

Hafeez Ullah Khan *
Sana Ullah **

BALUCHISTAN; ETHNO - NATIONALISM AND ECONOMIC UNDERDEVELOPMENT

Abstract

Most of the heterogeneous populated states consist of different ethnic communities. Each ethnic identity has different voices and demands, for the accomplishment of which, a continuous struggle is going on, influencing the national politics. Pakistan like other developing states of the world is also in front of identity crisis almost in all federating units with different concerns. These concerns are sometimes ethno-nationality, decentralization of powers, provincial autonomy and economic discrepancies. Baluchistan's territory is though known for possessing huge economic potentials in terms of mineral resources and vast expanse of geography but these opportunities can only be availed if Baluch-Brahvi or Baluch-Punjabi tensions are culminated due to which mega projects like Gawader Port, Gas Pipelines or railway lines planned at the central level do not reach to their accomplishment. So after the dismemberment of East Pakistan, the most sensitive and hot issue is the case of Baluchistan's ethno-national movement which sometimes in different occasions seem to be transformed to a militant or an insurgent group for fulfillment of their objectives. This paper is an analysis of Baluchistan's ethnic movement and its consequences.

Introduction

States having colonial past, possess a distinct socio-cultural and politico-economic history. After getting independence these states unfortunately came in the grip of politically corrupt politicians and their governmental policies carrying their infant sates and their people to warfare situations.¹ According to Adeel Khan the conflicting situation in Pakistan is due to a continuous struggle among the powerful and non-powerful groups and this conflict is due to power in politics. So if the political power is shared by different ethnic groups for minimization of tension, stability and politico-economic development will obviously come true.² Tahir Amin says that it is necessary that each ethnic group must be taken into account with equal footings and contribution in national political affairs in order to avoid a civil war in a state.³

The largest geography equal in size to Italy with smallest population, lowest in per capita income and poorest in socio-economic developments, despite of, being rich

* Mr. Hafeez Ullah Khan Lecturer, Department of Political Science, Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan, Correspondence Author's email: hafeezkhan3003@gmail.com

** Mr.Sana Ullah, Demonstrator, Department of Political Science, Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan.

in mineral resources, with low presence in high level employment and nominal political representation in national politics in Pakistan is the province of Balochistan and this is the main reason due to which its inhabitants feel uneasiness in its locality and in Pakistan as well.⁴ Besides this, military strikes in the province escalated the nationalist or separatist ambitions more than before as the people have lost trust in the political system and power sharing and it is therefore that these people are now more hostile towards Punjabis on the one hand and army on the other, the more Balochis are suppressed, the more they arise with violent form.⁵

Balochistan is a gate-way to Central Asian republics, Afghanistan, China, Europe and Western Asia is also in its approach because of Gawdar Port and such other mega projects and that's why rule of law, peace, development and political and economic stability are priority areas both for Balochistan and Pakistan.⁶

The population of this province consists of two types of people Balochis and Pashtoons. Southern and North-Western people are Pashtoons and have a political influence due to influx of Afghan refugees increasing numerical strength, especially in Quetta while the Balochis are divided mainly into two groups i.e Balochi and Brahui on the basis of language. These two groups are further divided into sub-groups or tribes i.e Marris, Bugtis, Bizonjos. Major ethnic groups speak Pushto, Balochi, Brahvi and Mongals in Balochistan.

According to British colonial census Balochi and Brahvi were declared as two separate and distinct languages and ethnic groups. With the inception of Baloch nationalist movement, the term Baloch encircles in itself not only Brahvi group but other linguistic groups of the southern Balochistan as well and these groups recognized themselves as a part of the ' Baloch nation' and distinct from Pukhtoon and other ethnic groups. Anyhow, Brahvi as the most prominent non- Baloch identity get involved in Baloch nationalist politics and so raised demand of provincial autonomy. The demands raised by Balochi people are very seldom addressed by the central government in a real sense and due to these grievances some political parties and insurgent groups are not happy to accommodate themselves with in the same state structure and therefore raise the voice of separation.⁷

History of Baloch Nationalist Movement

A historical background of Baloch movement is necessary to understand the political situation in Balochistan and its impacts on national politics. Territorially Balochistan is distributed in four zones or regions i.e Bela, Kallat, Makran, Kharan. these regions were under the rule of Mir Ahmed Yar Khan before partition but then agreements were signed between the two, according to which the British got hold over Quetta, Noshki, Bolan and Naseerabad on rent basis. However at the time of independence Balochistan was made to accede to Pakistan which was the first political contradiction between the rulers of Pakistan and some of Baloch Sardars including Khan of Kallat and so they formed Kalat National Party.

In 1950 when Khan of Kallat expressed his refusal to sign accession documents to Pakistan, the then central government impatiently flew jet planes against Khan to

demolish his palace to the ground and so no diplomatic behavior was adopted. In 1952, natural gas was discovered in the region of Sui and from then Pakistani government is benefiting itself from this cheap source of energy. Though it is a regional asset of Balochistan but has neither brought into use nor got its royalty till 1980 and the amount being paid to Balochistan for its gas is lower than those being paid for later discoveries in Sindh and Punjab and this made the Balochi people furious. Gas pipeline in Balochistan even today runs through Quetta only and its passage through Khuzdar is a dream. Under the pressure of international environmentalists the federal government later on became ready for supply of gas to Ziarat with a view to preserve juniper from waste burning.⁸

In 1955, in the result of an agreed formula of One Unit, a tribal 'Sardar' Sher Mohammad Marri, protested against violation of 'provincial rights', took positions in mountains with loyal tribesmen and started shootings at the 'occupying Punjabi army' The Balochis political vigilance for their due rights gave birth to Baloch nationalism after national elections, the outbreak of Bengali separatist movement and the appearance of Bangladesh. This nationalist movement was joined by the National Awami Party led by "nationalists" Ghaus Bux Bizenjo, Ataullah Mengal, Khair Bux Marri, Akbar Bugti and Khan Wali Khan who dominated Balochistan and the NWFP.⁹ At that time, even the Maulana Mufti Mahmud (JUI) supported the movement so that to expose the provincial cause. Certainly, Bhutto was faced by hard time with Balochistan situations posing a great challenge to Bhutto's power in hand. During this course, the provincial government of Baluchistan was run by NAP-JUI coalition which was strongly against of extreme centralization of the federal government and so voiced for provincial autonomy, the restoration of strong democracy and socialism as promised in PPP's manifesto, but when Baloch were admired of the central government's non- implementation ambition of 1970 manifesto, launched regional militant movement i.e "Greater Balochistan Movement". Since Pakistan's creation, the province is considered to be very little subjugated to the wishes of the central authorities and now the slogans of Greater Balochistan, the socio-cultural identity of the province was thought to be threatened so in 1972 prominent leaders of the province were accused for making and cementing anti-state conspiracy (London Plan), hatching plots in London and Geneva.¹⁰

Akbar Bugti, Ataullala Mengal, Ahmed Nawaz Bugti, Malik Ghulam Jilani, Yusuf Haroon, Khan Abdul Wali Khan, Zafar All Shah assembled in Loudon. These leaders held discussions time and again with Sheikh Mujib and his companions in London and Geneva. They collectively proposed a confederation for Pakistan with complete regional autonomy to the four provinces of Pakistan. The official media also played its role in levying charges against Baloch government that it has been assisted with arms and ammunition by foreign assistance. Moreover, Bhutto had the aim to put Balochis and Pathans into conflict against each other. International media reported that noble and genuine aspirations of Baloch people were brutally crushed by Bhutto in the name of national unity. Anyhow due to pressure of opposition and regionalism, Bhutto in his own chairmanship, arranged a committee to frame a constitution which was eventually drafted but however didn't fulfill provincial governments' expectation, having reservations on certain provisions of new constitution like;

- Role of P.M and C.M at central and provincial level respectively.
- Quantum of regional autonomy of federating units.

Bhutto lost his temperament due to opposition and resorted to iron-hand, imposing restrictions on provincial governments and leaders, mobilized police, federal security forces and army which were very astonishing as these actions were taking the federation to debacle of Quetta, Peshawar and Karachi as Dhaka.¹¹

Khan Abdul Wali Khan alleged Bhutto as “counter revolutionary” and “Fascist”. He further said,

“I call him Adolf Bhutto, because of his fascist policies. His only aim in life is to secure absolute and undiluted power at the cost of the welfare of the people of Pakistan.” He called Bhutto a “sick man”, “thoroughly evil”, “insane” and a dictator”.¹²

In order to counter provincialism and regionalism and ensure federal authority, NAP-JUI elected government was replaced by puppet governments upon his own will on the one hand and secondly encouraged by Shah of Iran on the other. He deployed army, operated by General Tikka Khan who was already notorious for East Pakistan, here received the title of “Butcher” for Balochistan and NWFP, killing 5300 Balochis and 3300 army soldiers, which increased only ill-feeling among the Balochis and other Pakistanis.¹³

Nawab Akbar Bugti was appointed as governor of Balochistan by the federal government but he as an agent of the federal government didn't speak a single word in favor of his region inhabitants' rights. When General Zia took the government, plans were formulated for desensitization of Baloch and Pashtun leading groups by offering jobs and funds in the federal quota to the insecure middle class tribal people. More importantly, he produced great political space for the religious parties in the KP and Balochistan so that they could be galvanized in the *war* against the Soviet Union in neighboring Afghanistan. After the death of Zia, PPP emerged as the only largest winning party in the elections of 1988, but however faced failure to avail monopoly in the Parliament. So in a compromise Benazir was elected as the P.M of Pakistan but the powers were mounted highly in favour of the President. Since 1988-1999, in almost all the elections political alliances were made on ethnic basis and the national parties have made inroads into the provinces, for instance, after the 1997 elections, the PML(N) opted for a coalition government with ethnic parties though the party was in a position to run the business alone, but in spite of this, formed coalition governments with the (ANP) in KP, the Balochistan National Party (BNP), Jamhoori Watan Party(JWP) in Balochistan. So the mainstream national parties increased their influence in the Province. The old alignment between the Balochis and Pukhtoons also ended as a result of the influx of Afghan refugees into Balochistan. Baloch conflicts with the centre over the division of resources, including water continued but these disputes were not characterized in ethno-national terms. The governments of PPP and PML (N) made Baloch nationalists and persuade them to give up violence over matters such as regional political autonomy, allocation of central tax revenue and funds for development of Balochistan and inappropriate royalty payment for the gas found in Balochistan and its utilization by Punjab to sustain its economy.¹⁴

Ethnic Balochistan and Economic Underdevelopment

An analysis of Balochistan current situation is essential to be considered which encompasses features like Baloch nationalist movement, its future and its political and economic impact on the mega projects of Balochistan. Balochistan's geography and its economic potentials are interrelated regarding trade and business. Balochistan's economic progress depends upon the realization of economic rents but the sources of these rents are disproportionately situated in the ethnic Baloch-Brahvi regions of the province which has threatened the economic future of this region. Quetta however enjoys economic importance since it stands across two important land routes – between the coast and Afghanistan and central Asia, and between Punjab and the Iranian frontier. But in comparison with other parts of the province, particularly the mineral-rich South, East and West, and the coastline Quetta and its surroundings are comparatively low potentials participators to the economic development of the province.¹⁵

Similarly, extraction of Sandak copper and other precious minerals project along with training and employment of local youth but a delay of round about a decade and ill wishes of the federal government to provide 1.5 billion rupees as working capital, with a false promise, project was given to Chinese on 50% profit share to china, 48% share to federal government and 2% share to Balochistan. Moreover no local youths were either employed or trained. Sea trade occurred in Pakistan through Karachi and Port Bin Qasim in the year 2000 was 42 million and 51 million in the year 2005 and need to be increased to 78 million in the year 2015 which can only be achieved if deep sea Gawadar port on the coast of Makran is built.¹⁶ It is fortunately now under process due to which Pakistan has not only an access to natural resources of Central Asia but to the whole region as well. Second, US sanction of more than 1.4 billion dollars for Trans Afghan gas pipeline which will carry 30 billion cubic meters of gas from gas reservoirs of Turkmenistan to Gwadar per year.¹⁷ It will be the first economic advantage to Pakistan. This 1500 Km pipeline project can yield significant revenues In an advertisement in the national and international media, new Gawadar city was regarded as land grab for investors outside the province and the federal authorities were thinking that 2.5 million people will be inducted which later on would be increased to 5 million, the number which is approximately equal to the total population of the province and so protest was raised against as it will wipe them out of their own province. Gwadar Port along with industrial sector will catch interests of internal and foreign investors and will provide an opportunity for economic and tourist developments on the one hand and will fulfill the intense need cargo traffic which is affected due to crisis in Karachi.¹⁸

Such a rise and fall in provincial politics, Mr. Bugti, considering himself to be patriotic and nationalist, fighting for the cause of provincial autonomy, royalties and other basic rights of the people and no personal interests while the federal government which was in mood to open up Balochistan for economic development but was in continuous fear of provincial Sardari system which acted as a great hindrance towards progress and internal security. Therefore Musharraf sidelined the role of national level parties (PML-N, PPP) and their allies (ANP, BNP) and

favoured JI and JUI for social and electoral engineering but the circumstances remained the same as they were. Similarly the Baloch consciousness of provincial autonomy illustrated in 1973 constitution was also undermined. However, the federal government, if, had delivered development, jobs and offices, it would avoid the sense of restlessness among the political and economic have-nots of the province. But it actually did not happen and remained a backward province. A question raises that why some Sardars are asking for demands of Baloch nationalism while many of them are not doing so¹⁹.

The nationalist movements remained strong and continued to attract followers on politics based on ethnic grievance. Few of them resolved issues in socio-economic terms for provincial development while most of them regard such questions as diversions from the nationalist struggle. In recent years there has been fragmentation of the Baloch nationalist movement due to the revival of patronage-based politics as well as central state repression.²⁰

Baloch Insurgencies and its impacts on Economy

Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) has stricken on gas pipelines and railway lines in almost all Balochistan and in Punjab as well. Civil and military agencies pointed out Iran as the catalyst for evoking regional aspirations in Baloch people but Iran has denied such accusations so many times.

Another incident of insurgency took place when Dr. Shazia Khalid was sexually harassed by some Punjabi employees in Sui. In a reaction people attacked on Sui facility. In the response of attack, Musharraf ordered ISI and army to mount operation against rebels. Nawab Akbar Bugti, leader of (JWP) was alleged for attack on Sui demanding royalty payment on the pretext of Shazia Khalid case. However he stated that the attack has nothing to do with the nationalist movement rather it was the result of people's anger on Shazia's event. The retaliated Musharraf was proposed by state politicians including ruling party, state agencies, ISI and IB that in spite of military action against Bugti, the authority should hold talks with him. But some of his councilors and MI advised him to strike Bugti, Khair Bux Marri and Atallah Mengal with iron hands.²¹

Nawab Akbar Bugti. An old man of 80 years of age and chief of 200,000 tribesmen was killed along with 35 followers by an air attack of PAF in Bhambore Mountain in Marri. With the assassination of Bugti, the President took the enmity of the whole Baloch population though had never taken up arms against army but now frustrated from federation regarding development of the province. Musharraf might under estimate the power of Baloch nationalism. The army gave a clear message to other provinces as to how they will deal such movements if not curtailed there. However, the smaller provinces feel resentment against continuous military involvement in state's politics. Same message along with evidence has been issued to India and Afghanistan for their long term involvement in internal politics of the state.

Musharraf in 2006 overruled PML incentives package to Baloch including constitutional amendment for provincial autonomy as the army argues that million developmental rupees have been spent on mega projects like Gawader port, cantonments and roads but the common Baloch were not benefited due to

nationalist movements. These projects are defined by army and so have no need to be consulted with either the people or provincial assembly.

Bugti's death has created so many threats for gas pipeline of Iran, India and Pakistan. During Iran's oil minister to New Delhi to discuss gas pipeline project, the anti-government elements blew two gas pipelines to send an unwilling message to the concerns. The gas pipeline which runs with Balochistan-Punjab border is the area which is extremely weak in economic terms though strategic utility is possessed by it having large reserves of oil and gas but have no fair share in royalty, no opportunity for economic development and a deep sense of disloyalty caused to the absence of mutual trust between the federal government and the Baloch people.²²

Serious violations of human rights in Balochistan occurred during last 30 years killing 8000 people in which 3000 were from army. The HRCP reported that 85% people escaped from their homes due to shelling by military in the town. Carlotta Gall, *New York Times* correspondent visited the area in April 2006 reported deep bomb craters caused by MK-82 bombs. According to her,

*"Hundreds of political party members, students, doctors and tribal leaders have been detained by government security forces, many disappearing for months, even years, without trials in well-documented cases. Some have been tortured or have died in custody."*²³

A national human rights organization reported that 20 lacs people were displaced and were living in an open environment in very hot season without food, water and other requirements. One half out of 100 civil humans been blasted in mines spread out by both BLA and army in Dera Bugti and Kohlu districts.²⁴

Various operations against Baloch nationalists in Marri and Bugti areas and assassination of Nawab Bugti led the nationalist struggle (continued from last six decades) to alienation from federation. So in the result of increased pressure on central government from separatist ambitions, the national parliament in 2007, during Musharraf regime, endeavored to initiate negotiation with Baloch leadership. After negotiations the reports submitted by Parliamentary Committee on Balochistan and Sub-Committee on Provincial Autonomy in November 2007, contained different issues and policy recommendations for resolving such issues.

First report marked:

- Requirement for constitutional amendments- transfer of subjects from federal to concurrent and then to proposed provincial list.
- Legislative measures for framing new rules for CCI (Council of Common Interests), PAC (Public Accounts Committee), NEC (National Economic Council) and IPCC (Inter-provincial Coordination Committee).
- Suggestions for CBMs like building hospitals, international standard schools, universities and airports etc.

Second report marked the following points:

- Payment of revenue receipts of oil and gas to concerned districts.
- Formula regarding royalty and gas development surcharge to Balochistan.
- Expanding job quota in civil and military jobs.
- Transferring of the Head Office of Gawader Port from Karachi to Gawader
- Announcement of NFC Award.
- Control and regulation of operational FC and CG (coast guards).
- Stoppage of building of army cantts.
- Educational training facilities for youth, relocation of displaced fishermen and inquiry into lands in Gawader.²⁵

The reforms package introduced by the PPP government in November 2009 on the basis of previous reports was presented to the joint sitting of Parliament. The package was called Aghze -e- Haqooq-e-Balochistan containing goodwill measures like payment of Rs.2.8 billion of gas royalty arrears, writing of the draft of Balochistan worth Rs 17.5 billion, addressing issue of missing persons, repeal of concurrent list, rationalization of CCI and NFC, withdrawal of army from Sui, stopping cantonments construction, provincial control over FC and Coast Guards, payment of royalty arrears (1954- 1991) of Rs.120 billion payable in 12 months.

The reform package was however criticized by Balochis as it failed in fulfilling the demand of shifting the Head Office of the Gwadar project from Karachi to Gawader so considered it as a political joke. According to them as the real power in Pakistan lays in the hands of army so civilian government is unable to deliver its all commitments to Balochistan. Anyhow parties like PML (N) and ANP highly appreciated the package.

Centre-Province Relations

The relations between Balochistan and Pakistan can be seen within the diagram of Pakistani federal politics. Ironically in principles, crisis in Balochistan are not different from those of the other provincial issues of Pakistan- distribution of resources, easy approach to institutions, identification and development of regional cultures, royalty for regional resources etc. The province is consisted of traditional tribal leaders, feudal classes with relations to the center, and a few literate middle class people. Ethnic nationalists among the Baloch, the Pashtun, and the leaders of Islamist movements, overlap with the kinship, patronage and class-based elites. Due to political and historical factors, various challenges have been faced by the central authorities. Different insurgencies in which an explicit demand for independence from Pakistan on the part of Baloch nationalist leaders is on the apex.²⁶

Balochis perceive that they have not been provided by any opportunity to preserve their specific identity however in 1972 after elections, when Balochis got the authority in the province of their own, people were desired of persistence of their local language but Ghaus Baksh Bizenjo (Baloch Governor), proclaimed Urdu as the official language of corresponding routine governmental works. This measure was taken to keep any conflicting situation away from Balochis, Pathans and

Brahvis as language issue was exploited by the Baloch politicians in order to get maximum power. These tribes have not only a role in the separatist movements rather hunger for power among them also remained very explosive.²⁷

An analysis of Balochistan current situation is essential to be considered which encompasses features like Baloch nationalist movement, its future and its political and economic impact on the mega projects of Balochistan. Balochistan's geography and its economic potentials are interrelated regarding trade and business. Balochistan's economic progress depends upon the realization of economic rents but the sources of these rents are disproportionately situated in the ethnic Baloch-Brahvi regions of the province. Quetta, however enjoys economic importance since it stands across two important land routes – between the coast and Afghanistan and central Asia, and between Punjab and the Iranian frontier. But in comparison with other parts of the province, particularly the mineral-rich South, East and West, and the coastline Quetta and its surroundings are comparatively low potentials participators to the economic development of the province.²⁸

Conclusion

All the provinces in general and Balochistan in specific are in continuous struggle to have an adequate share in national financial resources, water, representation in national legislature, and quota in public jobs etc but these thing by themselves lead t sectarianism and ethnic polarization giving a negative impact to economic development due to which mega projects are not going to initiate and so changes the forth coming prosperity into a misery.

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¹³ On 15 April 1973, a coalition government (PPP). PML (Q) and United Front of Independents) headed by. K. Gandapur was installed in the NWFP. Similarly, on 27 April, 1973, a three-men coalition government (PML (Q), JUI and PPP) headed by Ghulam Qadir Jam was installed in Baluchistan.

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