex-FATA**

Area	Population 1998			Sex ratio (Male per hundred female)	1998 Census Average Household size
	Both sexes	Male	Female		
Pakistan	132352279	53%	47%	108.5	6.8
KP	17743645	52%	48%	105	8
ex-FATA	3175000	53%	47%	108	9.3
Bajaur Agency	595227	52%	48%	105	9.1

Mohmand Agency	334453	53%	47%	110	9.0
Khyber Agency	546730	53%	47%	109	9.9
Kurram Agency	448310	52%	48%	105	10.6
Aurakzai Agency	225441	51%	49%	100	8.8
N.Waziristan Agency	361246	54%	46%	114	9.1
S.Waziristan Agency	429841	54%	46%	116	8.5
F.R Peshawar	53841	51%	49%	101	8.8
F.R Kohat	88456	52%	48%	106	9.3
F.R Bannu	19593	53%	47%	113	9.6
F.R Lakki	6987	50%	50%	98	7.5
F.R D.I Khan	38990	53%	47%	111	7.1
F.R Tank	27216	52%	48%	108	7.6

Source: Government of Pakistan, Islamabad, Population Census 1998

### **Health Facilities and Health Conditions**

In Pakistan, including ex-FATA, a mixed public and private healthcare delivery system operates, consisting of various levels of service provision. At the Union Council level, facilities include Basic Health Units (BHUs) and Sub-Health Centres (SHCs). At a higher administrative level are Rural Health Centres (RHCs), Mother and Child Health (MCH) Centres, and dispensaries, followed by Tehsil Headquarters Hospitals (THQs) at the tehsil level and District Headquarters Hospitals (DHQs) at the district level. Above these are tertiary and teaching hospitals. Preventive care services are also offered by the public sector through vertical programs such as the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI), TB control program, the national program for family planning and primary healthcare, AIDS control, and the malaria control program (Kansi, 2003; Government of Pakistan, 2003).

The overall health situation in Pakistan, and specifically in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and ex-FATA, is particularly poor, with rural areas facing the greatest challenges. Health services and infrastructure are often non-existent or insufficient, leaving rural communities vulnerable due to the lack of medical facilities and inadequate awareness of health issues. The government health infrastructure is not adequately equipped to serve the needs of the population, resulting in significant disparities.



Healthcare coverage in ex-FATA suffers from numerous deficiencies, including the lack of sufficient human and financial resources, poor accessibility, an unhealthy environment, and widespread ignorance about healthcare. When comparing health indicators for ex-FATA with the rest of the country, the inadequacies of the healthcare system in the region become apparent. While some data on population and population growth in ex-FATA is available, critical information on life expectancy, infant mortality, and maternal mortality is absent, indicating a severe gap in healthcare provision.

A comparative study of health institutions and facilities in Pakistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and ex-FATA reveals that the latter has far fewer health facilities than both the rest of Pakistan and the adjoining province. This shortage has resulted in a high incidence of health problems, including elevated maternal and infant mortality rates, a significant disease burden, and various health challenges that remain inadequately addressed. Table 2 and Table 3 highlight the disparity in healthcare facilities across these regions. Additionally, 90% of doctors graduating from medical colleges in Pakistan choose to work in urban areas rather than in remote regions lacking modern amenities, such as ex-FATA (Government of Pakistan, 2003).

The population-per-bed ratio in hospitals is much higher in ex-FATA than in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the rest of Pakistan, reflecting the severe shortage of healthcare infrastructure. Similarly, the population per hospital is considerably greater in ex-FATA compared to other regions of the country, as shown in Figure 1.

The inadequacies in Pakistan's health system are more pronounced in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and ex-FATA. The state of rural infrastructure, including Rural Health Centres, Basic Health Units, and dispensaries, is even worse in ex-FATA. These facilities not only lack adequate numbers but are often rendered ineffective due to the poor condition of buildings and various deficiencies. Many health services, including education and others, remain dysfunctional because of insufficient staffing and the lack of essential supplies, further limiting the ability of existing healthcare facilities to operate at full capacity.

**Table – 2: Comparison of Health Facilities**

	Hospital	Dispensary	R.H centres	T.B clinic	B.H.U	Sub Health Centres	Leprosy clinics	M.C.H centers
Pakistan	876	4583	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A	853
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	185	514	102	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A	102
ex-FATA	42	170	5	6	156	3	17	4

Bajaur	2	10	1	1	16	-	-	2
Mohmand	3	4	1	1	23	-	-	-
Khyber	4	16		1	11	-	1	1
F.R Peshawar	1	-	-	-	8	-	-	-
F.R Kohat	2	3	-	-	9	-	1	-
Orakzai	3	10	2	-	21	-	1	-
Kurram	5	25	-	1	19	-	3	1
N.Waziristan	9	29	1	1	13	3	7	-
F.R Bannu	3	18	-		11	-	-	-
F.R Laki	-	4	-		3	-	-	-
F.R Tank	3	13	-		4	-	1	-
S.Waziristan	5	30	11	1	16	-	2	-
F.R D.I. Khan	2	8	-	-	2	-	1	-

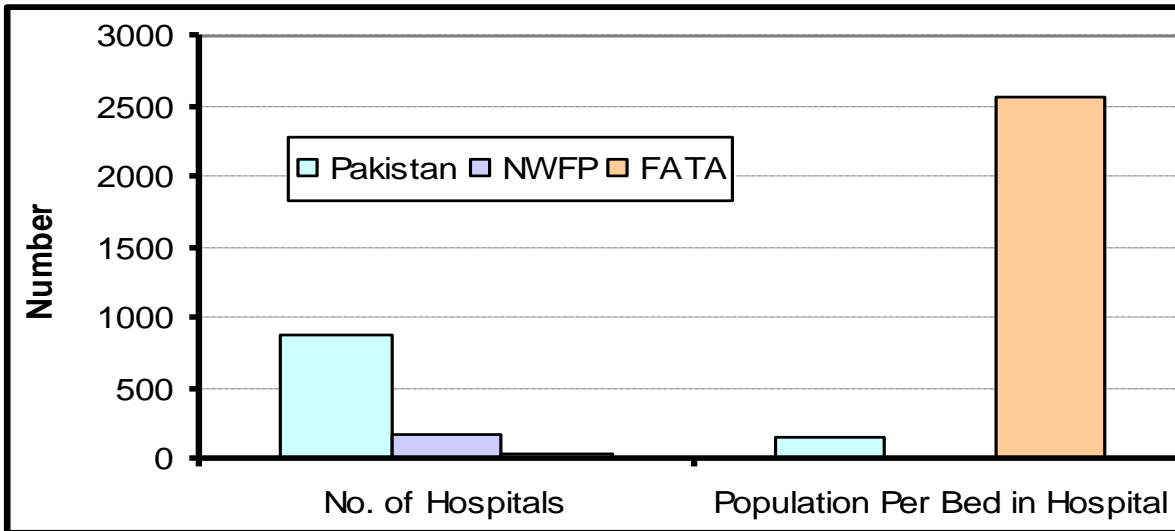
Sources: (1). Directorate of EX-FATA (2002) Peshawar, (2). Directorate of Education (Secondary), Peshawar, (3). Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bureau of Statistics 2002, (4).Federal Bureau of Statistics 2002.

**Table - 3: Posts in Different Health Institutions in ex-FATA**

	Total	Filled	Female	Filled
Medical Officer	459	451	47	37
Dental Surgeon	23	13	1	-
Nurses	81	-	-	-
Health Technicians	447	432	5-6	-
LHV	238	238	-	-
Dispensers	629 (male)	629	-	-
Immunization	24	10-15	-	-
Malaria (staff)	169 (male)	-	-	-
Leprosy	8 (male)	-	-	-
TB control	16 (male)	-	-	-
Tonitary	47 (male)	-	-	-
Mid wives	68 (male)	-	-	-

Source: EX-FATA Directorate of Health, EX-FATA Secretariat, Peshawar and EX-FATA Development Statistics, 2000

**Figure - 1: Number and Population per bed in Hospitals**



**Education Facilities**

The overall literacy rate in Pakistan is 45%, with male literacy at 65% and female literacy at 37%. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the literacy rate is lower at 37.3% for both sexes, with 52.8% for males and 21.2% for females. In contrast, ex-FATA exhibits an even more concerning literacy gap, with an overall literacy rate of just 17.42%. For males, the literacy rate is 29.5%, while for females, it is a mere 3% (EX-FATA Development Statistics, 2000; Federal Bureau of Statistics, 2000). These figures indicate that ex-FATA has a significantly lower literacy rate than both Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Pakistan as a whole.

A closer comparison among different Agencies within ex-FATA shows considerable disparities. The Khyber Agency has the highest overall literacy rate in the region; however, the female literacy rate remains extremely low at 0.67%. Bajaur Agency has a slightly higher female literacy rate of 1%, the highest among all the Agencies. Conversely, the female literacy rate in Frontier Region (FR) D.I. Khan stands at 3.48%, the highest in the ex-FATA region (Table 4).

**Table - 3.4: Gender Based Literacy Ratio (%) of Population**

	Both Sexes	Male	Female
Pakistan	45	65	37
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	37.3	52.8	21.2
ex-FATA	17.42	29.51	3
Bajaur Agency	3.80	6.18	1.00
Mohmand Agency	3.61	6.07	0.64
Khyber Agency	10.94	20.18	0.67

Kurram Agency	6.25	11.04	0.85
Aurakzai Agency	3.03	4.71	0.69
N.Waziristan Agency	7.39	13.00	0.49
S.Waziristan Agency	7.04	11.76	0.60
F.R Peshawar	17.91	32.51	1.88
F.R Kohat	15.65	27.88	1.04
F.R Bannu	4.75	8.00	0.50
F.R Lakki	NA	NA	NA
F.R D.I.Khan	3.83	13.50	3.48
F.R Tank	8.95	6.02	1.21

Sources: 1). EX-FATA Development Statistics, 2000, (2). Federal Bureau of Statistics, 2000.

The school participation rate at different levels in Pakistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and ex-FATA reveals a high dropout rate in ex-FATA compared to the rest of the country. The data shows that while female participation is relatively higher at the primary level, it drops sharply at the middle and high school levels (Table 5).

**Table - 5: Gender Wise Participation Rate at Primary, Middle & High Level (1998-99)**

	Primary			Middle			High		
	Both sexes	Male	Female	Both sexes	Male	Female	Both sexes	Male	Female
Pakistan	30.14	20.90	17.29	20.90	22.05	18.74	17.29	18.20	15.58
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	29.64	28.01	33.0	19.94	21.00	16.90	18.61	20.06	14.41
ex-FATA	35.34	68.86	16.62	10.51	17.52	1.89	7.64	13.00	1.05
Bajaur Agency	36.80	66.48	13.08	6.45	11.45	0.56	5.66	10.06	0.48
Mohmand Agency	32.64	65.83	9.94	11.26	18.07	3.09	8.60	14.37	1.69
Khyber Agency	51.24	80.12	26.14	13.92	25.11	1.49	10.22	18.90	0.57
FR Peshawar	70.40	100.00	30.12	33.79	59.74	5.30	25.80	45.70	3.95
FR Kohat	73.58	100.00	52.12	38.07	61.20	10.42	33.43	60.10	1.54
Aurakzai Agency	31.51	58.82	6.96	7.89	12.92	0.88	5.18	8.49	0.57
Kurram Agency	40.76	70.49	16.26	14.52	23.00	4.96	10.55	16.66	3.65

N/Waziristan Agency	34.63	64.24	11.20	6.52	11.50	0.40	5.41	9.38	0.53
FR Bannu	100.00	100.00	100.00	63.68	100.00	1.73	37.50	66.13	
S/Waziristan Agency	26.45	46.25	7.06	4.44	7.35	0.48	2.94	4.77	0.44
FR D.I.Khan	38.80	72.36	10.72	6.84	12.46	0.10	4.14	5.59	
FR Tank	73.26	100.00	43.68	13.95	22.26	3.98	5.90	10.01	0.96

Sources: 1). EX-FATA Development Statistics, 2000. (2). Federal Bureau of Statistics, 2000.

The high dropout rates in male institutions at different education levels in ex-FATA can be attributed to various factors, particularly child labor due to widespread poverty. Many parents in poor families prefer sending their children to work rather than school to contribute to household income. As shown in Table 5, the participation rate is relatively high at the primary level, as younger children are not yet seen as able to work. However, at higher levels, when children are perceived as capable of earning, they often leave school (Khwendo Kor NGO, 2005).

The number of educational institutions in ex-FATA is also limited compared to the rest of Pakistan. Out of 162,500 primary schools in Pakistan, only 3,276 are in ex-FATA, representing a 2.03% share. Male primary schools in ex-FATA account for 2.02% of the national total, while female primary schools constitute just 2.01%. Similarly, ex-FATA has only 0.94% of the country's middle schools, with male schools accounting for 1.41% and female schools just 0.22%. The region's share of high schools is 0.84%, with 1.26% for males and 0.17% for females. Regarding higher education, ex-FATA's share of inter and degree colleges is just 0.38% of Pakistan's total, with 0.69% of male colleges. Data for female colleges' share is unavailable (Government of Pakistan, 2003).

#### **Infrastructural Facilities: Electricity, Communication, and Road**

According to the 1998 census, the electricity coverage in ex-FATA was lower (61.97%) compared to Pakistan (70.46%) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (72.19%). In ex-FATA, there were 294,636 electricity consumers, with the majority (253,795) being domestic users, while only 4,088 users were registered for industrial purposes. Additionally, 4,059 villages in ex-FATA had electricity (Table 6). Among households, 61.97% used electricity for lighting purposes, with the highest percentage recorded in Khyber Agency (72%) and Frontier Regions (FR) Peshawar and Kohat, both at 90% (Tables 7 and 8).

**Table – 6: Agency/F.R wise Electricity Consumers and Villages Electrified (2008-09)**

Agency/F.R	Number of Consumers						Villages Electrified (Cumulative) (2008-09)
	Total	Domestic	Commercial	Industrial	Irrigation	Bulk	
Ex-FATA	294636	253795	28353	4088	8343	57	4059
Bajour	33807	28466	3633	994	710	4	419
Khyber	73204	65511	5864	1253	561	15	643
Kurram	23654	19568	3717	280	75	14	424
Mohmand	24760	20275	1110	554	2817	4	534
North Waziristan	47226	39929	6452	420	417	8	386
Orakzai	14183	13395	642	88	58	0	455
South Waziristan	39035	31144	4254	144	3481	12	311
F.R Bannu	12157	12155	1	0	1	0	149
F.R D.I.Khan	4812	4520	291	1	0	0	68
F.R Kohat	15320	12356	2387	354	223	0	383
F.R Lakki	0	0	0	0	0	0	11
F.R Peshawar	6478	6476	2	0	0	0	275
F.R Tank	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

Note:- The figures of F.R Tank and F.R Lakki are included in their respective Agencies.  
Source: Chairman, TESCO, Peshawar.

**Table – 7: Agency/FR Region Wise Number of Housing Units by Source of Lighting**

Agencies/ F.Rs	Total Housing Units	Electricity		Kerosene Oil		Other Source	
		No.s	%age	No.s	%age	No.s	%age
ex-FATA	341114	211373	61.97	123287	36.14	6454	1.89
Bajaur	65439	37071	56.65	28095	42.93	273	0.42
Khyber	54416	39310	72.24	13954	25.64	1152	2.12
Kurram	41732	26757	64.12	14551	34.87	424	1.02
Mohmand	37123	21882	58.94	13928	37.52	1313	3.54
North Waziristan	39188	23424	59.77	15251	38.92	513	1.31

Orakzai	25546	13864	54.27	10389	40.67	1293	5.06
South Waziristan	50093	29383	58.66	19606	39.14	1104	2.20
F.R Bannu	2001	556	27.79	1434	71.66	11	0.55
F.R D.I.Khan	5500	2846	51.75	2616	47.56	38	0.69
F.R Kohat	9474	8560	90.35	888	9.37	26	0.27
F.R Lakki	930	77	8.28	844	90.75	9	0.97
F.R Peshawar	6113	5534	90.53	506	8.28	73	1.19
F.R Tank	3559	2109	59.26	1225	34.42	225	6.32

Note:- Total may not add up due to independent rounding.

Source:- Agency/FR Census Reports 1998 of EX-FATA

**Table - 8: Communication System**

Item	Year	Unit	Pakistan	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	EX- FATA	EX-FATA as % Share of Pakistan
Communication						
Post Offices	1999- 2000	Number	12854	1990	195	1.5
Telegraph Offices	1999- 2000	-do-	384	44	4	1.04
Telephones	-do-	-do-	3124000	316820	24283	0.8
TV Sets	1998	-do-	273620	60665	76	0.03
Population Per Telephone	-do-	000 Persons	44	59	136	-
Population Per Post Office	-do-	-do-	10	9	17	-
ROADS						
Total		Km.	248340	10134	4417	1.8

	1999-2000					
High Type	-do-	-do-	138200	7431	2592	1.9
Low Type	-do-	-do-	110140	2703	1825	1.7
Road per Sq: Km of Area	-do-	-do-	0.31	0.13	0.16	-

Sources: Northern Telecommunication Region, Peshawar & D.I. Khan; Post Master General, North Western Circle, Peshawar; Pakistan Television Corporation, Islamabad; C&W Department, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Access to adequate communication and road infrastructure in ex-FATA is essential for regional development, yet data show significant shortcomings. The region accounts for only 1.5% of post offices, 0.8% of telephones, 0.03% of television sets, and 1.8% of roads relative to the total in Pakistan. The lack of link roads connecting ex-FATA with other areas limits access to markets, affecting the ability of residents to trade local products such as fruits, minerals, and other natural resources (Table 9).

**Table – 9: Agency/F.R Wise Roads, Postal and Telecommunication Services (2008-09)**

Agencies/ F.Rs	Area	ROADS				TELECOMMUNICATION & POSTAL SERVICES				
		Black Topped	Shingled	Total	Road per Sq.Km	Population (2008-09)	Telephones	Population per Telephone	Post Offices	Population per Post Office
Units	Sq.Km	K.M	K.M	K.M	K.M	Persons	Nos.	Persons	Nos.	Persons
ex-FATA	27220	3978	2248	6226	0.23	4016495	32789	122	158	25421
Bajour	1290	436	317	753	0.58	942140	2791	338	13	72472
Khyber	2576	573	222	795	0.31	829210	4829	172	18	46067



Kurram	3380	490	332	822	0.24	585805	3877	151	21	27895
Mohmand	2296	364	114	478	0.21	526638	1161	454	15	35109
North Waziristan	4707	512	220	732	0.16	470048	8617	55	15	31337
Orakzai	1538	389	357	745	0.48	285073	1949	146	7	40725
South Waziristan	6620	544	473	1017	0.15	529871	3702	143	16	33117
F.R Bannu	745	197	52	249	0.33	24775	200	124	9	2753
F.R D.I.Khan	2008	98	55	153	0.08	49304	170	290	5	9861
F.R Kohat	446	85	14	99	0.22	116689	4214	28	5	23338
F.R Lakki	132	43	19	62	0.47	8836	12	736	17	520
F.R Peshawar	261	129	5	134	0.51	68299	1069	64	5	13660
F.R Tank	1221	117	70	187	0.15	34414	198	174	12	2868

Source:- 1. Chief Engineer, Works & Services KP.

Ex-FATA suffers from inadequate communication facilities, with no link roads available to connect the region to other areas and larger markets. Current statistics highlight the lack of various infrastructure facilities, particularly roads, in ex-FATA. As illustrated in the data presented in Table 10, this deficiency significantly limits the ability of residents in ex-FATA to access major cities in Pakistan for business purposes. Furthermore, the poor state of infrastructure hampers tribal communities' access to markets, making it challenging for them to sell local products such as fruits, minerals, stones, and other natural resources in various parts of the region.

**Table –10: Region Wise Position of Drinking Water Supply Schemes (2008-09)**

Agencies/ F.Rs	Drinking Water Supply Schemes Completed			Population Served (%)
	Total	Tube Well Base	Gravity Base	
ex-FATA	1420	1096	324	58.90
Bajour	189	119	70	54.16
Khyber	192	164	28	66.58

Kurram	147	72	75	58.71
Mohmand	169	134	35	45.04
North Waziristan	199	186	13	63.65
Orakzai	110	56	54	53.15
South Waziristan	158	120	38	65.77
F.R Bannu	61	59	2	31.94
F.R D.I.Khan	36	35	1	74.64
F.R Kohat	48	44	4	62.02
F.R Lakki	17	17	0	22.58
F.R Peshawar	38	36	2	67.69
F.R Tank	56	54	2	76.18

Source: Chief Engineer ex-FATA Works & Services Deptt. Peshawar, Census 1998

### **State Governance and Underdevelopment**

The tribal areas, particularly ex-FATA, represent one of the most impoverished regions in Pakistan, with approximately 60% of households living below the poverty line (Economic Survey of Pakistan, 2015-2016). Several factors contribute to the persistent underdevelopment and extreme poverty in ex-FATA.

Firstly, the administrative structure established by colonial powers, designed for strategic purposes, has deeply influenced the social and moral fabric of the tribal society. This has led to widespread social poverty, where the practice of circumventing universal norms of justice, dignity, and self-respect has become commonplace. Such practices have not only morally corrupted the Malaks and the Malaki system—despite the purported democratic nature of their 'Rewaj' (traditions)—but have also provided the state with a rationale to evade its responsibilities in ensuring fundamental rights and services for ordinary tribal members.

Secondly, the persistence of outdated governance structures within the Tribal Agencies has further entrenched the impoverished economies of tribal communities, leaving them reliant on external influences that undermine their self-worth. Development budgets allocated to these regions are often misdirected, yielding minimal benefits for the wider community.

Thirdly, the inhospitable, rugged, and predominantly barren terrain of ex-FATA, combined with its geographic isolation, provides little incentive for economic investment and development. The region is fundamentally impoverished (Thorburn, 1876; 1999).

Access to clean drinking water is alarmingly low in ex-FATA, with only 25% of the tribal population having access compared to 75% in adjacent Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The prevalence of piped water supply is also significantly lower in ex-FATA (inside 12.39%, outside 6.92%) compared

to the rest of Pakistan (inside 28.08%, outside 4.18%) (Government of Pakistan, 1998). Water scarcity, affecting both drinking and irrigation needs, poses an immediate and severe problem in ex-FATA. Although the government has implemented several tube well and dug well schemes to address drinking water shortages, political sabotage has rendered 30-40% of these facilities non-functional (Table 11). Under the new policy, the responsibility for maintaining these tube wells has shifted to local communities. Low electricity voltage has been cited as a contributing factor that renders the operation of tube wells prohibitively expensive (Khwendo Kor NGO, 2006). Communities have also resorted to collecting rainwater in ponds and cemented pools, but this stagnant water is often polluted and a common breeding ground for malaria. Women are typically tasked with fetching water from long distances, making ten to fifteen trips daily to meet the needs of extended families.

Human rights activists and international development organizations highlight a significant gender disparity within tribal society, noting that women face particularly challenging conditions due to conservative socio-economic structures (Asian Development Bank, 2003). The tribal setup clearly illustrates that the male descendants play a central role in the tribal system, carrying the responsibility of upholding the legacy of valor, pride, and honor for their tribes. Male offspring are regarded as the torchbearers of Pakhtunwali, the Pashtun code of life, and are thus considered crucial ambassadors for the tribe's future. In contrast, women are often relegated to roles as mere vessels for procreation.

According to traditional beliefs, "a true tribal (Pakhtun) woman is defined by her ability to practice 'Ghairat,' which involves promoting the principles of Pakhtunwali among her offspring, particularly her sons." Women are expected to inspire their sons to embody strength, bravery, and dignity while upholding Pakhtunwali and the honor of their families. This romanticized image of the Pakhtun woman positions her as a symbol of strength who motivates her son to seek revenge for family members harmed by enemies. However, this portrayal serves to undermine her own freedom, rights, and value as an individual (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2011).

In addition to issues of underdevelopment, poverty, and geographical proximity to Afghanistan, the Pakistani government faces significant challenges in exerting control over ex-FATA, allowing the region to become a safe haven for criminals and outlaws. Activities such as car theft, smuggling of banned goods, kidnapping for ransom, and the production of arms and drugs have proliferated in the area (Lamb, 2008). Furthermore, perpetrators of crimes in settled areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa often flee to ex-FATA to escape law enforcement (Shah, 1997).

The residents of ex-FATA exhibited before and in the post-merger period a widespread refusal to pay electricity bills, resulting in minimal revenue generation for the government.

Consequently, the state has little incentive to allocate funds for the region's development. The federal budget reflects this neglect, with resource allocation for ex-FATA being exceedingly low. For instance, the Annual Development Plan (ADP) allocation has historically been based on ad hoc arrangements rather than coherent policy. In 1986-87, the ADP allocation was Rupees 609.353 million; this figure dropped to Rupees 527.457 million the following year and further declined to between Rupees 520-500 million by 1991-92 (Shah, 1997).

The distribution mechanism for resources in ex-FATA was primarily managed before the merger through the offices of the Political Agents, whose main priority was to maintain law and order, often relying on the Malaks. Unfortunately, funds allocated for development were rarely utilized for genuine improvement initiatives. Additionally, the mainstream political system has not fully penetrated ex-FATA, with approximately 30% of the region still politically inaccessible (Shah, 1997).

A significant factor contributing to the lag in development in ex-FATA is the pervasive mistrust of the tribal population toward the government. Long-standing feuds characteristic of tribal life foster endemic distrust. A famous saying encapsulates this troublesome norm of Pashtun life: "Me against my brother, my brother and me against our cousins, we and our cousins against the enemy" (Spain, 1963, p. 42).

Before the merger, tribal communities harbored fears that the government would seek to dismantle their centuries-old systems, potentially annexing them into settled areas. The relationship between the government and tribal people was marked more by mutual threat and displays of power than by respect and trust.

Political Agents often communicated in a manner that could be perceived as hostile, yet they typically masked their feelings. As Shah (1997) noted, "Quite often they would talk in a tone which could burn the skin off the sensitive...sangfroid was the hallmark of a Political Agent... In his heart of hearts, he may have liked to slap a tribal Malak sitting in the chair opposite to him, threatening him on an issue, but he would just laugh it away... You can call it a weakness, but in this tolerance lay the greatness of the institution of Political Agent."

Another significant factor contributing to the development backwardness of ex-FATA is the absence of a proper formal system and programs for community mobilization and development. There is an urgent need for a structured system that can facilitate the mobilization of people to promote development in ex-FATA.

The Jirga, an informal body, serves as the primary institution for decision-making and governance in ex-FATA. It plays a pivotal role in determining the direction of development initiatives within the region. For any developmental project, the Jirga must be consulted, as it holds the authority to decide the fate of both the projects and the tribal people involved.

When considering the implementation of development projects, the Political Agent engaged in a consultative process with Jirgas and Malaks, seeking their confidence regarding the projects and the benefiting sub-tribes. However, it is important to note that Jirgas were not permanent entities; they did not function as development forums, nor did they interface regularly with government departments. Instead, their primary interactions were typically with disputing parties or with the Political Agent for the resolution of conflicts.

In ex-FATA, the Political Agent operated much like a king without a crown, controlling the affairs of the region through a "carrot and stick" approach. His influence is highlighted in the following statement: "The Political Agent had a major role in the selection and award of development projects as part of his 'carrot and stick policy,' favoring or penalizing local Malaks and tribes. Examples of such rewards are vividly depicted in the construction of tube wells, schools, and hospital buildings, many of which lacked clients or output, with staff recruited from the tribes receiving salaries from the government. The government line departments in ex-FATA had little say when projects were awarded as rewards for tribal compliance" (Asian Development Bank, 2003).

An important factor influencing project selection by the Political Agent was the Nikat system practiced in the tribal areas. Under this system, benefits were allocated to tribes and sub-tribes based on their numerical strength, a practice that predated the British subjugation of tribes in the 19th and early 20th centuries. A negative consequence of this system was that a dominant section or subsection of a tribe might receive project benefits, even if the need was more pressing in other areas or among less powerful subsections with fewer recorded members.

The distribution of employment opportunities provided by government initiatives often follows the quota system established for each tribe or Malak, with benefits frequently shared among various stakeholders within the community. The economic conditions in the tribal areas are so poor that historical patterns of raids and robbery reemerge as desperate measures to seize resources from wealthier community members.

The lack of representation for the poorer segments of society is a significant factor contributing to the underdevelopment of ex-FATA. In this context, the poor are represented by their Malaks, who negotiate collective tribal rewards and punishments and advocate for development interventions. However, this system effectively excludes beneficiary participation in project selection and implementation. Notably, the concept of poverty-focused developmental interventions in ex-FATA is virtually non-existent.

The current system of resource allocation and prioritization in the tribal areas is unsustainable. For any meaningful development initiatives in ex-FATA that aim to address the

needs of the poor and disadvantaged, efforts must focus on organizing communities. Government services that are available primarily cater to larger farmers and entrepreneurs, leaving the poor without access. The government-supported extension and social sector services—such as those related to agriculture, livestock, forestry, health, education, and small infrastructure—would be delivered more effectively and equitably at the grassroots level if organized communities, rather than Malaks and other influential residents, were the recipients. Under the existing system, with limited extension of services from field staff, outreach cannot effectively reach the impoverished on an individual basis.

To sum up, the obstacles to development in ex-FATA include a poor resource base, the region's proximity to Afghanistan (which has experienced over three decades of conflict and instability), and limited civil society participation in development activities. The local administration predominantly manages tribal affairs through tribal Malaks, resulting in minimal involvement of the population in decision-making processes. Additionally, the weak capacities of government line departments responsible for planning, implementing, and monitoring development interventions, alongside governance-related issues such as a lack of transparency, accountability, commitment, empathy, and equity, contribute to the marginalization of tribal society. These factors collectively hinder the development of ex-FATA.

### **Conclusion**

The longstanding neglect by the central government, coupled with the unfortunate conflict situation that has persisted over the decades, has exacerbated the complexities of the relationship between the tribal areas and the state. Ex-FATA continues to grapple with the aftershocks of one of the most challenging periods in its modern history. The combined effects of conflict and neglect have cast a dark shadow over the socio-economic and political life of the region and its inhabitants.

Generally, ex-FATA has been overlooked in terms of development, particularly affecting the common people in this society. Existing state interventions, framed as development activities, have failed to reach the ordinary citizens; instead, they have predominantly benefited a select group of tribal elites and interest groups.

In the realm of socio-economic development, Malaks (tribal elders), who enjoy political patronage from the state, have emerged as the primary beneficiaries of development projects. Their influence allows them to identify which interventions are implemented, select project sites, and ensure their involvement in the provision of services and the employment of contractors, often favoring their close relatives.

Additionally, a newly emerging wealthy class, having acquired wealth through unconventional means (such as businesses outside ex-FATA and abroad), has begun to exert influence over the decision-making processes within the region.

The harsh ecological conditions, challenging terrain, and predominantly barren mountainous landscape significantly affect the lives of the tribal population. Consequently, common tribesmen have adapted to these harsh realities, often striving to earn a livelihood through small trade, odd jobs, and business ventures in larger cities within Pakistan. Many have also sought employment opportunities in the Middle East. The resilience and hard work of these individuals manifest in their ability to establish businesses, including hotels, transport services, and other labor-intensive occupations. Notably, the transport and timber industries have become key areas for wealth generation among the tribal people.

In conclusion, the informal nature of the tribal economy, combined with the central state's neglect of the region, has led to the underdevelopment of ex-FATA, clearly illustrating its status as an internal colony within Pakistan. Despite significant investments in the area over recent years due to international support, ex-FATA remains underdeveloped. The socio-economic indicators continue to reflect a dire situation, highlighting the ineffective outreach of state institutions and services, further entrenching the region's status as an internal colony governed by the central state.

### **References**

- Appleby, J. (1978). *Economic thought and ideology in seventeenth century England*. Princeton University Press.
- Asian Development Bank. (2003). *Pak: FATA rural development project (TA: 3984-PAK). Supplementary appendix C: Institutions, management, organization and implementation* (S. Bhandari, Ed.). Asian Development Bank.
- Blaug, M. (1962). *Economic theory in retrospect*. Cambridge University Press.
- Chomsky, N. (1979). *The Washington connection and third world fascism*. South End Press.
- Eagly, R. V. (1984). *The structure of classical economic theory*. Oxford University Press.
- Galgano, A. F., & Palka, E. J. (Eds.). (2012). *Modern military geography*. Routledge.
- González Casanova, P. (1969). *Internal colonialism and national development*. In I. L. Horowitz, J. de Castro, & J. Gerassi (Eds.), *Latin American radicalism: A documentary report on left and nationalist movements* (pp. 118–139). Vintage Books. (Original work published 1965)
- Government of Pakistan. (2003). *National health policy 2003: The way forward, agenda for health sector reform*. <http://lnweb18.worldbank.org>
- Hechter, M. (1975). *Internal colonialism: The Celtic fringe in British national development, 1536–1966*. University of California Press.

- Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. (2011). The state of human rights 2011. <http://hrcp-web.org/hrcpweb/wp-content/pdf/AR2011-A.pdf>
- Johnson, D. L. (1972). On oppressed classes. In J. D. Cockcroft, A. G. Frank, & D. L. Johnson (Eds.), *Dependence and underdevelopment: Latin America's political economy* (pp. 269–283). Anchor Books.
- Kansi, M. K. (2003). An appraisal of social services delivery for children in Pakistan. <http://www.policy.hu/kansi>
- Khwendo Kor NGO. (2005, May). Quarterly report, Save the Children.
- Khwendo Kor NGO. (2006). Quarterly report, "Save the Children."
- Lamb, D. R. (2008). Ungoverned areas and threats from safe havens. U.S. Department of Defence, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for Policy Planning. [http://www.cissm.umd.edu/papers/files/ugash/report final.pdf](http://www.cissm.umd.edu/papers/files/ugash/report%20final.pdf)
- Marquard, L. (1957). South Africa's colonial policy. Institute of Race Relations.
- McMichael, P. (2012). *Development and social change: A global perspective* (5th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Rubin, B. R. (2013). *Afghanistan in the post-cold war era*. Oxford University Press.
- Sartre, J.-P. (2001). *Colonialism and neocolonialism*. Routledge. (Original work published 1964)
- Shah, M. A. (1997). *My second innings: A critique on Mohmand Agency*. Khyber Mail Press.
- Spain, J. W. (1963). *The Pathan borderland*. Mouton & Co.
- Thorburn, S. S. (1999). *Bannu; or, Our Afghan frontier*. Sang-e-Meel Publications. (Original work published 1876)
- van den Berghe, P. L. (1978). Education, class, and ethnicity in Southern Peru: Revolutionary colonialism. In P. G. Altbach & G. P. Kelly (Eds.), *Education and colonialism: Comparative perspectives*. McKay.
- Veblen, T. (1967). *Absentee ownership and business enterprise in recent times: The case of America*. Beacon Press. (Original work published 1923)