Policing Under Colonial Shadows: The Profiling of Afghan Refugees

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Abstract
This research critically investigates the enduring legacy of colonial rule principles on policing and profiling Afghan refugees in Quetta, Pakistan. At the nexus of Postcolonial Theory, Structural Violence Theory, and Institutional Theory, this research demonstrates how the long-term principles of colonial power continue to shape contemporary institutional conduct and everyday lives of displaced Afghan communities. Despite Pakistan's long-standing history as a haven for Afghan refugees since the Soviet invasion, the absence of a specific national refugee law, along with continued reliance on colonial-era statutes like the Police Act of 1861 and the Foreigners Act of 1946, creates a culture of legal ambiguity and discretionary enforcement. Adopting an interpretivist, qualitative methodology inspired by the Research Onion model, the research employs in-depth, semi-structured interviews with Afghan refugees, local police officials, and governance representatives. NVivo-assisted thematic analysis demonstrates that structural violence is made normal through everyday policing encounters that systematically reproduce ethnic profiling, arbitrary surveillance, and coercive monitoring. Particular focus is given to the Hazara subcommunity, whose overlapping vulnerabilities reveal the compounded effects of sectarian identity and refugee status. Findings point to institutional stagnation and policy loopholes reproducing discriminatory principles from the colonial state, despite professed commitments to community-based policing and protection strategies. The author asserts that decolonizing governance in Pakistan necessitates the elimination of legal artifacts, the adoption of rights-based policing practices, and the establishment of effective accountability mechanisms. In doing so, it makes an original contribution to the scholarship on postcolonial policing, forced migration, and structural violence in the South Asian context.

Keywords: Afghan refugees; colonial legacy; policing; structural violence; Quetta; institutional theory

Introduction
The long-term legacy of colonial domination continues to define the daily lives of marginalized groups throughout South Asia. Nowhere is this more the case than in the fragile status of Afghan refugees living in Quetta, Pakistan — a city that has long played a central role at the geopolitical frontier of imperial expansion, Cold War competition, and modern forced migration. Since the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in 1979, Pakistan has been host to one of the world's largest protracted refugee populations. Official numbers may differ, but millions of Afghans have come to the country for temporary asylum for more than four decades, with Quetta, the provincial capital of Balochistan, serving as an initial settlement and

transit point.

Despite decades of providing shelter to Afghan refugees, Pakistan has no codified national refugee law. State control of these groups functions largely in an unstructured fashion, with great reliance upon the antiquated legal codes of the colonial era—most significantly the Police Act of 1861 and the Foreigners Act of 1946. These codes originally served to maintain logic of the British colonial state of surveillance, control, and repression of the 'others.' The fallout of these codes remains, as this research has shown, shaping the institutional models of contemporary refugee enforcement.

Though international instruments like the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol specify certain protections for displaced peoples, neither of the two documents has been ratified by Pakistan. In practice, this gap has enabled the transference of colonial policing techniques into the discourses of peace and security today, thus legitimating discretionary profiling, arbitrary detention, and targeted harassment in the exercise of national security and public order. Afghan refugees, especially of the Hazara ethnic group, suffer increased vulnerabilities resulting from the intersection of their ethnic, sectarian, and refugee status. These conditions underscore the need for a critical analysis of how postcolony states inherit, reproduce, and expand colonial techniques of governance to new socio-political environments.

This research stands at this nexus, asking: How do the remains of colonial control continue to inform the profiling and enforcement strategies imposed on Afghan refugees in Quetta today? Employing Postcolonial Theory (Fanon, 1963; Bhabha, 1994; Ashcroft et al., 2000), Structural Violence Theory (Galtung, 1969), and Institutional Theory (Mamdani, 1996), the research explains how historical relations of power are institutionalized in the here and now. These theories provide a critical lens through which to analyze not only the overt control mechanisms but also the insidious, indirect violence that policing activity imposes upon marginalized communities.

In order to examine these questions, the study adopts an interpretivist, qualitative case study approach, and semi-structured interviews with Afghan refugees, police representatives, and governance actors. Through thematic coding using NVivo, the study discloses how colonial policing models are reinterpreted through institutional standards, discretionary power, and everyday encounters. The integration of the subcommunity of Hazara gains further insight into intersecting vulnerabilities that compound the impacts of profiling and surveillance.

Literature Review
The long-term impact of colonial regimes of rule on the construction of contemporary institutional practice has been the subject of intense postcolonial analysis. Fanon (1963) insightfully charted the psychological, social, and structural inheritances that colonialism leaves to the postcolonial state. For Fanon, colonial policing is not merely an instrument of direct control but a regime of permanent surveillance and classification that continues to operate in the postcolonial sphere long after formal decolonization. This theorization provides a rich analytical framework through which to frame how the Pakistani state's

handling of Afghan refugees reiterates the machinery of suspicion, control, and conditional belonging embedded in colonial policing regimes.

Bhabha's (1994) theory extends that of Fanon by situating the consequences of colonialism in an even more dynamic site of mimicry and hybridity. Bhabha suggests that postcolonial countries not only inherit institutions but also the epistemologies that support colonial relations of power. This is especially evident in the Afghan refugee situation in Pakistan, where the heritage is evident in the continued application of colonial-era legislation, such as the Police Act of 1861 and the Foreigners Act of 1946. These acts, drafted with the colonial context in mind, grant wide-ranging discretionary powers to security agencies in order to manage 'non-citizen' populations and maintain a particular social order based on racial suspicion and categorization.

Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2000) discussed this connection in their work Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts, observing that the colonial venture's administrative systems persist through institutional inertia, thus shaping contemporary paradigms of governance. In Pakistan, the legacy of these administrative practices is seen in the training manuals, procedural checklists, and routine discretionary choices of the policing bureaucracy—settings that build and reinforce the positioning of refugees as habitual outsiders who are greeted with heightened surveillance and conditional legality.

Concurrent with the postcolonial theoretical lens is Structural Violence Theory by Galtung (1969), which offers a critical lens of analysis for the institutionalization of harm beyond physical force. Galtung's conceptualization of structural violence is indirect, often imperceptible, and socially constructed as normative through arrangements that systematically disadvantage specific groups. This definition is pivotal to an analysis of the everyday policing realities faced by Afghan refugees in Quetta. Harassment at roadblocks, repeated demands for papers, and racial profiling perhaps are not always direct violence expressions; rather, they evoke a gradual erosion of dignity, mobility, and belonging—all pivotal elements of structural violence that reinforce unequal power relations.

Mamdani (1996) provides a critical institutional critique in outlining the postcolonial state's originary dualism of 'citizen' and 'subject'. Through his account of modern Africa, Mamdani shows how colonial rule was sustained through a regime of dualism of power: civil law was used to rule citizens, while customary or indirect rule was used to rule subjects. This dualism reproduces itself in postcolonial contexts and generates an unequal regime of rights and duties. For Afghan refugees in Pakistan, this means discretionary rule by institutions evocative of colonial indirect rule — they are neither fully integrated as protected citizens nor fully beyond the law, but are in an in-between position marked by administrative suspicion and exceptional policing practice.

Scholarship within the academic literature on South Asian policing underpins this theoretical framework by highlighting the historical connection between the region's policing institutions and colonial heritage. For instance, the Police Act of 1861 was passed by the British Raj as a direct response to the rebellion of 1857,

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with the express purpose of creating a force with the capability to suppress dissent and manage subject populations. Scholarship in recent years (e.g., Bayley, 2001) argues that even in the context of incremental reforms by independent countries such as Pakistan and India, the underlying system — one that is highly centralized, hierarchical, and discretionary in its organizational structure of the police — remains in place. Moreover, scholars such as Goldsmith (1990) and Higashi (2015) acknowledge that policing cultures forged under colonialism continue to prioritize coercion over community relations, especially in their dealings with groups designated as 'security threats.'

In refugee governance literature, Dryden-Peterson's (2011) global perspective details that receiving states have a propensity to balance against the intricacies of humanitarian commitments and security discourses, frequently opting for the latter in cases of extended displacement and regional instability. The Afghan refugee crisis in Pakistan is a classic example of such contradiction: while the country's hospitality cannot be impeached, the absence of binding legal protections creates a governance vacuum that is then filled by discretionary law enforcement actions. This has resulted in what Van Hear et al. (2009) call 'mixed migration regimes'—hybridized governance spaces where humanitarian ideals are in disharmonious coexistence with securitized controls.

In Pakistan's case, there are comparatively few empirical studies among Afghan refugees, and most studies focus on humanitarian relief, repatriation trends, or economic impacts. Far fewer studies explore the impact of local policing practices on the condition of refugees, and even fewer of these include a postcolonial reading of this research. There are some scholarly research papers that do consider this dimension (Leake, 2017; Javed & Löfstrand, 2021) and point to the endurance of colonial templates not merely shaping formal legal frameworks but also organizing everyday relations among refugees and the state. These relations expose that profiling practices, discretionary harassment, and surveillance are not norms but actual constitutive aspects of legacy governance regimes.

In bringing together these theoretical and empirical understandings, this research aims to address several of the gaps that persist. It renders visible that Afghan refugees' experiences of profiling and surveillance cannot be fully understood by humanitarian or security paradigms alone. Rather, there needs to be an integrated one, which bridges past legacies with current institutional practices and daily governance routines. Through the leading of Structural Violence Theory in conjunction with Postcolonial and Institutional Theory, the research demonstrates that Afghan refugees' profiling is not only the product of the absence of refugee legislation but a more profound structural issue that is rooted in the very design of the state's policing architecture.

Methodology
This study adopts an interpretivist philosophy that depends on the assumption that social realities are heterogeneous, constructed, and can be fully grasped through the meanings that people attach to their experiential realities (Saunders et al., 2009). Interpretivism recognizes that the profiling and law enforcement actions against Afghan refugees in Quetta cannot adequately be expressed through

quantitative data alone; instead, it requires a qualitative study that is attuned to the local setting, power relations, and historical contexts.

In order to organize this research, the study employs the Research Onion model, which methodically takes the methodological design from wide-ranging philosophical assumptions to detailed plans for data collection and analysis. At the most external level, the interpretivist paradigm influences an inductive, qualitative research design. Instead of testing a pre-formulated hypothesis, this research is concerned with how colonial conventions are perpetuated and interpreted in the context of everyday policing encounters.

Method and Participant Recruitment
One embedded case study was the most suitable methodology for this study. Quetta, Balochistan's provincial capital, has been a transit point and residence for successive generations of Afghan refugees for decades. Quetta's unique security context, shaped by colonial frontier rule and present geopolitical rivalry, is a strategic site for examining how the residual forms of colonialism are articulated in the law enforcement practice of the present day.

The participants were enlisted through purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Afghan refugees with different ethnicities—i.e., Hazara, Tajik, and Pashtun—were given priority to obtain a general idea of the different experiences of profiling and surveillance. Other stakeholders that were pertinent were local police officials, policy-makers within provincial governing bodies, and community leaders who had knowledge regarding the refugee policing dynamics.

27 Afghan refugees were given an open-ended one questionnaire. DIG Quetta was interviewed, The Deputy Commissioner was interviewed, the UNCR representative was interviewed, The Commissioner to Afghan Refugees was interviewed, and a FIA representative was interviewed. The interviews took 30-60 minutes, allowing respondents to give both general impressions and detailed personal stories. Interviews were conducted both in Urdu, Persian, and Pashto, with English translations of non-English quotes in order to maintain analytical rigour and transparency.

Gathering and Organizing Data
Semi-structured interviews were utilized because they are flexible in allowing rich, contextually embedded information to be collected while at the same time ensuring that important thematic domains—colonial legal orders, profiling regimes, and institutional norms—were rigorously probed among the participants. All the interviews were digitally recorded (informed consent) and verbatim transcribed. Where translation was required, every effort was made to maintain culturally specific term usage, supported by bracketed English explanations to enable readers in other contexts to understand.
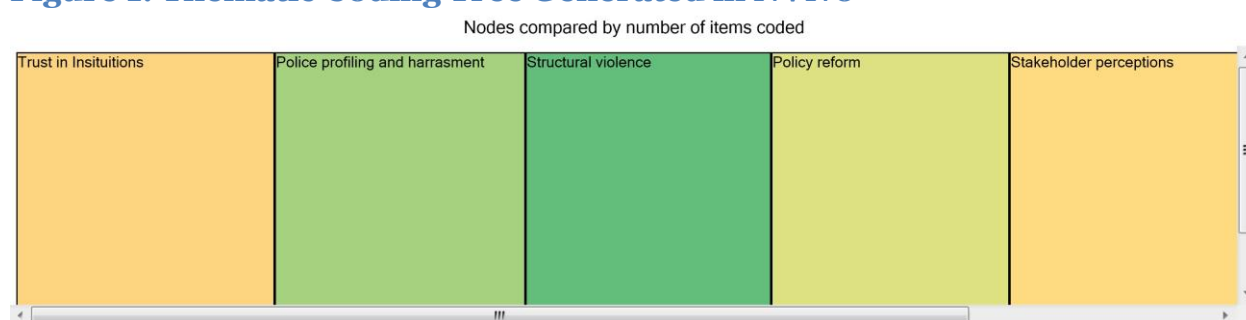
Documentary traces—made up of the Police Act of 1861, the Foreigners Act of 1946, policy memoranda, and newspaper reports—were cross-referenced with interview data to establish validity and place individual testimony within wider contexts of governance.

Data Analysis
Thematic analysis was then carried out using NVivo software to facilitate systematic coding and hierarchical structuring of qualitative data into thematic nodes. Thematic inquiry began with open coding to generate descriptive categories, which were then elaborated through axial coding in order to clarify deeper relationships between themes such as Colonial Legal Continuity, Profiling Practices, Structural Violence, and Institutional Inertia. Special attention was given to the intersectional vulnerabilities of Hazara respondents, whose accounts highlighted the accumulated risks of their sectarian position..

Figure 1: Thematic Coding Tree Generated in NVivo

Nodes compared by number of items coded

| Trust in Insitutitions | Police profiling and harrasment | Structural violence | Policy reform | Stakeholder perceptions |

Ethical Implications
The research adhered to ethical guidelines set by NUST's Department of Governance and Public Policy. All participants gave consent, and they were guaranteed confidentiality and made aware of the voluntary character of the research. Given the sensitive character of the implications of the refugee identities and the dangers from the exposure of experiences with law enforcement, all real names have been replaced with pseudonyms and identifying information has been modified as required. The methodological approach taken for this study, from an interpretivist paradigm to inductive analysis, ensures that the research not only reveals the structural components involved with the legacy of colonial domination but also reveals the everydayness and forms of resistance embodied by Afghan refugees under this pervasive regime of surveillance.

Findings
Among the dominant issues that have arisen from the formal evidenceand the testimony of the refugees is the ongoing effect of legal measures that were created during the colonial era — the Police Act of 1861 and the Foreigners Act of 1946. They still influence the regulation,profiling, and detention of Afghan refugees.

The Quetta Commissioner for Afghan Refugees also verified this himself:
"Yes, the Foreigners Act of 1946 remains the primary legal framework under which all non-citizens, including Afghan refugees, are governed. This colonial-era law continues to shape how refugees are profiled, documented, and even detained."
(*Commissioner Interview*)
The resilience of this colonial juridical apparatus means that

even such contemporary administrative devices as PoR cards are contained within an archaic system that is defined by suspicion and control. Refugees have manifested an appreciation for this persistent reality. One interviewee explained:

"Even with PoR cards, we're mistreated and insulted. Slurs like 'Border Pass' are common, and we face harassment like it is normal."
(*Refugee Respondent, 21st Interview*)

The evidence verifies that the absence of a national refugee law creates a lacuna in law, resulting in the survival of colonial paradigms—discretionary policing powers inherent in the system that have enduredfor decades.

Profiling Prtactices & Everyday Surveillance
The second key theme is the normalisation of profiling and arbitrary surveillance. Afghan refugees described repeated experiences of being stopped, questioned, and extorted for bribes — regardless of documentation status. A consistent pattern appears across interviews:

"Police have stopped us and demanded bribes. The amounts have been as high as several thousand rupees."
(*Refugee Respondent, 22nd Interview*)

"Yes, the police have stopped us several times and asked for bribes. We've had to pay thousands of rupees just to avoid trouble."
(*Refugee Respondent, 25th Interview*)

Female refugees especially identified the risk of gender-basedintimidation:

"Women are afraid to walk alone… even valid papers don't protect us from abuse."
(*Refugee Respondent, 24th Interview*)

In the police context, the DIG recognized the function that security narratives play in perpetuating this discretionary surveillance:

"Refugees are often viewed through a security lens due to geopolitical factors, which can lead to discriminatory practices, albeit unintentionally."
(*DIG Interview*)

The SHOs explained regular checks and detentions for individuals who are unable to produce PoR cards:

"If individuals cannot show valid Proof of Registration cards, they are detained according to government directives."
(*SHO Interview Summary*)

Together, these accounts demonstrate that profiling is not exceptionalor ad hoc practice — it is institutionalized through policy ambiguity and discretionary power based on colonial policing traditions.

Instituitional Inertia & Resistance to Reform
In spite of regular promises of modernization, the research discoversthat reforms in governance were cosmetic because of entrenchedinstitutional rigidity. The DIG and Commissioner both cited training requirements, absence of refugee procedures, and political lack of interest in reform.

The Commissioner stated categorically:

"There are currently no structured efforts underway to integrate long-term Afghan residents into the national framework through documentation or legal

naturalisation. The matter remains politically sensitive and lacks the consensus needed for legislative progress."
(*Commissioner Interview*)
Meanwhile, the DIG assured that while some training has been instituted, it does not take care of the causes of profiling:
"We are actively working to improve accountability and promote equitable policing through training and community engagement, but the system needs deeper changes."
(*DIG Interview*)
At the grass root level, SHOs indicated a system that does not leavemuch room for discretionary leniency:
"The centralized structure of command remains intact, with little room for localized decisions."
(*SHO Interview Summary*)

For the refugees, this inertia means living under the constant threat of detention:
"No, we constantly fear for our safety. Arrest and mistreatment are a daily threat."
(*Refugee Respondent, 23rd Interview*)

Hazara Specific Vulnerabilities
The experience of the Hazara subcommunity illustrates the multifaceted effects of profiling. Hazara refugees indicated that theywere double-targeted — both as Afghans and Shia Muslims in a sectarianized security environment.

Hazara ethnicity and refugee status make us doubly targeted.
"Hazara ethnicity combined with refugee status makes us targets twice over."
(*Refugee Respondent, 25th Interview*)
"Being Hazara and a refugee makes us a double target in Pakistan."
(*Refugee Respondent, 21st Interview*)
This is reminiscent of Galtung's structural violence theory, whereby harm is inherent in normal practice of governance. It also shows how Mamdani's argument for continuities of 'subject' populations'distinctions during colonialism persist in current forms of conditional citizenship and exceptional policing.

Table 1: NVivo Thematic Matrix

	A : Colonial Legacy	B : Ethnic vulnerability (Hazara)	C : International criticism of repatriation	D : Lack of training	E : P profilir and harrasr
1 : UNHCR interview	2	0	5	1	2
2 : unchr 2017	0	0	0	0	1
3 : unchr 2014	0	0	0	0	1
4 : Solidarity with Refugees_ UNHCR urges Pakistan to uphold support to refugees, compassion for asylum seekers UNHCR Pakistan	0	0	1	0	0
5 : SHO Satellite	1	1	0	0	3
6 : SHO CIVIL	1	1	0	1	3

7 : SHO Cantt	2	1	0	0	4
8 : Questionnaire FIA	2	0	0	1	2
9 : Police Reforms	3	0	0	1	1
10 : interview16	0	2	0	0	2
11 : Interview 9	0	1	0	0	2
12 : Interview 8	0	1	0	0	2
13 : Interview 7	0	1	0	0	2
14 : Interview 6	0	1	0	0	3
15 : Interview 5	0	1	0	0	2
16 : Interview 4	0	1	0	0	2
17 : Interview 3	0	1	0	0	2
18 : interview 27	0	1	0	0	2
19 : interview 26	0	1	0	0	2
20 : interview 25	0	1	0	0	2
21 : Interview 20	0	1	0	0	2
22 : Interview 2	0	1	0	0	2
23 : Interview 19	0	1	0	0	2
24 : Interview 18	0	1	0	0	3
25 : Interview 17	0	1	0	0	2
26 : Interview 15	0	1	0	0	2
27 : Interview 14	0	1	0	0	2
28 : Interview 13	0	1	0	0	2
29 : Interview 12	0	1	0	0	2
30 : Interview 11	0	1	0	0	2
31 : Interview 10	0	1	0	0	2
32 : Interview 1	0	1	0	0	2
33 : FCR_Text_for_NVivo	2	0	0	0	0
34 : DIG Interview	2	0	1	3	2
35 : Deputy_Commissioner_Interview_Quetta	1	1	1	1	1
36 : Balochistan Police Act	0	0	0	0	1
37 : Afghan Refugees' Comissioner Interview	1	0	3	2	2
38 : 24th interview	0	1	0	0	2
39 : 23rd Interview	0	1	0	0	3
40 : 22nd interview	0	0	0	0	3
41 : 21st interview	0	1	0	0	3
42 : Case Specific Details	0	0	0	0	0
43 : Coerced repatriation	0	0	0	0	0
44 : Colonial Legacy	17	0	0	0	5
45 : Policing Practices	0	0	0	0	0
46 : Profiling	0	0	0	0	0
47 : Legal Gaps	0	0	0	0	0
48 : Human Rights	0	0	0	0	0
49 : Ethnic vulnerability (Hazara)	0	31	0	0	6
50 : Identity and Belonging	0	0	0	0	0

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51 : International criticism of repatriation	0	0	11	0	1
52 : International hostility and deportation	0	0	0	0	0
53 : Lack of training	0	0	0	10	1
54 : Police profiling and harrasment	5	6	1	1	82
55 : Policy reform	1	0	7	6	2
56 : Refugee Integration	0	0	0	0	0
57 : Stakeholder perceptions	0	0	1	6	4
58 : Structural displacement	0	0	0	0	0
59 : Structural violence	11	4	4	1	17
60 : Trust in Insituitions	0	2	2	0	6
61 : All Nodes	17	31	11	10	82
62 : All Sources	17	31	11	10	82
63 : All Sources Not Embedded	0	0	0	0	0

Together, they suggest that Afghan refugee administration in Quetta cannot be fully explained by reference to the limitations of existing policy or resource inadequacies. Instead, they need to be understood as a long-term legacy of colonial forms of administration that institutionalize profiling and structural violence as constitutive elements of everyday administration. Table 1 gives a snapshot of the manner in which the most prominent thematic clusters — Colonial Legacy, Profiling, Institutional Inertia, Structural Violence — were coded from stakeholder interviews and documentary sources.

Discussion

The findings of this research make an important contribution to the emerging literature on postcolonial policing, governance, and forced displacement by documenting the manner in which colonial legacies become inscribed in institutionally embodied habitus and influence the everyday lives of Afghan refugees in Quetta. The continuance of the Police Act of 1861 and the Foreigners Act of 1946 illustrates that the formal end of colonial hegemony did not eradicate the administration apparatus underlying surveillance and control. Rather, as Fanon (1963) and Mamdani (1996) have argued, the institutions of colonial power have survived through codes of law, state bureaucracies, and policing culture.

Revisting Colonial Legacies through Postcolonial Theory

Fanon's concept of the 'colonial subject' helps us to explain the persistent exclusion of Afghan refugees as permanent foreigners. Their legal status is temporary and can be readily revoked, as seen in the widespread fear of deportation even among Proof of Registration card holders. The constant allegations of police harassment — "Even with PoR cards, we're mistreated and insulted" (Refugee Respondent, 21st Interview) — serve to demonstrate the persistent labelling of particular groups as inherently suspicious. Bhabha's (1994) theories of mimicry and hybridity also help us to understand how the postcolonial Pakistani state inherits and modifies these colonial surveillance mechanisms. Official discourse may insist on national sovereignty and a departure from colonial domination, but everyday governance of Afghan refugees reveals the working of mimicry: contemporary security categorizations cover up earlier mechanisms of control.

This duality is also reflected in the perceptions put forth by police officials. The Deputy Inspector General (DIG) admitted that " *Refugees are often viewed through a security lens due to geopolitical factors, which can lead to discriminatory practices"* (DIG Interview).The remark highlights the way older colonial logics of racialized suspicion have been translated in the idioms of modern security. By linking quotidian profiling with the broader geopolitics of border security and terrorism, the state reproduces what Bhabha describes as the 'colonial difference' — the act of othering re-presented in a new form.

Profiling as Structural Violence
Galtung's (1969) Structural Violence Theory is a useful paradigm upon which to examine the daily lives of Afghan refugees. The ongoing intimidation documented in the interviews — *"The police have stopped us several times and asked for bribes... we've had to pay thousands of rupees just to avoid trouble"* (Refugee Respondent, 25th Interview)— rarely results in physical violence; but it erodes social mobility, security, and human dignity. This indirect harm aligns with Galtung's definition of violence as being 'integrated into' social structures.

The overlapping weaknesses of the Hazara subcommunity illustrate the multimodal nature of structural violence. The following is how one interviewee explained it: *"Hazara ethnicity combined with refugee status makes us targets twice over"* (Refugee Respondent, 25th Interview). The double jeopardy substantiates Fanon's thesis that the colonial constructs of racial categorization and sectarian division are internalized in the structuring of the postcolonial state. The research also shows that security rationales not only legitimize surveillance practices but also silence discussion of the historic roots of such biases.

Institutional Theory and Inertia
The resilience of old legal structures, amidst rhetorical claims of change, illustrates Mamdani's (1996) 'institutional inertia.' While the Commissioner's office claims that *"We have conducted training workshops in collaboration with UNHCR..."* (Commissioner Interview). they are marked by their discontinuity and insufficient funding. The Station House Officers confirm that front-line officers operate under restricted autonomy, bound to central commands based on rigid command hierarchies:
"The centralized structure of command remains intact, with little room for localized decisions" (SHO Interview Summary).
The absence of agency at the local level illustrates how the bureaucratic structures first established by colonial governments continue to impede present efforts at policing reform. Institutional Theory predicts that organizations resist change when founding rules, norms, and cognitive arrangements are not put under critical examination. With no structural reform, training alone is impossible to change the deep-seated profiling and conditional citizenship culture.

Connecting Theory and Data
The NVivo Coding Tree (Figure 1) and Thematic Matrix (Table 1) provide an empirical basis for the analysis. The number of coded nodes, the patterns found, and stakeholders' quotes validate that profiling is not anecdotal and points to systemic shortcomings. Interweaving the coded themes — Colonial Legal

Continuity, Profiling Practices, Institutional Inertia, Structural Violence — the study explains how theoretical models intersect the everyday life of refugees.

This link between theory and data is not unique to Pakistan's example. Dryden-Peterson (2011) argues that host states will balance humanitarian responsibility against national security interests in a way that defaults to control and exclusion. In Pakistan, the absence of national legislation on refugees repeats this tension. While the state collaborates with UNHCR on the issuance of PoR cards, the lack of mandatory legislation ensures that policing discretion makes up the final word on refugee status.

Situating the Hazara Subcommunity
The Hazara people's experiences constitute a key case in this broader context. Their testimony verifies Mamdani's conclusion that colonial domination maintained 'subjects' in indirect rule, making ethnic and sectarian identity tools of rule. The reactions of Hazara people demonstrate the persistence of this administrative structure. They are situated in a vulnerable legal sphere, which is supported by ethnic suspicion as well as sectarian fear. This combined disadvantage doubles the impact of institutional violence, further consolidating them as 'others' who can be stopped, interrogated, or extorted with impunity.

Reflections on Policy Gaps and Needed Reforms
The findings of the research show that without an overarching refugee legislative framework, traces of colonial control will continue to influence policing patterns through discretionary power. The Commissioner's statement — "There are currently no structured efforts underway to integrate long-term Afghan residents into the national framework" (Commissioner Interview) — reflects the political unwillingness to fill this legal gap. At the same time, the Deputy Inspector General's comment on the improvement of accountability demonstrates a policy-institutional capacity deficit.

Policy reforms must start with the dismantling of legal frameworks that authorize profiling practices. The re-promulgation of the suspended refugee bill, in the opinion of the Commissioner, is the key to bringing Pakistan's governance in line with global standards. Apart from legislative reforms, institutional changes must address the establishment of mandatory procedures for rights-based community policing, increased accountability through independent monitoring, and capacity building based on a critical examination of colonial inheritances.

Original Contribution and Broader Implications Through the application of Postcolonial, Structural Violence, and Institutional Theory to qualitative empirical data, this study makes a unique contribution to the literature on policing and the regulation of refugees in South Asia. This study demonstrates that colonial legacies are not merely artifacts of the past but are dynamic structures that shape the regulation of marginalized groups in the present. In so doing, this study challenges policymakers, academics, and practitioners to reconsider how so-called 'postcolonial' states can truly decolonise their institutional structures. For Pakistan, this means shifting away from quick-fix administrative solutions towards long-lasting legal structures and institutional norms that can uphold refugees' dignity and rights.

Conclusion

This research has been critically examining the degree to which the governance of Afghan refugees in Quetta, Pakistan, is shaped by colonial legacies. Using Postcolonial Theory, Structural Violence Theory, and Institutional Theory, the research illustrates that residual colonial frameworks—such as the continued enforcement of the Police Act of 1861 and the Foreigners Act of 1946—are sustaining a reality in which profiling, harassment, and conditional belonging are everyday realities for refugees.

The interpretivist, qualitative character of the research, enabled by scrupulous thematic coding with NVivo (Figure 1) and triangulated with the in-depth Thematic Matrix (Table 1), demonstrates that these events are not isolated incidents but integral parts of a segment of a governance system that is more preoccupied with surveillance than security. The everyday reports of bribery, harassment at roadblocks, and sectarian discrimination, especially against the Hazara subcommunity, bear witness to the insidious yet effective functioning of structural violence in bureaucratic life.

Policy Recommendations

To address these injustices, it is necessary to dismantle the legal and institutional pillars that enable profiling to continue.

First, Pakistan needs to resurrect and pass a strong national refugee law in line with international norms. The interview with the Commissioner reaffirmed that drafts have been in the pipeline for decades but have been held back by political opposition. Passing such a law would replace antiquated colonial-era processes with open, rights-based safeguards that restrain police discretionary powers and inscribe the principle of non-refoulement in national law.

Secondly, police institutions require structural transformation going beyond the superficial training. Whereas the DIG and Commissioner spoke of capacity-building activities, the study discovers that institutional inertia and command structures hinder meaningful change. Mandatory modules on refugee rights, cultural sensitivity, and critical analysis of colonial policing inheritances must be incorporated in all police training levels and career development. Thirdly, it is imperative to implement strong accountability mechanisms. Independent oversight entities that possess explicit mandates to examine issues of profiling, corruption, and abuse should be established and made accessible to marginalized populations. This necessity is especially pressing for the Hazara community, which experiences multifaceted vulnerabilities, rendering them recurrent targets of sectarian violence and discriminatory law enforcement practices.

Implications for future research

Although this research takes Quetta as its site, its significance pertains to South Asia and other postcolonial regions where migration control converges with colonial policing logics. Research comparing how other host countries of refugees deal with such inherited systems would build insights into the global situation of the structural violence of refugee management.

In addition, subsequent empirical analysis can extend from this study by using longitudinal approaches to analyze how changes in national security discourse, repatriation strategies, and regional geopolitics affect the daily lives of Afghan refugees and other non-citizens.

Closing Reflection

This essay finally argues that decolonizing government implies a departure from rhetorical promises towards protectionism. It implies confronting painful histories, rebuilding legal structures, rethinking policing, and above all, respecting the rights and dignity of the institutionally excluded. In Pakistan, the project is both a matter of moral necessity and a necessary step towards a model of government that actually differs from its colonial past and is still committed to its international obligations.

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