

The Problems of Baloch Ethnicity in Balochistan: Paving Way Towards Betterment Through Political Consensus

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to explore the issue of ethnicity of Balochs in Balochistan. Historically this issue took its roots in 1948 on account of Kalat seizure with Pakistan. Balochs had reservations with this seizure while the state did not take the matter seriously. The result to which was various resistance moves by the Balochs. The state's hesitance to determine the issue politically, created further doubts between the Balochs and the state. The resistance moves were stifled by the state resulting in anti-state feelings among the Balochs. This paper examines the nature of Baloch ethnicity by using qualitative research design with content analysis as a method to analyze the various issues between the state and Balochs in Balochistan. The findings of the study indicate that Baloch is the most primitive tribe in Balochistan with its own specific identity. The state needs to understand and resolve the ethnic conflict of Balochs politically through consensus on fair grounds, to bring about peace and stability in the province.

Keywords: Baloch ethnicity, resistance, identity, stability.

Introduction

The Baloch or Baluch are a people who live mainly in the Balochistan region of the southeastern-most edge of the Iranian plateau in Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan, as well as in the Arabian Peninsula. They mainly speak the Balochi language, a branch of northwestern Iranian languages, and are an Irani people. Baloch people co-inhabit desert and mountainous regions along with Pashtuns. Baloch people practice Islam, are predominantly Sunni, and use Urdu as the lingua franca to communicate with other ethnic groups such

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as Pashtuns, and Sindhis, as is the norm of Pakistan. Statistic limit of Baloch ethnic gathering straddles to three nations: Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran. The larger part of Balochis living in the province of Pakistan, Balochistan. When Baloch migrated towards Balochistan and captured kalat, they established their capital at Miri and reinforced their capacity in kalat. However, due to its geological importance, different countries like Greeks, Afghans, Persians, and Sikhs they endeavored to pick up power over their region, however they ended up unsuccessful. Baloch territory remained associated with Iran and India because they chose to be in touch with them. At the time of Mughals and Britishraj there were three Baloch pioneers, Mir Chakar Khan Rind, Abdullah Khan and Nasir Khan who brought huge changes in Baloch innate society. As a matter of first importance, Mir Chakar Khan who built up "tribal confederacy". He worked for Baloch social development and the literacy of Balochi dialect. Moreover, Abdullah Khan brought together the Balochis politically. Nasir Khan who is the sixth Khan of kalat made the Baloch armed force, which depended on 25,000 men and 1,000 camels. Furthermore, he relatively led over yonder at least half of the century.

Literature Review

Different studies have been conducted on Baloch ethnicity. For instance, Jetly (2014) wrote about Baloch ethnicity and nationalism and talked about three variable terms, nature and pattern of the movement, role of the state, and external dynamics, which are some impacts of the rise and decline of the Baloch movement. In another research, Malhi (2009) discussed about Baloch ethnic uprising and national integration in which he says that nowadays some states are suffering and fighting for their nationalism and some of them are post-colonial who faced ethnicity and ethnicity is the huge problem which mainly causes the conflicts between state and some diverse groups. Sometime these ethnic issues take very serious turn. Mostly the reason behind these conflicts is the ignorance of some specific groups. Gichki (2010) discusses about ethno-nationalist conflicts in Pakistan where he says that our country Pakistan is still suffering to find the sense of unity between different ethnic groups. This sense of unity is known as basic block through which a building can be built strong. Baloch people are suffering from structural weakness due to which they cannot execute the administrative institution and there is a big issue between Islamabad and Balochistan but the major one is democratic

transition. Dedalus (2007) talks about the refugees of Balochistan and explains that there have been disastrous affects on the civilians during the simmering conflicts in Balochistan. He also discusses in his article about General Parvez Musharraf who threatened the Baloch insurgents with violence in 2005, when Baloch nationalists demanded political autonomy from the federal government. Kokaislova (2013) explains that Baloch people live in different countries but still they have no statehood yet. There are some certain parallels between them and European people and their ethnogenesis have common features either the Balochis of Iran, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, and Pakistan. Ethnicity issues probably are the issues of linguistic and cultural identity. Balochistan and Baloch are attracted internationally in the shadow of political crisis in Afghanistan since in map Balochistan is the largest province of Pakistan.

Discussion

Colonial Division of Balochistan

After the death of Nasir Khan 1, the Britishers came in Balochistan (1839 to 1876 and 1876 to 1947). Moreover, Afghanistan was given more importance by the Russian empire. Due to Russian region proximity with central Asia Afghanistan was very close to them. Therefore, the Britishers were occupied with war with Afghanistan.

The war 1839-42 was considered to happen because of the relationship between British and Khan of Kalat; in others words it was as juxtaposition of Afghanistan and Balochistan. This is the reason that Britisher assaulted and executed the Khan of Kalat named Mir Mehrab Khan. Later, the 2nd khan Mir Nasir came into power and tried to fight but could not and suffered heavily. At last they came up with the agreement in which the Britishers could make companies and trade as well; for this they paid big amount of 50000 to Khan of Kalat. This deal was considered as if Khan of Kalat has purchased his loyalty in the form of subsidy.

Essentially the frontier organization looked over numerous political issues and the tension raised between Khan of Kalat and native people increased. Under this situation, Baloch became anti-British and first modern Baloch ethnic nationalism raised. Still British worked very well for the progress in Balochistan but Baloch people were not in condition to accept them. Britishers too had to go through different tough political situations. They

were neglected to present any political, financial and social approach in the locale. The Baloch were not quiet and hence started Balochistan movement. There were several political groups led by the middle-class nationalists. Mir Ahmed Yar Khan was their supporter and was very strong. In 1937, these young nationalists who received their bachelors degree from British universities announced to form national party of Kalat in Sibi and this party voiced against the non-Baloch administrators in Balochistan. Later they worked for independent entity. During that time, all important leaders were exiled because of some unacceptable activities and Khan of Kalat was not in favor of Sardari activities. He stopped these activities and the party was also undergrounded. Later, Khan of Kalat developed the relationship with Quaid-e-Azam and asked him to be the legal advisor of Kalat.

Ethnic Composition of Balochistan and Tribal Set Up

Basically, people of Balochistan are divided in three ethnic groups and there are 27 tribes. The names of these three groups are: 1. Baloch, 2. Brahui and 3. Pashtuns. There are 40 percent people who speak in Balochi, 20 percent Brahui and 40 percent of Pashto language speakers. These ethnic groups also speak Urdu and Siraiki languages. Chiefly Baloch are amassed in west, east, south and south eastern parts which are the most well-known areas where Balochs live. The center of the province is dominated by Brahui speakers. In the north of Balochistan, the majority includes the Pashtuns. Hence, both are present in the tribal system. However, from the last 25 years their nomadic lifestyle has changed into modernity. These tribal people prefer to settle in developed areas while sardar and khan system is now limited to the tribal areas. Sardar in Baloch tribes and khan in Pashto tribes respectively.

Nature of the Issue

There are some issues of Baloch ethnic identity which are their socio-political rights which are multifaceted and complex in nature. Through some variables these issues could be highlighted.

1. Baloch Nationalism and the Issue of Identity

In the 20th century, when the Britishers were ruling on Balochistan, Baloch were struggling for their identity. Inayatullah (1987) explains that the credit

should be given to those white-collar class who took their education from Britain. He says that these were impacted by the Indian legislators.

“The Young Baloch” was the first nationalist movement, propelled in 1920. It published various articles in different newspapers and magazines. In these articles the message of Baloch unity was frequently communicated. Later on, the first political party Anjuman-e-Ittehad-e-Balochistan was formed. Its basic demand was a united and independent Balochistan” (pp. 151-154).

This movement was against Britishers yet additionally against Shams Shah who was administering in Kalat. When Mir Ahmed Yar Khan progressed towards becoming in power this movement was stopped (Naseer, 1979, p. 420) and later they framed another party which was “Kalat State National Party” in Sibi with the same purpose of independent Balochistan and independent Kalat.

“On August 12, 1947, the Khan of Kalat announced the establishment of independent state of Kalat. At the same time, Shahi Jirga and Quetta Municipality (both were nominated bodies by the British) decided to join Pakistan. Contrary to this verdict, the Khan of Kalat formed a Parliament, despite the fact that he had already signed the agreement, conducted first ever elections, in which the Kalat National Party (KNP) participated in private capacity, had won 29 seats” (Baloch, 2009, p.352)

2. The issue of Provincial Autonomy

The issue of provincial autonomy in Balochistan cannot be separated from the rights and the ethnic identity of Balochs. This matter is under discussion since 1971. The Baloch leaders have demanded for comparatively homogeneous province. All the civil and military governments focused only on central power. The treason behind this proposal was rise of ethnic conflict. In 2008 the government of PPP tried to explain this issue and furthermore nullified the simultaneous rundown. It was a technique from them, however Balochistan government did not acknowledge it.

3. Historical narrative and the issue of greater Balochistan

Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran are the three countries which are covered by Baloch ethnic issues. In Pakistan, the Baloch ethnic groups are in majority. They have their own territory and culture. There are some tribes in different areas who are not even cohesive to each other. They are making some

political parties only to make sure that they are important and to show their presence in politics as well while there are some parties for example, bnp of mengal group, jwp of bugti, and haq talwar of nawab khair bakhsh marri. These parties have same goals but with some internal conflicts. These parties believe that a few territories of balochistan which were given to afghanistan and iran by the british government during their rule, should now become part of balochistan again to create greater balochistan. This approach could be responsible of insurgent movements in pakistan but also in the neighbor countries as well.

4. Inter and intra-tribal conflict

The idea of baloch society is ancestral and baloch tribe gives more importance to clans and groups. There are right around 400 subgroups and 17 major inborn gatherings. These tribes are under the control of sardar and their issues are also solved by them (Jetly, 2004, p. 10). Hence, Janmahmand explains that "nawab akbar bugti who was the minister of state for defence during 1958, killed his elder haibat khan. Besides, Janmahmand asserts that "on this charge nawab bugti was put behind the bar" (1982). During the imprisonment, he was removed from the office of tribal chief. Attaullah mengal was also accused of murdering of his uncle and sent into jail." (1982, p. 229).

5. Factional politics

There are two baloch groups or we can say parties one is known as anti-state because they demand for the azad balochistan and they demand to have maximum autonomy over balochistan. While the other group wants to solve the issues of baloch by working with the state. The fact is that both are struggling from different issues but their aim is same; they want to work for the progress of balochistan however having different opinion and different ways of doing work which causes conflict between them. "Among the tribal sardars, the mengal tribe which have bnp.m and jwp of bugti tribe is in favour to work within political system. There are some other sardars or tribes who have joined hands with the mainstream national parties like ppp and pml (n) and (q). Other than these tribes, there are activists representing the baloch middle class like the national party (np). Its mainstream leadership including dr. Abdul hayee baloch and dr. Abdul malik baloch are also in favour of

finding political resolution of the dispute. The other group which is known as militant groups like baloch liberation army (bla) and the baloch haq talwar believed to have full control over their territory” (nation, 2006).

Development of conflict: a chronological order

Basically, the baloch people are fighting beside the intolerant behavior which is shown by the government of pakistan towards balochistan. In the present situation of balochistan whatever is happening is a guerrilla struggle which is against the state of pakistan since 1948. In this section of the paper, a chronological order of the development of the conflict will be discussed.

1.the issue of accession and revolt in 1948

On 15th april 1948, the legal authority of khan-e-azam came to an end when he was compelled to sign the accession and many ministers of kalat were arrested. Quaid-e-azam who was the governor general of pakistan acquainted the general's policy for the governance and administration and this was the first step taken towards balochistan as a federal authority over it. This step became the reason of rebellious activities in balochistan and gave rise to the movement led by the younger brother of khan of kalat. He moved to afghanistan to organize a liberation movement named “baloch mujahedeen”.titus and swidler state:

“prince karim started its guerrilla operation from jhalawan district. The authorities of pakistan army influenced his brother to surrender. In response he will get amnesty from the army. They signed an agreement with abdul karim. But when he surrendered, the army arrested him along with 126 militants, dishonouring the agreement. The ksnp was banned”(2000, p.50). Besides, in views of kundi (2009), *“after this move, the baloch nationalists were divided into two factions. One favoured to continue armed struggle as guerrilla war while the other presented themselves as a moderate group favoured to resolve the issue through dialogue”*.

2.the parari resistance 1962

In 1958 when ayyub khan came into power,the second insurgency was crushed in balochistan. Ayub khan introduced basic democracies to strengthen the central policies. He won the races and presented a presidential framework in 1962. According to this system, for the first time many of the

sardars were elected including nawaz bugti who was the first to become the parliament member. Ayub khan felt a threat to his policies due to the elected sardars. Hence, pak army started to build some new cantonments in balochistan which resulted in a baloch nationalist movement named "*parari*" (a word from balochi language referring to the non-negotiable issues). According to the asia report (2006), "*the sporadic fighting ended when in 1969 general yahya seized power and withdrew one-unit plan*" (p.4). finally, balochistan was given the status of province.

3.the 2005 insurgency and direction of conflict

After twenty-seven years the fifth insurgency was caused due to the conflict between baloch and punjabi, the colonization of punjabi and the exploitation of natural resources in balochistan. The national leaders of balochistan became busy in participating in the political activities instead of solving the core issues. during this democratic period mengal and bizingo formed bnp, and akbar khan bugti formed jwp. Besides, covalent governance was also made which was a positive sign. In 1999, when military came into power, the baloch showed complete distrust against military. Hence, the second generation of nationalist movement began to work together in unity. hence, in views of shah meer baloch (2016) "*the current spate of violence reached at its peak when on 26 august 2006, the military forces killed nawab akbar khan bugti, the jwp leader. His death further flared the baloch resistance not only in balochistan but in other provinces as well. The nawab's death made them more united and determined about their cause. He became the symbol of baloch resistance for their identity and independence*".

Conclusion

The grievances of balochs if not solved with mutual harmony and understanding may take serious drastic turns. This paper traced the historical trajectory of balochs and their nationalistic stance. As dashti warns "ignoring the baloch grievances will further escalate the tensions. Cpec is a golden opportunity for the state to prosper while addressing the complaints of the baloch." Besides, malik siraj akbar who is a baloch thinker residing in washington dc states, "baloch nationalists can be an ally in the fight against religious extremism instead of the government treating them as enemies." Such a rational point of view can bring changes in the foreign

policy by changing the thinking scenario of the government which can lead to stability in the entire region.

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