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PAKISTAN'S AFGHAN REFUGEES

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CIA GI 82-10205 M

SUMMARY

The influx of over 2 million Afghan refugees, largely Pushtun tribesmen, into Pakistan's western borderlands taxes the limited resource base of the region. Prolonged stay poses potential political problems and security risks for the government of Pakistan.

This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] Office of Global Issues. Comments and queries are welcome and should be addressed to [redacted]

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Pakistan's Afghan Refugees

◦ Who Are They?

Since the spring of 1978, more than 2.7 million Afghans have been registered as refugees in Pakistan. Registration records indicate that 80 to 90 percent of them are Pushtun tribesmen, comprising about a third of the estimated 6.5 to 7 million Pushtun ethnic community in Afghanistan. (About half of Afghanistan's pre-1978 population was classified as Pushtuns). Many of the refugees brought livestock with them and most of them are farmers or farm laborers; some are pastoral nomads and a lesser but significant number among them are professionals and the well-to-do. (U)

◦ 300 New Towns.

Based on 1981 Census of Pakistan figures, the Afghan refugees have doubled the population in Pakistan's western borderlands. To deal more effectively with the massive numbers, Pakistani relief officials group refugees where possible into camps averaging 5,000 to 7,000 persons or 1,000 families each. Approximately 300 Refugee Tented Villages (RTVs) have been established, most of which are located in the formerly completely rural Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). (U)

The majority of the camps are clustered in six areas near major points of entry into Pakistan: the Bajaur-Dir area, the environs of Peshawar, the Kurram River valley, and the Gumal River valley in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP); and the Pishin-Quetta and the Chagai Hills areas in Baluchistan. Where possible, relief officials attempt to locate the camps at least 10 miles from the border to avoid providing a provocation for Soviet cross-border raids. The camp sites are adjacent to a motorable road, near a source of water, and on land not suitable for agriculture or other immediate use by the local population. Food and shelter (tents) are provided by international relief organizations and volunteer agencies, but water supplies, grazing space, and firewood for fuel are scarce. (U)

◦ Refugees as Guests

The GOP publicly refrains from giving the refugees other than temporary status, by allowing the use of only temporary shelter (tents), and by discouraging activities that would place the refugees in competition with the local population, particularly in ethnically sensitive Baluchistan. At the same time, efforts are quietly being made to disperse camp populations away from the border both for security reasons and to alleviate the strain on over-burdened resources in the frontier areas. (U)

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◦ Benefits of Ethnic Homogeneity

The Afghan refugees are largely confined to Pushtun ethnic areas in NWFP and Baluchistan where they share kinship ties and a cultural value system with the people among whom they live. Although US Embassy officials report little open resentment of the refugees, some discontent has been voiced from those groups affected by the refugee presence, namely:

- a narrow segment of the middle class pinched by rising prices for consumer items, food, and housing;
- lower economic class groups with incomes in the range of GOP support payments to the refugees;
- those tribesmen in direct competition with the refugees for water resources and grazing areas;
- Shi'ite tribesmen in conflict with Sunni Afghan refugees in the crowded Kurram Valley. [REDACTED]

We believe the ethnic bond has been a key factor in the relatively low level of friction to date between the refugees and the local inhabitants, given the population pressures on scarce resources in the region. The tolerance for the refugee presence, however, is likely to change to increasing resentment as the perception grows that the refugees will continue to be recipients of government income payments and as they become job and resource competitors. [REDACTED]

◦ Resource Pressures

The refugee camps are located in areas that have been experiencing heavy outmigration over the past decade. The probable cause, according to a World Bank study, is the continuing degradation of the natural environment in an area where traditionally 80 percent of the tribesmen have been dependent on some form of subsistence agriculture. More specifically, the World Bank report pinpointed increased erosion and lowered agricultural productivity resulting from overgrazing, overcutting of the region's tree growth for firewood, and poor farming techniques. [REDACTED]

Since the resource base is inadequate for its native population, we believe it unlikely that large numbers of refugees can be sustained in these regions without continuing government subsidies or by some form of economic development that compensates for the lack of natural resources. Tribal landholding patterns preclude the sale of land to farmers among the refugees, and grazing privileges in the largely barren land are closely guarded, leaving little scope to accommodate refugees. [REDACTED]

◦ Strategic Risks

The support of the insurgency in Afghanistan by groups using refugee encampments in Pakistan constitutes a rationale for Soviet incursions into the country to take action against the camps. Reliable sources assert that the GOP is likely to seek ways to restrain support activity to a level below that which might prompt Soviet military intervention. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] there is growing concern among thoughtful Pakistanis who draw an analogy with the Palestinians, that these well-armed groups could become a troublesome security problem in the borderlands. We believe that refugee support activities can be moderated but cannot be halted completely because of the lack of close border control and the widespread sympathy for the refugees' objectives among their ethnic kindred in Pakistan. Dispersing refugee camps to other locations away from the border would dilute their status as an attractive nuisance target for the Soviets, but those refugees most actively engaged in cross-border activities would probably resist leaving the frontier area. [REDACTED]

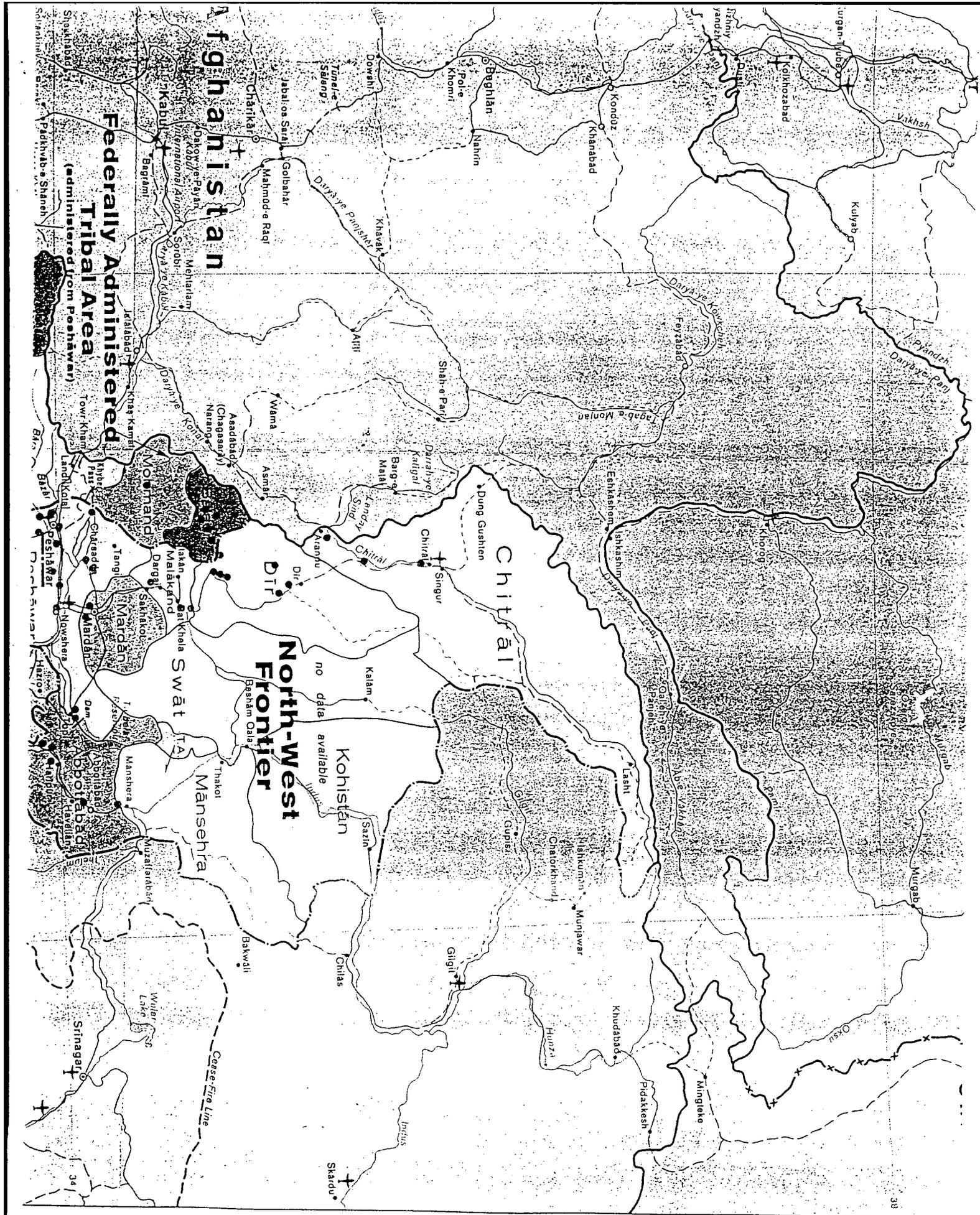
◦ Pakistani Apprehensions

GOP officials fear the Soviet use of Afghan refugees and/or Pakistani Pushtun tribesmen for subversive activities in the politically volatile borderlands. They are apprehensive that should the refugees lose faith in an eventual return to their homelands, they may well become active in NWFP tribal politics, rekindling agitation for an autonomous Pushtunistan on Pakistan territory. Their presence in large numbers in the borderlands would cause those demands to pose a serious threat to the GOP efforts to integrate the tribal areas into the political life of Pakistan. We believe the reported increase in size of the Army's Frontier Corps may be related more to potential refugee activities than to prospects of Soviet intrusions. [REDACTED]

◦ Cold Realities

In our opinion, Pakistan's peacekeeping efforts in the borderlands have been made more difficult by the introduction of more numerous and sophisticated weapons among refugee groups and local tribesmen in the wake of the Afghan insurgency. Warfare is almost a sport among the Pushtun. In a tribal society that traditionally settles disputes with guns, intertribal clashes are likely to escalate quickly out of control. On another level, a disquieting factor for the Pakistani military, in any future confrontation with armed Pushtun tribesmen, is the experience and confidence the Pushtun have gained combating technologically superior Soviet forces. [REDACTED]

We believe that the refugees are facing a prolonged to indefinite stay in Pakistan, despite the effort of the GOP to characterize them as "temporary guests". The refugees are unlikely to return to Afghanistan permanently as long as a Soviet-backed government is in power. Even if conditions in Afghanistan become conducive for repatriation, it is unlikely that all of the refugees will return, particularly the landless laborers among them. The longer their sojourn in Pakistan, the more likely that a larger number will take up permanent residence in Pakistan. [REDACTED]



Afghanistan

Federally Administered Tribal Area

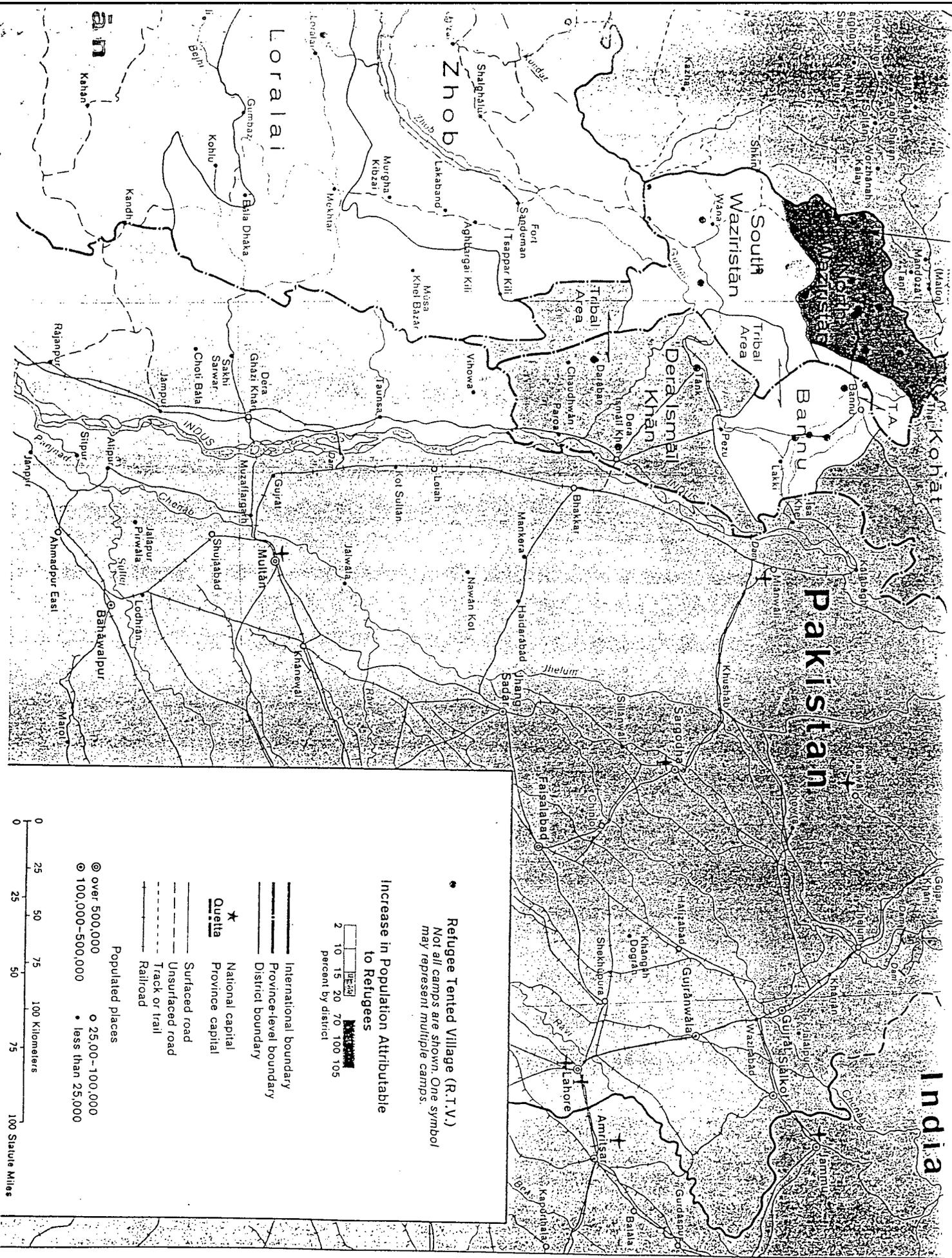
(administered from Peshawar)

North-West Frontier

no data available

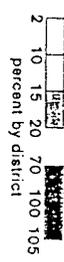
Kohistan

Chitral



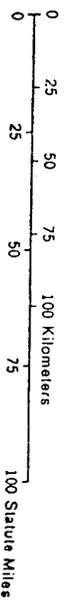
● Refugee Tented Village (R.T.V.)
 Not all camps are shown. One symbol
 may represent multiple camps.

Increase in Population Attributable
 to Refugees



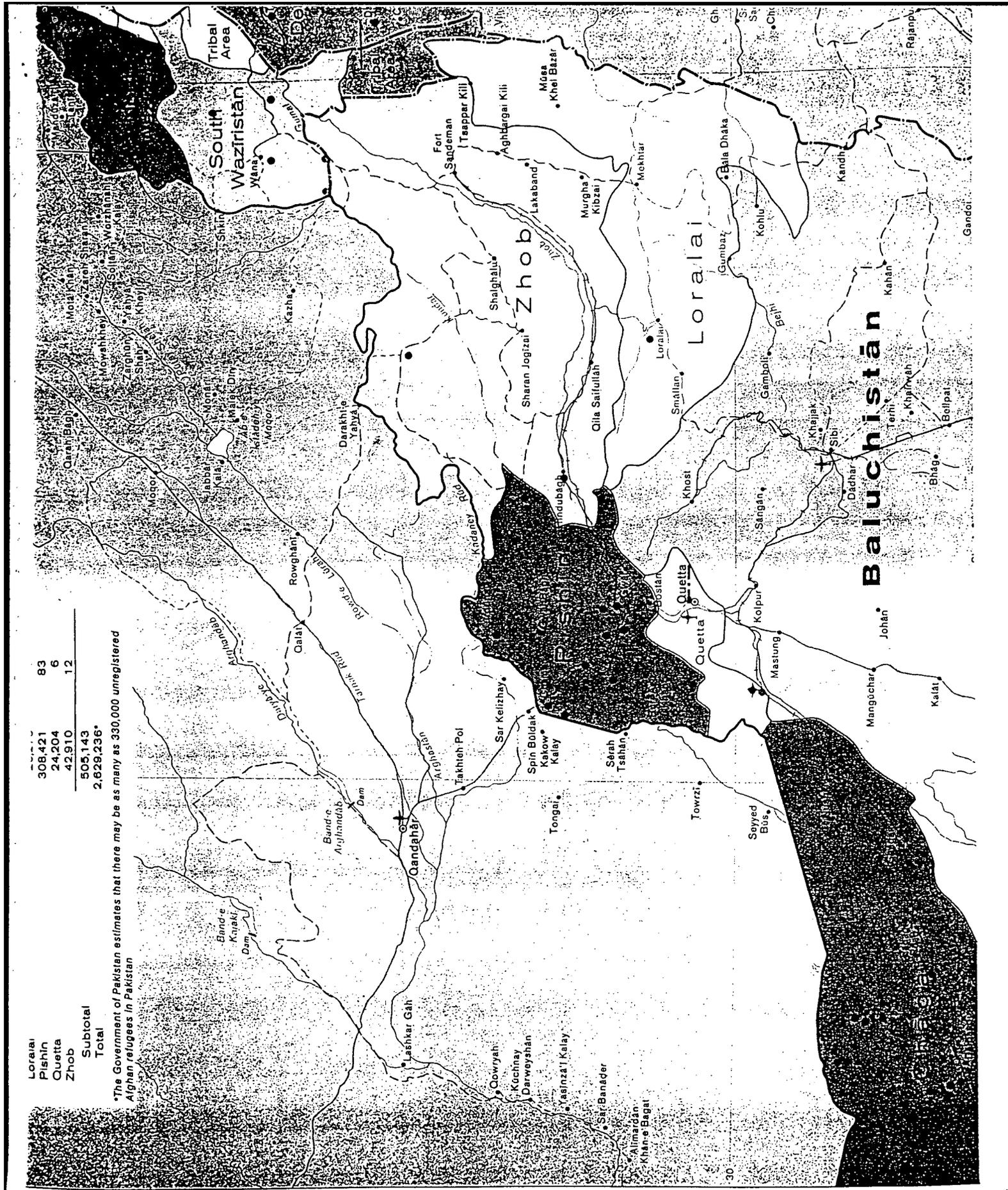
- International boundary
- Province-level boundary
- District boundary
- National capital
- Province capital
- Surfaced road
- Unsurfaced road
- Track or trail
- Railroad

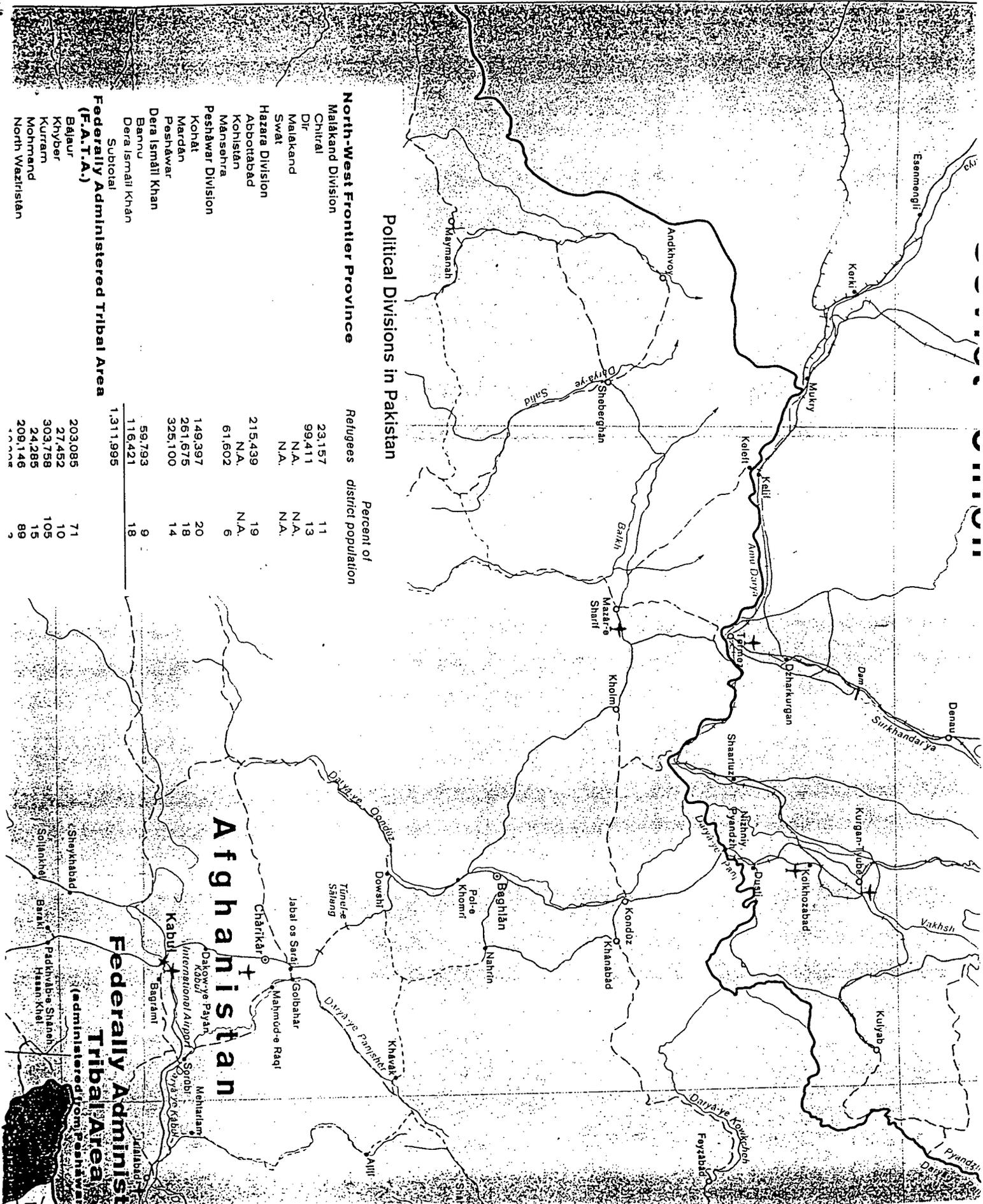
- Populated places
- over 500,000
 - 25,000-100,000
 - 100,000-500,000
 - less than 25,000



Loralai	308,421	83
Pishin	24,204	6
Quetta	42,910	12
Zhob	505,143	
Subtotal	2,629,236*	
Total		

*The Government of Pakistan estimates that there may be as many as 330,000 unregistered Afghan refugees in Pakistan





Political Divisions in Pakistan

North-West Frontier Province

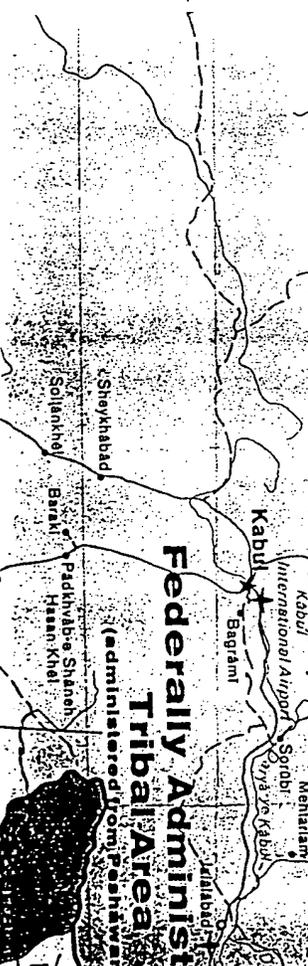
Division	Refugees	Percent of district population
Malakand Division	23,157	11
Chitral	99,411	13
Dir	N.A.	N.A.
Malakand	N.A.	N.A.
Swat	N.A.	N.A.
Hazara Division	215,439	19
Abdottabad	N.A.	N.A.
Kohistan	61,602	6
Manshera	N.A.	N.A.
Peshawar Division	149,397	20
Kohat	261,675	18
Mardan	325,100	14
Peshawar	56,793	9
Dera Ismail Khan	116,421	18
Bannu	1,311,995	
Subtotal		

Federally Administered Tribal Area (F.A.T.A.)

Bajaur	203,085	71
Khyber	27,452	10
Kurram	303,758	105
Mohmand	24,285	15
North Waziristan	209,146	89
Subtotal	767,726	270

Afghanistan

Federally Administered Tribal Area



Thailand: Indochinese Refugee Camps, June 1982

