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## CHALLENGES IN ESTABLISHING POLICING SYSTEM IN ERSTWHILE FEDERALLY ADMINISTERED TRIBAL AREAS (FATA), PAKISTAN

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### ABSTRACT

Police is usually perceived as the first and most visible tool and symbol of government. The role of the police department is even more critical in tribal areas of Pakistan where the government and its institutions have limited presence. This qualitative study investigated the various challenges faced by the police department in the newly merged tribal districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. The study used a case study method with in-depth interviews and focused group discussions for data collection from police officers, judicial officers, public prosecutors, lawyers, local community leaders (Maliks), and ordinary residents of District Kurram, where the Government of Pakistan has been struggling to maintain law and order situation. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select the participants with insights into the post-merger policing challenges. The critical issues identified in this study include a lack of physical and administrative infrastructure, insufficient professional training for police personnel, and limited resources, which hinder the effective functioning of the police. In addition, the posting and appointment of non-local Station House Officers (SHOs) create further complexities and mistrust between the police and the local community. This mistrust is compounded by the local people's historical preference for the traditional justice system (Jirga) over the state legal justice system. Additionally, the Disputes Resolution Councils (DRCs) faced myriads of challenges, including a lack of clarity regarding their role and insufficient support, limiting their effectiveness in bridging formal and informal justice systems. This study suggests measures to improve the policing system in the tribal districts.

**Keywords:** Policing system, tribal district, infrastructure, training, trust deficit, shortages of police, non-local SHOs, DRC system, community resistance

### 1. Introduction

The establishment of an effective policing system in the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan presents complex challenges that are rooted in the region's unique socio-political history, legal framework and cultural dynamics (Gul et al., 2019). Until the merger of the erstwhile FATA into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2018 through an amendment in Pakistan's constitutions, the tribal areas operated outside Pakistan's legal and administrative systems. These semi-autonomous areas called 'tribal agencies' were governed by the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR), a legacy of

the British Raj which aimed to control the 'unruly' tribal people. In addition, the tribal people practiced their own centuries-old customary laws called *Pakhtunwali*. This distinct governance system fostered a firm reliance on the traditional justice system, which tribal communities perceived as integral to maintaining tribal autonomy and identity (Khan, & Israr, 2021).

However, after the merger of the erstwhile FATA in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan, it was indispensable to introduce a formalized state policing system to strengthen the rule of law and integrate the erstwhile FATA into the national legal and administrative fabric (Haider & Jalal, 2020). However, introducing the formal regular policing system in the tribal districts faces multiple challenges. Among them, a lack of infrastructure and resistance of local tribals towards the policing system, who think that police is against their tribal customs, are significant issues (Ullah & Hayat, 2018). Besides this, lack of training, especially for the *Levis* (tribal police) and *Khasadars* (paramilitary forces in erstwhile FATA), who have previously had very little training and experience in dealing with the formal criminal justice system of the state, remains a serious issue in the post-merger scenario (Mirza & Aslam, 2019). The study of Jadoon and Khan (2021) reflect that government in tribal districts of Pakistan merged former *Levis* and *Khasadars* into regular policing system without imparting them proper training on legal justice system. Khan et al. (2021) stated that all types of trainings are important for the smooth and fair functioning of policing system but investigation is more important which can help in fair and transparent justice system. Moreover, historical mistrust between tribals and state institutions creates complex situations when implementing formal policing structures in tribal districts. Some of the local tribals perceived the police as corrupt, biased, and incompatible with their tribal customs (Ullah & Safdar, 2021).

Moreover, the shortage of police officers/ officials significantly impacts the promotion of the formal legal justice system and the law and order situation in the tribal districts. Many years have passed since the former FATA merged into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. However, the government has not yet recruited the required police staff, significantly affecting the formal justice system (Noor & Hashim, 2021). Similarly, the posting or transferring of police officers, especially SHOs, from settled districts remains a significant issue. Local tribals think that police officers from other than tribal districts do not know about their tribal customs, which they cannot accept at any cost (Khan, & Ahmad, 2022). These and other such issues continue to hamper the development of the policing system in tribal areas which has jeopardized the law and order situation in the newly merged districts.

## **2. Literature Review**

Tribal regions across the world usually rely on traditional and customary laws (Javed, 2021). Social norms have been the primary agents of social control and the traditional *Jirga* (council of elders) has been the primary institution for dispensing justice in the

tribal areas of Pakistan. The introduction of a formal policing system in the post-merger scenario is faced with a number of barriers, such as a lack of infrastructure, limited resources, and untrained police forces that are often unprepared for the complexities of tribal districts. There are some local tribals who viewed that policing system is against their tribal customs, which resulted in opposition to policing system in tribal districts (Babar, 2021). The study by Ghani (2021) highlighted that a lack of trust in formal state institutions and the posting of non-local police officers further alienated local tribals, who viewed these changes as disruptive to their traditional values and social structure. Akhtar and Naeem (2020) said that there is need for culturally sensitive police training and local community engagement to foster trust between local residents and police in the tribal districts. Further, to resolve tribal issues according to their tribal customs, government established DRCs in certain police stations; however, some of the locals were not satisfied with the functions of DRCs, who think that DCRs is nothing else just to maintain traditional justice system and the status quo of *Maliks* (Ullah & Ibrar, 2019).

In fact, development of state institutions never has been a smooth process in the transition of tribal communities into settled societies. It is usually that the old customary laws go and in hand with modern laws for some times. For example, the challenges faced by the Afghan police closely resemble those in erstwhile FATA, Pakistan, where tribal customs and the local governance system remained dominant. Following the decades of conflict, studies on the Afghanistan policing system, such as those by Deglow and Sundberg (2021), highlight critical barriers, including poor infrastructure, limited resources, and insufficient training of police. The study conducted by Murray (2007) indicates that due to war and security threats, government of Afghanistan faced several problems to train the police forces, which had significant effects on the fair delivery of justice. In Afghanistan, most of the people in remote tribal areas do not trust in police who perceived that police is just working for the promotion of foreign and western agenda instead of supporting local people (Sajjad, 2013). Additionally, the deployment of police officers unfamiliar with the local customs exacerbates mistrust, with locals often associating law enforcement with foreign or government imposition. The police faced threats from militant groups and struggled to assert authority in rural areas, where traditional systems are still in practice. Jackson and Amiri (2019) suggest that a more localized and community-oriented approach is essential to gain public trust and improve the effectiveness of Afghanistan's policing efforts.

Likewise, in Serbia, particularly during the post-Yugoslav transition, police faced challenges of re-establishing public trust and adapting to a more democratic system of governance. The study undertaken by Dokovic (2020) pointed out that the lack of training in community policing, inadequate infrastructure. Moreover, the legacy of political influence over the police was significant challenges in promotion of policing services in Serbia (Nalla, 2009). Public distrust was rooted in the perceptions of police

as instruments of the previous regime, which created resistance towards the new police reforms. Furthermore, a study by Culum and Pesic (2022) underscores that the involvement of international organizations such as the European Union (EU) helped in re-structuring and professionalization of Serbian police, although integrating these reforms into local practices remains a gradual process requiring enhanced transparency and accountability.

Similarly, police in Tanzania, as developing country in Africa, faced its own policing challenges, largely due to underfunding, lack of training, and limited infrastructure, especially in rural areas. In tribal and remote areas, traditional justice systems, such as local councils of village elders, continue to play a prominent role in conflict resolution, just like *Jirga* in erstwhile FATA, Pakistan. A study by Othman and Rutenge (2021) highlights that police officers in Tanzania are posted in different regions where they lack familiarity with local customs and languages, which leads to misunderstanding and a lack of cooperation from the local community. Mollel and Leshabari (2018) further explain that low trust levels stem from police reliance on punitive measures over community engagement, underscoring the need for police reforms that are rooted in cultural understanding, community engagement, and stronger resource allocation.

### **3. Methods of the Study**

This study analyzed the challenges faced by government in the establishment of formal policing system in the tribal districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. We adopted qualitative research approach for data collection and analysis. We use District Kurram as a case study which is one of the seven newly merged tribal districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. We selected a total of 54 study participants from all three tehsils of District Kurram, which include police officers and judicial officers, public prosecutors, lawyers, *Maliks*, and local tribals, who are the main stakeholders of the formal justice system. It is worth noting that, in case of government officers/officials, the researchers selected only participants with at least one year of professional experience in the tribal districts. For local residents, the researchers selected those participants who had registered their cases in the police stations and formal courts.

We used n-depth interviews and focus group discussions as tool for data collection, which helped the researchers to learn about the issue by having face-to-face discussions with the participants. The collected data was first transcribed into text. The data was then analyzed thematically in which the researchers read the transcripts again and again to familiarize themselves with the categories and themes of the study. This led to the identification of the major themes in the data with respect of policing system. The following results are derived from the perspectives shared by the participants.

The study was conducted by following all the ethical guidelines of social research. Informed consent was obtained from all participants and efforts have been made to

maintain participants' anonymity and confidentiality. All names used in the results section are pseudonyms and no real names of the participants have been used in this study.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

Police play an important role in the state's legal and criminal justice system. Prior to the merger of the former FATA, there were *Levis* and *Khasadar* forces who; were not trained on the formal justice system of the state. As a result, they have limited understanding of the formal law and its various sections, which create problems for the stakeholders of the formal justice system. The extension of the policing system and training of *Levis* and *Khasadar* forces is necessary for the successful operation of the formal justice system in the tribal districts. However, this is not a smooth process as it is faced with a number of hurdles due to which the tribal districts are still without an effective police system. The following sections discuss the various themes pertaining to challenges faced by the police in the tribal districts.

##### 4.1. Shortage of Local Police Forces and Posting of Non-Local SHOs

After the merger, the existing security forces called *Levis* and *Khasadars* were transformed into police force. However, their number is not enough to deal with the criminal justice system; therefore, shortages of police forces remain a severe issue. The recruitment of police is a lengthy and technical process, which further negatively affects the formal justice system. The study participants shared that the less educated and untrained personals of *Levis* and *Khasadars* forces who were promoted to the ranks of police officers need to have the essential qualifications and training to deal with the state's formal justice system. As a result of their lack of understanding of the new legal system, they face problems in dealing with legal matters in the tribal districts.

Likewise, many participants described that posting of the police officers especially Station House Officers (SHOs) from settled districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is a great challenge to the police department. The local people believe that the SHOs from the settled districts do not know about the tribal customs; therefore, their posting has created problems. Muhammad Shafiq, a study participant, shared his opinions in the following words:

*"As compared to District Kurram's population, the existing police forces are not enough to deal with the crimes and state legal justice system. For the effective state formal justice system, there is a need to recruit more police forces as soon as possible."*  
(Muhammad Shafiq, District Police Officer, 56)

After the merger of the erstwhile FATA, the government was supposed to recruit more police forces to fill the gap and promote the formal justice system of the state. However, due to financial crisis and political instability, the government has not yet recruited the required number of police forces, significantly undermining the role of

police in the tribal districts. During the interview, Muzamil Hussain, another study participant, stated:

*"I have observed that local tribals in certain parts of tribal districts do not like police, and they developed negative attitudes towards the police, especially SHOs posted from settled districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. For local tribals, these SHOs do not know the value of their tribal customs and traditions."* (Muzamil Hussain, local tribal, 38)

The local people of tribal districts have never faced or experienced the policing system before, which is why they have lack of trust to take their issue to police stations. To improve the police services and the trust of local tribals, the government needs to train police about the sensitivity of tribal customs and norms in the tribal districts.

In short, a shortage of police forces, coupled with resistance from local communities to officers, mainly posting of SHOs from other than tribal districts has curtailed the effectiveness of police department in tribal areas. Tribals often view the appointment of non-local SHOs as a violation of their rights and traditions, leading to mistrust and reduced cooperation with the police department. As a result, these challenges hinder the police's ability to maintain law and order situations and the formal justice system of the state.

#### **4.2. Issue in Development of Infrastructure for the Police Department**

The establishment of infrastructure is essential for the smooth functioning of the police. It is indispensable to establish police lines, police stations, and police check posts in the most suitable place. However, in tribal districts, the current infrastructure is not enough to deal with the formal justice system. The establishment of infrastructure is not only costly but also a lengthy process. Many participants said that currently, there are only three police stations in District Kurram, which is far less than ideal and are insufficient to deal with the security situations and crimes in the area.

Police officers who participated in this study estimated that in a District like Kurram, there must be at least 13 or 14 police stations, two police lines, and more than 70 police check posts. It is significant to mention here that without a good infrastructure, police themselves face security threats from various non-states or anti state, violent actors. Therefore, there is a dire need to develop proper infrastructure for the police to improve police services in the tribal districts. In this context, Kabeer Khan, a police officer, stated:

*"Due to limited infrastructure, police have started working in the old building of government institutions. There have been no police lines, police stations, and police check posts, which are extremely important for the smooth functions and safety of the policing system in the tribal districts."* (Kabeer Khan, Deputy Superintendent Police, 55)

Another participant of the study, a lawyer by profession shared his observation and opinion in the following words:

*"In tribal regions, where policing infrastructure is lacking, police encounter difficulties in reaching crime scenes, conducting a thorough investigation, and maintaining an effective presence of policing, contributing a sense of insecurity among the citizens."* (Muhammad Ali, Lawyer, 34)

Inadequate infrastructure negatively affects the core functions of police, such as rapid response, investigation, and local community engagement. In regions with limited facilities, police struggle to cover vast areas effectively, which often leads to delays in addressing crimes and erodes public confidence in law enforcement. It ultimately fosters a sense of insecurity among the residents of tribal districts, who depend on timely and reliable police presence for their safety.

Without adequate facilities, police operations are hampered by poor coordination, limited communication and insufficient space to house essential resources, including records and equipment. It has not only reduced the ability of police to respond to emergencies promptly but also weakened their administrative capacity to manage cases efficiently. Moreover, the absence of proper offices undermined the police authority and presence in the tribal districts, making it harder to build local tribals' trust in the police and maintain law and order situations. Besides this, inadequate infrastructure limits officers' ability to respond swiftly and maintain a visible presence, which is essential for deterring crimes. This shortfall leads to a growing mistrust in policing, as local communities feel under-served and unprotected. Hence, improved infrastructure is critical for enhancing the overall functionality and credibility of the policing system in the tribal districts.

4.3. Mixed Reaction of Local Tribals towards the Dispute Resolution Councils DRCs Like other settled districts, the government has established Disputes Resolution Councils (DRCs) at certain police stations in the tribal districts in order to provide cheap and quick justice through a council of local elders. This is recourse to traditional/alternative dispute resolution mechanism which is relatively effective in the settled districts. The government established DRCs in order to reduce tribals' resistance towards the policing system, who claimed that the police were against their local customs. DRCs are also aimed to reduce overburden on the courts and prisons, especially in minor cases. However, DRCs also faced the problems of trust and confidence. The study participants said that the local tribals believe the members of DRCs are those government-backed *Maliks (tribal elders)* who were previously the part of traditional *Jirga* system. It is significant to mention that the police department selected *Maliks* with strong political and social backgrounds. In this regard, Abdul Ghafoor, as another study participant, shared his thoughts that:

*"DRCs established at different police stations played a vital role in resolving minor cases. However, the local tribals lacked trust and confidence in it. They said that DRCs are used by socially and politically influential people for their own interests."* (Abdul Ghafoor, District and Session Judge, 53)

The aim of establishing DRCs in police stations of tribal districts was to address the grievances of locals who thought the police were against their tribal customs. Therefore, to provide justice in accordance with the tribal customs, the government established DRCs in certain police stations of the tribal districts. However, it has been observed that the decisions of DRCs are based on bias and discrimination, which ruined public trust extensively. While interviewing with the police officers, Intehab Khan, a study participant, stated:

*"There are some people in the tribal districts who avoid taking their issues to the DRCs. They believe that there is no difference between traditional Jirga and DRCs, and the institutions are composed of Maliks, who decide issues according to their own interests."* (Intehab Khan, Police officer, 42)

Most of the elders who work as members of DRCs were *Maliks* or members of *Jirga* in the erstwhile FATA. That is why some of the tribals reacted negatively towards the DRCs and said that DRCs and *Jirga* are two diverse sides of the same coin.

It has been noted that the reactions of the local people towards the DRCs are mixed in the tribal districts. Some local people viewed the DRCs as a positive alternative to the formal court system, offering quicker and culturally familiar resolutions. In contrast, others expressed concerns about the effectiveness and fairness of DRCs. Many local people appreciated the DRC's alignment with the traditional dispute resolution methods, emphasizing community-based solutions and consensus. However, there is skepticism over the impartiality of the DRCs, as local power dynamics and influence from tribal elites could sometimes skew the decisions. Additionally, integrating DRCs with formal justice mechanisms has raised questions about the balance between customary and state-based legal formal justice systems.

#### **4.3. Trust and Confidence of the Local Tribals in Policing System**

The people's trust in the policing system remained one of the critical issues in boosting the formal justice system in the tribal districts. The lack of trust and confidence in the policing system has negatively affected promoting a formal justice system. Stereotypically, it is said that the police are corrupt and they do not support the victims unless and until they are bribed. To build tribal trust, there should be a proper check and balance and online grievance cells against the policing system, and access to the higher authorities should be made possible in the tribal districts. Furthermore, the study participants stated that the police must be very friendly with the public to hear



their problems publicly in *Kholi Kachehri* (open courts). They should arrest the offenders and criminals quickly and have an impartial role that can help to build public trust in police. Likewise, the politicization of police officers, especially in the context of posting/ transfer, promotion, and any other official matters, should be avoided. The police need to care for the customs of the tribals because the majority of the people are not aware of the state's formal legal justice system. In this regard, Noor Zaman, a study participant, explained the issue in the following words:

*"The policing system in the tribal districts is new, and some local tribals lacked trust in police, especially those posted from other settled districts of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. The police officers posted from other districts are strangers to the local tribals and are reluctant to contact the police at the times of troubles."* (Noor Zaman, District Public Prosecutor, 55)

The local people of the tribal districts are not yet familiar with the police and are skeptical when contacting them. Most of the tribals even see police as strangers and do not trust them easily to call for support, which significantly undermined police and public trust in the tribal districts. During the discussion, Muhammad Shehbaz, a study participant, stated that:

*"It is commonly said that the police are corrupt, and the same is the case with the police working in the tribal districts, who often do not work without taking bribes. Most of the local tribals do not want to take their issues to police stations due to the fear of corruption."* (Muhammad Shehbaz, Civil Judge, 37)

The police are notorious for corruption and biases in Pakistan, and people do not take their cases to police stations due to this fear. The same applies to tribal districts, where people hardly trust the police. To build public trust, police must be very friendly and honest with the public to resolve their cases promptly and fairly.

Historically in Pakistan, trust and confidence in the police remain generally low due to negative perceptions of the people towards the policing system. Police, as an external force, are often associated with the state authority rather than a protector of the local people's interests. The lack of locally recruited officers and the appointment of non-local SHOs fuel mistrust, as tribal people customs emphasize local police in maintaining social order. Additionally, the perceptions of corruption, limited accountability, and inefficiency further eroded the public confidence in the policing system. To restore local people's trust, there is a need for community policing initiatives, greater transparency, and culturally sensitive engagement with local customs and traditions in the tribal districts.

#### 4.4. Training/ Capacity-building of the *Levis* and *Khasadar* Forces

Imparting basic and legal training to police on the procedures of criminal laws can help to improve the state's formal justice system. In tribal districts, training the traditional *Levis* and *Khasadar* forces, who were turned into police after the merger is more important at this transitory stage of justice. Nevertheless, several years have passed since the former FATA integrated into the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, but the government has not yet trained most of the former *Levis* and *Khasadar* forces. In this regard, the study participants said that training is the most crucial part of the policing system, which plays a significant role in imparting the quality of the justice system. However, the *Levis* and *Khasadar* forces lack quality investigation training, which affects the conviction and acquittal of accused persons in the courts. As Azhar Ali, a study participant stated that:

*"Being a police officer, I would say that both the operation and the investigation training are important for the police; however, investigational training of the police is more technical and important for the transparent justice system. The government needs to focus on investigation training of the police in the tribal districts to improve the quality of the legal justice system."* (Azhar Ali, Deputy Superintendent Police, 48)

In the erstwhile FATA, *Levis* and *Khasadar* forces worked as police without proper education and training. They lacked basic legal training in post-merger scenarios to deal with the formal justice system. To address the issue, the government needs to focus on police training, especially their investigation skills. Muhammad Nawaz, a study participant and a lawyer by profession, shared his views about police:

*"Most of the Levis and Khasadar forces lack basic qualifications and do not know about the criminal justice system and procedures. Giving the role and responsibilities of the police to them without legal training creates problems for the courts and other stakeholders of the formal justice system."* (Muhammad Nawaz, Lawyer, 37)

Immediately after the merger of the former FATA, the *Levis* and *Khasadar* forces were entrusted with the role of regular policing system. The *Levis* and *Khasadar* forces, who, started working without training, lacked knowledge about the different sections of law to charge the criminals, undermining their ability. During discussion, the judicial officer, Muhammad Riaz, a study participant, explained that:

*"The responsibility of writing FIR and preparing challan and other official documents should be given to the educated Levis and Khasadar forces. In cases where they face problems, the senior officers from police, the courts, and the prosecution department should help them to prepare challan and FIR."* (Muhammad Riaz, Additional Session Judge, 52)

Most of the *Levis* and *Khasadar* forces are less qualified, do not have reading and writing skills, and often face problems in performing their duties. To improve the

morale of police, the formal courts, prosecution, and other concerned stakeholders need to support the *Levis* and *Khasadar* forces, which will motivate them to play their role effectively.

Despite facing all these issues, police in the tribal districts has been struggling to adapt to the complexities of newly introduced formal legal justice system of the state, including evidence collection, procedural compliance and investigative techniques. However, to effectively deal with the justice system, there is a need to focus on capacity-building and professional training skills of policing system in the tribal districts.

### **5. Discussion**

Police is one of the most important organs of the criminal justice system. However, after the merger of the former FATA, the policing system has been facing several problems in tribal regions. Among them, lack of training and posting of non-local SHOs in the tribal districts are the major issues, which have significant impact on the promotion of policing services. In this regard, the study conducted by Mirza & Aslam (2019) has also pointed out that the government has decided to train the police. However, the *Levis* and *Khasadar* forces or police are not trained thoroughly on the legal procedures of criminal laws, which further leads to challenges in the formal justice system (Ullah & Sajid, 2018). Moreover, to deal with the issue of shortage of police officers, the government posted SHOs from settled districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. In response to this, some of the local tribals opposed the posting of SHOs to tribal districts and viewed that their posting is against the tribal customs. They believe that tribals have unique customs and traditions, which police officers transferred from other settled districts, do not know (Khan, & Ahmad, 2022).

Moreover, the lack of infrastructure such as police stations and police check posts has not only affected their duty but also exposed them to risk and threats in tribal areas where security situations have not yet improved after US War on Terror in Afghanistan. Javed (2021) in his study found that there is a lack of infrastructure for the police in the tribal districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province to deal with justice matters. The government allocated funds to establish proper infrastructure for the police department in the tribal districts. Nonetheless, the government did not establish the required infrastructure due to delay in releasing the funds. Without establishing the infrastructure for the police, it is challenging to deal with the state's legal justice system. Similarly, the Government of Afghanistan determined to bring reforms in the policing system and develop proper infrastructure for the police in the country. However, the country's law and order situations and opposition from the public remained serious issues in establishing the needed infrastructure for the policing system (Deglow & Sundberg, 2021).

Likewise, Dispute Resolution Councils (DRCs), which are established with aim of resolving local people's issues in accordance with tribal customs and reducing the burden on the newly established state legal courts. However, soon after the merger,

some of the locals reacted negatively towards the DRCs, who claimed that DRCs are nothing else just to maintain the traditional status of *Maliks*, who were once the members of *Jirga* in the erstwhile FATA. In this context, the study of Babar (2021) indicates that after the merger of the former FATA, some local tribals said that the police are against their tribal customs and work just for the interests of wealthy people. In response, the government has established DRCs in some police stations to decide people's issues according to tribal customs. However, certain tribals claimed that DRCs and *Jirga* are the two diverse sides of the same coin. The selection of the members of DRCs is not based on merit, which leads to a trust deficit issue (Ullah & Ibrar, 2019). Therefore, being an essential organ of the criminal justice system, the police need to be neutral in selecting members for the justice process of DRCs. Likewise; some of the people in Serbia resisted the policing system. In such situations, the Government of Serbia introduced the community policing system to develop cooperation and trust between law enforcement institutions and the local communities (Dokovic, 2020). Nevertheless, the political interference badly influenced the independence and impartiality of the police. Ensuring that the police department operates from political influence remained a critical issue in the Serbian community policing system (Nalla, 2009).

In tribal districts, being a new state institution of the justice system, police face the issue of trust from local people, who think that police are corrupt, biased and against the tribal customs. The study of Ghani (2021) elaborates that people in the tribal districts showed fear that police are threats to their local customs. Stereotypically, the police are notorious for corruption, which is why some of the local people have a lack of trust in the policing system. Further, to create hurdles, some of the *Maliks* (tribal chiefs) and local people claim that the police are corrupt, which negatively undermined the public trust in the police. Moreover, the study of Sajjad (2013) exhibited that some of the people claimed that Afghan police are pro-Americanization and do not work for the poor and ordinary people. Most Afghans believed that the police, being a state institution, work more for foreigners' interests than the local people's safety. Therefore, people in Afghanistan lacked trust in the policing system, which had significant effects on the policing services. Moreover, the findings of our study also resonate with a study about the training of Afghan police. In Afghanistan, due to War on Terror, it was difficult to equip the police with the modern training. Most of the police forces were not appropriately trained to deal with criminal issues, which had negative implications for the justice system (Murray, 2007).

Furthermore, in a post-merger setting, the *Levis* and *Khasadar* forces, who previously worked just like policing in the erstwhile FATA, are integrated into the regular policing system of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. However, due to lack of legal trainings and education, they face many problems in performing their duties. As the study of Jadoon and Khan (2021) demonstrated that the government had absorbed the *Levis* and *Khasadar* forces into the police department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa without

imparting trainings. The provision of legal training to the *Levis* and *Khasadar forces* is vital for the successful transition of the justice system. According to Khan et al. (2021), all types of training are crucial; however, more focus should be given to the investigation training of police and *Levis* and *Khasadar forces*, which directly affects the conviction and acquittal of the accused persons.

## 6. Conclusion

The challenges facing the police department in erstwhile FATA highlight the complex dynamics of integrating a formal policing system into a region with unique cultural, historical, and administrative characteristics. The lack of infrastructure and essential operational resources has greatly impeded the effective functioning of the policing system in the tribal districts. Moreover, lack of training leaves personnel unprepared to tackle complex cases, crime prevention, and security concerns in the tribal districts. Besides, posting the non-local SHOs further aggravates the challenges, as non-local police officers lack familiarity with the tribal customs, contributing to local mistrust. The local residents of the former FATA have long relied on the traditional justice system, viewing the newly introduced police system as threatening their customs. This distrust is compounded by the issue faced by the Disputes Resolution Councils (DRCs) in the post-merger era as they attempt to navigate the integration of tribal and formal justice system practices. The DRCs often need more support, coordination, and resources to function effectively, leaving gaps in both conflict resolution and local people engagement. Addressing these challenges faced by the policing system requires a multi-dimensional approach. Policymakers must prioritize investments in infrastructure and skills development to the unique challenges of the former FATA. Simultaneously, efforts to enhance cultural understanding of the police can help to bridge the trust gap. Such steps are essential for fostering a functional and accepted policy that meets the region's security needs and the expectations of its communities.

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